

Little Dukes Nurseries

# Food Provided by Parents/Carers Guidance

Adopted: January 2026

Next review due: January 2027

## Reviewed by:

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Any reference to 'Little Dukes' applies to nurseries named below within the Dukes Education Group:

- Hopes and Dreams Montessori Nurseries
- Hove Village Nurseries
- Miss Daisy's Nursery Schools
- The Kindergartens Nursery Schools
- Riverside Nursery Schools
- Reflections Nursery and Forest School
- Pippa Pop-ins Nursery Schools

## 1. Purpose

This guidance sets out how food provided by parents and carers is managed within the nursery to ensure they are:

- Safe, healthy, and age-appropriate for children aged **0–5 years**
- Compliant with the **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)** requirements for children's health, safety, and wellbeing
- Compliant with **Government early education funding guidance**, which requires that parents can choose to opt out of charges for meals and snacks provided by the nursery
- Suitable for our setting, as we do not have facilities to heat or reheat food
- Safe for all children, including those in the nursery setting with allergies and dietary requirements, within a strict no-nuts policy

## 2. Aim

The aim is to provide guidance to parents/carers around the EYFS statutory framework and Early Years nutritional guidance 2025. This guidance applies to all children attending the nursery, including:

- Children accessing funded early education hours
- Children attending additional paid hours
- All meals and snacks brought in from home by parents/carers

## 3. Funded places and food charges (parent opt-out)

Government guidance makes clear that:

- Funded early education hours must be delivered free at the point of delivery
- Providers must not make food charges mandatory for children accessing funded hours
- Parents must be given a genuine choice and be able to choose to opt out of paying for meals or continue to remain part of the settings offering

### Our approach

- Parents/Carers may choose for their child to bring in food from home instead of paying for any optional nursery food charges.
- Packed lunches and snacks are a reasonable alternative, ensuring funded hours remain fully accessible without compulsory costs.
- Any charges for food (where offered) will be clearly itemised, optional, and separated from funded entitlement hours.
- Parents who choose to opt out of paying for meals and snacks must then provide **all meals and snacks on a daily basis**. We are unable to offer a part/partial meals and or snack offering.
- We require a full month's notice should you wish to opt back in to the nursery providing all meals and snacks.
- Discounts are applied to charges for additional services offered by the nursery. If a parent chooses to opt out of any additional service, the applicable discount will be adjusted accordingly. Our finance team is available to answer any questions regarding discounts or charges.

## 4. Responsibilities

### Parents and carers

Parents/carers are responsible for:

- Providing food from home that strictly follows this guidance and complies with our Mealtimes Policy
- Ensuring food is **nut and seed-free**, safe, healthy, and appropriate for their child's age and development
- Informing the nursery of **all allergies, intolerances, medical dietary needs, and cultural/religious requirements**
- Ensuring packed lunches are stored safely (e.g. insulated bags with ice packs)

### The nursery

The nursery is responsible for:

- Supervising children while eating
- Supporting children's individual dietary needs
- Managing allergies safely and consistently
- Communicating with parents if lunch contents do not meet safety or guidance requirements

## 5. What an appropriate packed lunch should include (ages 0–5)

Packed lunches should reflect a balanced, nutritious meal, appropriate to the child's age and stage of development.

We recommend that packed lunches include:

### Starchy foods

- Wholemeal bread

- Wraps, pittas
- Pasta, rice, couscous
- Potatoes

### **Protein foods**

- Cooked chicken, turkey, or meat alternatives
- Fish with all bones removed
- Eggs (well cooked)
- Beans, lentils, chickpeas
- Hummus (nut and seed-free)
- Cheese
- Yogurt (unsweetened or low sugar where possible)

### **Fruit and vegetables**

- At least one portion of fruit and/or vegetables
- Prepared and cut safely and appropriately for the child's developmental stage (See appendix 1)

### **Drinks**

- Water is encouraged
- Milk may be provided where age-appropriate
- No fizzy drinks, squash, or high-sugar drinks

### **Example lunches**

- Soft sandwich + cucumber sticks + fruit + yogurt
- Pasta with vegetables + fruit
- Rice and beans/chicken + soft veg + fruit

## **6. Food that must NOT be included (No-Nuts Policy)**

To protect children with allergies and support health and safety, **the following are not permitted:**

### **Nuts and other products (strictly prohibited)**

- Whole nuts of any kind
- Peanut butter
- Nut spreads (e.g. chocolate-nut spreads)
- Foods containing nuts or nut traces
- Pesto, nut-based snacks, nut bars
- Sweets, chocolate bars, lollipops
- Sugary desserts as everyday items
- Fizzy or energy drinks
- Chewing gum
- Hard sweets
- Popcorn
- Raisins and Sultanas

If any of these items are found, they will be removed immediately to protect children and staff and parents/carers will be informed and required to provide an alternative.

## 7. Allergies, intolerances, and special dietary needs

We take allergies extremely seriously, particularly within a 0–5 age range where children may be unable to recognise or communicate risk.

Parents/carers must:

- Inform the nursery of any allergies or intolerances, diagnosed or suspected
- Provide relevant medical plans and medication where required
- Ensure foods are clearly identifiable and, where possible, provided in original packaging

The nursery will:

- Maintain up-to-date allergy and dietary records
- Ensure staff are aware of children's needs
- Supervise meals carefully
- Ensure food is not shared between children
- Follow strict handwashing and cleaning procedures before and after meals

## 8. Choking prevention and safe food preparation (ages 0–5).

Young children are at increased risk of choking. All food must be prepared safely and appropriately for the child's developmental stage (**See appendix 1**).

Parents must:

- Cut grapes, cherry tomatoes, olives lengthways into quarters
- Slice sausages lengthways and into small pieces
- Avoid hard foods for younger children unless softened or cut appropriately
- Ensure food size and texture are suitable for their child's age and ability

Foods posing a choking risk may be removed if not prepared safely.

## 9. Food temperature, storage, and no-heating arrangements

Due to our facilities:

- We do not heat or reheat food brought from home.
- All packed lunches must be suitable to be eaten cold or at room temperature.

Parents **MUST**:

- Use an insulated lunch bag with an ice pack
- Clearly label lunch bags with the child's name
- Avoid foods that require reheating or hot holding

The nursery will store packed lunches as safely as practicable but cannot guarantee refrigeration for all items.

## 10. Packed lunch checks and responding to concerns

To keep all children safe:

- If food does not meet safety requirements, staff will contact parents to discuss next steps and alternatives

We will always approach concerns in a supportive and non-judgemental manner.

### **11. Equality, inclusion, and respect**

We are committed to inclusion and will make reasonable adjustments to support:

- Medical dietary needs
- Cultural and religious food requirements
- Vegetarian and vegan diets

Open communication with parents is essential to ensure children's needs are met safely and respectfully.

### **12. Communication with parents**

This guidance will be:

- Reviewed regularly
- Discussed with parents as needed to support safe and healthy eating

### **13. Review of policy**

This guidance will be reviewed:

- When guidance changes
- Following any significant food safety or allergy incident

## Appendix 1:

### Food Provided by Parents/Carers - Guidance

#### The Eatwell plate:



#### Appropriate food preparation:





# HOW TO CUT FOODS FOR SAFE BABY-LED WEANING

