



Food and Drink Policy

Available in Staff & Visitor Policy Folders

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Policy context

This policy was a combination of the original 'Food and Drink Policy, 6th February 2023' and the 'Food Allergy Procedure, 6th February 2023'. These two documents were combined due to their importance within one another, and to minimise confusion where possible.

As of September 2026, this policy has been split back into two separate policies: one for Food and Drink, and the other for Allergies and Dietary Needs. This is due to the new Benedict's Law that came into force as of September 2026 for schools.

As this policy covers our general food practice, please read the Allergies and Dietary Needs policy to understand how your child and family may be affected.

Introduction:

The Gooseberry Bush Day Nursery regards snacks and mealtimes as an important part of the nursery day. Eating represents a social time for the children and adults and helps children to learn about healthy eating and explore new foods and snacks!

At snack and mealtimes, we aim to provide nutritious food which meets the children's individual needs, whether that follows a known allergy or dietary need, or providing food that the children enjoy.

Food Costs and Exceptions:

The cost of meals, snacks and drinks during the day, such as milk or water, is included in the session's cost.

Government funding cannot be used to cover the costs of any cooked meals provided by the nursery. This includes:

- Under 2 Year Olds Funding for Working Families,
- 2 Year Olds Funding for Working Families,
- 2 Year Old Funding for Families Receiving Additional Support,
- 3 & 4 Year Old Statutory Funding,
- 3 & 4 Year Old Funding for Working Families,

As funding cannot be used for children's meals, families are required to pay for lunches if their child's session is predominantly covered by funded hours.

For example, if your child attends from 8am until 6pm, and you want to use as much funding as possible, the childcare fee would be covered by funding. *However*, you would be charged the cost of lunch*.

Nursery Packed-Lunch and Home-Made Packed-Lunch are not options for children under 2 years old at our setting.

Lunch Options for Families:

Option:	Cost:	Description:
Nursery Cooked Lunch	£4.25 per day	Your child will receive a cooked meal prepared by our on-site chef from our kitchen, with fresh ingredients purchased locally.
Nursery Packed Lunch	£3.25 per day	Your child will receive a packed lunch by our on-site chef from our kitchen, once again using fresh ingredients. Please see our website at: www.gooseberrybush.org/about_us/enrolling-my-child-at-nursery/#LunchOptions for more information.
Home Made Lunch	No cost!	Families can provide their child with a home-made packed lunch to prevent additional costs from nursery.

**We aim to meet the requirements of the legal standards,
which are listed below:**

1. Before a child starts to attend the nursery, we find out from parents/carers the child's dietary needs and preferences, including any allergies they may have.
2. Information about each child's dietary needs are recorded in her/his registration record and parents sign the record to signify that it is correct and regularly update the information.
3. Current information about individual children's dietary needs are discreetly displayed in their room so that all staff and volunteers are fully informed about the child's individual needs.
4. We implement systems to ensure that children receive only food and drink that is consistent with their dietary needs and preferences, as well as their parent's wishes (e.g. red bowl system for children with severe allergies).
5. The current lunch menu is displayed in the classroom and on our website for parents to view. Lunch menus are planned and the food offered is fresh, wholesome and balanced. Frozen vegetables may be substituted when fresh are not available or of poor quality.
 - a. The lunch menu is on a rolling system. Meals may change in the order to offer variety and to renew interest in particular foods.
6. We provide nutritious food at all snacks and meals, avoiding large quantities of saturated fat, sugar and salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colouring.
7. We include a variety of foods from the four main food groups:
 - a. Protein (for growth) → such as Meat, Eggs, Beans, Fish and Meat Alternatives
 - b. Dairy (for calcium) → such as Milk, Milk alternatives (soya, oat, etc.), butter, yoghurts, etc.
 - c. Carbohydrates (for energy) → such as Wholegrain Breads, Breadsticks, Rice, Pasta, etc.
 - d. Fruits and Vegetables (for essential vitamins and minerals) → such as Apples, Melons, Mangos, and Potatoes, Carrots, and various Seasonal Vegetables.
8. The children are provided with familiar food and also introduced to new ones over the course of the year, sometimes in accordance with nursery events.

9. Food is provided appropriate for the age and development of the child i.e. cut into small pieces or blended for very young children (see Weaning section).
 - a. For those children who are tube-fed, food will be blended as needed.
10. We try to avoid any food containing nuts or nut products such as Nutella or even certain kinds of breadsticks or biscuits, as nuts are a common allergy.
11. We are especially vigilant where we have a child who has a known allergy. Any children who have food allergies will have a red bowl for their meals to raise awareness with staff.
12. A vegetarian alternative is available on days when meat or fish are offered, for children who require it. The dietary rules of religious groups and vegetarians/vegans are known and met in appropriate ways. If a diet is exceptionally complex we may arrange for parents to send lunches into nursery with their child.
13. We require staff to show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. Staff do not use a child's diet or allergy as a label for the child or make the child feel singled out because of his/her diet or allergy.
14. On social occasions such as tea parties or events, we organise meal and snack times so all children and staff can participate.
15. Meal and snack times are used to help to develop the children's independence through making choices, helping with setting up for meals and drinks and feeding themselves. The older children sometimes help to prepare snack under staff supervision.
16. We provide children with utensils that are appropriate for their ages and stages of development and that take into account the eating practices in their cultures.
17. In accordance to parents' wishes, we offer children arriving early in the morning – and/or staying late – an appropriate meal or snack. If for any reason the parents are not happy about a meal on the menu, it will be discussed with staff and an alternative given if they happen to attend on the day it is set.
18. We provide fresh pasteurized milk for the children to drink as recommended.
19. We also offer fresh drinking water for the children, which is available at all times.
 - a. **We do not recommend drinks other than milk and water for children under five years old.**

- b. Other drinks such as Squash, Fruit Juice, Fizzy/Soft Drinks (such as Cola), Flavored Water, and any drinks that include added caffeine and other stimulants, are **NOT recommended** as they contribute to tooth decay and can interrupt children's behaviour and routines.
20. We encourage the children to learn about healthy foods and where they come from. We do this through regular learning in the classrooms, such as plant cycles, and termly planning by organising events such as 'Planting, Growing and Tasting'.

Weaning

At the GBDN all staff in the Piglets classroom (otherwise known as the 'Baby Room') will have training and constant reviews on the following procedures:

- Sterilising Bottles
- Preparation of formula bottles
- Preparation of vegetables for baby lunches (weaning stage)

Infants/Babies under 6 months old:

- No solid foods for under 6 month olds, as stated in the government guidelines.
 - BestStartInLife – <https://www.nhs.uk/best-start-in-life/baby/weaning/>
 - NHS – <https://www.nhs.uk/baby/weaning-and-feeding/babys-first-solid-foods/>
- Family to consult a doctor if needed before 6 months.

Infants/Babies over 6 months old, but younger than 12 months old:

- No main meals that contain uncooked milk, such as milk jelly.
- No red meat ← no beef, pork, etc.
- Poultry and fish allowed
- Any breakfast cereals, within reason (usually Weetabix)
- Finger foods will start to be introduced, depending on the child and their needs

How do we promote balanced eating and drinking?

We encourage the children to try a range of food over the week and keep parents informed as to what their child has eaten, enjoyed and did not like. In doing so, we encourage families to try and understand the benefits of a varied, healthy diet.

Throughout the school year, each classroom may 'experiment' with different fruit options during snack times or try new combinations to give the children a variety of foods to try and help them learn what they like and dislike.

We also promote physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle, encouraging the children to play outside as much as possible. This is promoted all year round, regardless of whether the weather is sunny, overcast or wet.

All families are requested to bring in drinks bottle appropriate for their child's development age, so their child can independently drink water throughout the day. Each classroom has their own water stations as well where children can pour their own drinks if they run out. Staff also invite children to have a drink each meal and snack time, with approximately every two hours between.

Healthy Lunchbox leaflets are distributed at the beginning of each term to all families of children intending to bring in pack lunches. This information, as well as lunch ideas and suggestions, can also be found on our website under the Parents tab.

Parents of children bringing an excess of sweet or unhealthy food in their lunch boxes will be offered advice by staff and some foods may be removed and returned to parents at the end of the session.

Our menus are regularly reviewed and altered to provide a healthy varied diet for the children, and to accommodate their changing tastes and preferences. We also take into consideration what foods may be in season, changes in the weather and new recipes we have discovered.

Preparing Meals

Meals and Snacks are cooked and prepared using food hygiene standards and following healthy guidelines. Meals are freshly prepared on site by the Nursery Chef and follows a carefully balanced menu.

It is cooked using a minimum of additional fat (meaning food is not fried, excess fat is trimmed off meat, excess oils are drained from food before further prep, etc.).

Vegetables are prepared fresh (except when frozen is substituted due to poor fresh-crop quality or unavailability) and where possible, vegetables are cooked in a minimum amount of water or steamed.

Salt is not added to meals as there should be enough salt coming from the ingredients themselves to not require additions. Children cannot add additional salt when served dinner.

Sugar is kept to a minimum, within reason.

Wholemeal bread, flour and rice are used sometimes to provide variety and to introduce the children to healthy alternatives.

Lean meat is used for meals, and both white and oily fish may be used. All meals can have meat substituted for vegetarian options.

Cooking in the classrooms

We encourage the children to take part in 'baking' but staff are advised to follow these helpful guidelines:

1. Staff must plan appropriately:
 - a. Ask the children what they would like to make
 - b. Once baking option is decided, what will nursery need to order? Do we need to substitute anything due to allergies or food intolerances?
 - c. Place an order with the Deputy Manager
2. Check the above before starting the activity to ensure all allergies and dietary needs are considered and catered for.
3. Gather all ingredients before starting
4. Give each child an individual bowl so they can mix and taste the mixture independently.
5. Staff will use a main bowl to show the children what happens and be used to cook.

Food handling ← plating up meals, snack, etc.

Lunches are prepared in the main kitchen on site, located in Gilly’s Café, and transported in a closed food trolley to be distributed to the classrooms from the kitchen.

The food is then transferred into individual dishes as appropriate by staff within each classroom. Children with allergies and dietary needs will have their meals added to bright, red plates and bowls using SEPARATE utensils. Staff will do an additional check to make sure the child’s allergy and dietary needs are met by the chef-prepared meal.

Only *then* are the children served their meals, once cooled to the correct temperature. Red plates will be served first using clean implements to avoid contamination.

Staff have been trained in Food Hygiene Awareness as well as Allergies in Education, which includes food handling, correct storage, fridge temperatures, etc.

Staff wash their hands before handling food, wear specific aprons when serving food and follow hygiene guidelines. Temperature monitors are kept in fridges and freezers across site to ensure accurately stored food for refrigeration or freezing, and temperature probes are available to ensure food is at the right temperature for serving.

Signatory, Review & Update Section:

Signed by the Manager, on behalf of GBDN:

C. Buscane.

Previously:	12 th September 2024	Updated?	YES / NO
Updated on:	14 th September, 2026	Updated?	YES / NO
Reviewed on:		Updated?	YES / NO
Reviewed on:		Updated?	YES / NO

Post Note: Families are allowed to bring in food gifts for their child’s classroom for events such as birthdays, etc. However families are asked to be forthcoming with the food gifts ingredients (if baked/cooked) or if any common allergies are present, such as dairy, soya, eggs, wheat, etc.