



Sacred Heart School

Food and Drink Policy

At Sacred Heart School we all aspire to provide a happy, safe and secure environment in which every child is encouraged to achieve their full potential.

This policy is applicable to all pupils, including those in EYFS.

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To be read in conjunction with the School's Allergy Policy.

Aims

We believe that all children should enjoy a sufficient, well-balanced and healthy diet appropriate to their individual health, taking into account cultural and philosophical dietary requirements.

The school takes positive action to encourage healthy eating. Children learn to enjoy foods and understand the reason why some foods are healthy, and others are not. This is done by providing healthy snacks and meals, by encouraging children to become involved in helping to prepare food and through everyday activities that encourage children to make healthy food choices.

Our food and drink provision is informed by the **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework** and the **Department for Education's Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance (May 2025)**. The school has regard to this guidance and follows it unless there is a good reason not to. Meals and snacks are planned to support children's growth, development and long-term health.

Our lunches are delivered by The Pollen Partnership, who specialise in providing lunches for schools. The school works with the catering provider to ensure that meals are nutritious, balanced and appropriate for the children we serve.

Children are taught about food-related hygiene, for example, washing their hands before eating. They are also encouraged to share food times together, such as meal and snack times, to promote social skills and good hygiene practices which can play an important part in the social life of children in the Nursery and beyond.

Sustainability is high on our agenda, and we work hard to minimise food wastage. Food waste is separated and sent to a treatment site for composting.

Implementation of policy

The school must ensure that:

- New members of staff, including students and volunteers, must read and adhere to the Food and Drink Policy.
- All staff, students and volunteers are made fully aware of individual children's dietary needs and requirements.
- The Food and Drink Policy is made available to parents and carers.
- Records are kept of dietary and medical requirements and are updated annually or when there are any changes.
- Staff follow appropriate food safety and hygiene procedures when preparing, handling and serving food and drink.
- Children are appropriately supervised during snack and mealtimes.
- Staff are aware of and follow the school's procedures for managing allergies, intolerances and other dietary requirements.

Allergies and Intolerances to food products and substances

We ask parents to advise us of any allergies, intolerances or cultural preferences when a child begins at Sacred Heart. Prior to joining, parents must complete the school's medical forms and update them annually or sooner if there are any changes. This information is included on the food/medical emergencies list which includes photos of the children, which is displayed in the Foundation Stage area and hall kitchen. This must be brought to the attention of all staff working with the children including students and volunteers. The Catering Manager and all staff members must keep up-to-date with any changes or

variances to this information. During meal, cooking or snack times children are not allowed to exchange food in order to avoid accidental exposures to allergens.

Where a child has a diagnosed food allergy, the school will ensure that an appropriate individual healthcare/allergy plan is in place where required. Relevant staff will understand the child's allergens, signs and symptoms of a reaction, emergency procedures and the location and use of any prescribed emergency medication.

Further Procedures to Safeguard Children

At lunchtime, Foundation Stage practitioners must verbally confirm with the catering team whether any children have alternative food products due to allergies, intolerances or parent/carer preferences. When preparing snacks and meals, all staff must check allergy, intolerance or parent/carer preference alerts before providing children with food or drink. Staff must ensure that food is prepared, handled and served in a manner that minimises the risk of allergic reactions, cross-contamination and choking. Any changes to a child's dietary or medical requirements must be communicated promptly to all relevant staff and the Catering Manager.

Cooking Activities

We incorporate cooking into our curriculum planning and may share food from different cultures through topics, events or celebrations. Children take part in regular cookery activities. Children will not be withheld from taking part in cooking activities unless staff deem it to be an immediate health risk to the child. If this is the case, staff will ensure that an alternative activity is made available which safeguards the child from any exposure to known medical risks. Before cooking activities take place, staff will check relevant allergy,

intolerance and dietary information and ensure that ingredients and equipment are suitable for all children taking part. Children are supported to learn about food hygiene and safe food preparation as part of cooking activities.

Celebrations and Snacks from Home

Parents and carers may provide food for birthdays or special occasions if they wish. As a small setting, this does not compromise our healthy eating approach Sacred Heart. School does not permit nuts or nut-containing products to be brought into school. Food brought into school for celebrations should be suitable for young children and should reflect the school's commitment to healthy eating. All food must comply with the school's allergy, dietary, choking and nut-free requirements.

All foods brought from home are ingredient-checked before being offered to children, particularly those with known allergies.

Lunches

School lunches are provided in partnership with The Pollen Partnership, our specialist school catering provider, and are freshly prepared on site.

Sacred Heart works closely with The Pollen Partnership to ensure that menus reflect current Department for Education nutrition guidance, applicable school food standards and the Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance for our youngest children. Menus and food preparation practices are reviewed regularly and adapted as national guidance and requirements change.

We expect our catering provision to promote a healthy, balanced and varied diet. This includes providing fruit and vegetables each day; offering a range of protein and starchy foods; incorporating wholegrain

choices; limiting foods high in fat, saturated fat, salt and added sugar; and using healthier methods of preparation and cooking wherever possible. Fried, deep-fried, batter-coated, breadcrumb-coated and pastry-based foods are limited in accordance with current guidance and applicable standards.

The school works with The Pollen Partnership to review menus, children's feedback, dietary requirements and the nutritional quality of the food provided. Where changes to national nutrition guidance or school food standards are introduced, the school will work with The Pollen Partnership to review and amend menus and food preparation practices as necessary.

Menus are planned to provide a healthy, nutritious and balanced diet. Fresh fruit and vegetables are provided daily. Children are encouraged to try familiar and unfamiliar foods but are never forced to eat. Children are supported to recognise their own hunger and fullness cues. Portion sizes are appropriate for children's age and appetite, with opportunities for additional servings where appropriate.

Children with special dietary requirements are catered for and vegetarian options are provided daily. All children have the choice of a meat or vegetarian meal and/or a choice from the salad bar. The menu operates on a three-week rotation and is reviewed regularly, at least termly. Sacred Heart offers a varied menu and may also organise special themed days, for example for Burns Night.

Lunch is served at approximately 12.15-1.30pm.

Children in Nursery sit at an appropriately sized table and are supervised in accordance with the safer-eating requirements set out in this policy.

Tea

Most children go home at 3.30pm at the end of the school day. Those children who do stay for our Busy Bees Club (after-school club) are given a snack tea at 5pm.

The size of the meal portions is designed to be sufficient and adequate to the child's appetite. Children are appropriately supervised while eating and drinking, and relevant allergy, dietary and choking procedures continue to apply.

Refreshments

Fresh drinking water is always freely available to children and staff. Suitable cups or water bottles are readily available, and children are encouraged to help themselves. Each child has their own personalised water bottle in school. Staff ensure that all children have appropriate amounts to drink, especially in hot weather and supply refills when needed.

We are a juice-free setting, offering water and milk only, to promote good oral and dental health. Children are supported to recognise when they need to drink water.

Snack Time in Nursery

Our planned snack time is a regular, pleasant and sociable experience promoting healthy food choices for children aged 2–5 years.

We encourage the children to take turns, to share and be polite. We encourage common courtesies such as saying "please" and "thank you".

Staff sit with children, encouraging conversation, turn-taking and respectful listening.

Children are encouraged but **not pressured** to eat. The snack menus operate on a three-week rotation. Staff, parents/carers and children are involved where possible in planning, preparing and serving snacks.

Food is prepared and served appropriately for young children, taking account of potential choking hazards and individual dietary requirements.

Snack Time in Reception

Children's healthy snacks are provided by their parents and carers. Parents are encouraged to provide snacks that support a balanced and healthy diet.

Snack time is a calm and sociable experience. Children eat their snacks while sitting on the carpet, facing an adult. This ensures appropriate supervision, promotes good manners, supports positive social interaction and enables staff to monitor children's safety and wellbeing while eating.

Children are encouraged to eat independently, listen to their own hunger cues and enjoy snack time without pressure.

Parents and carers should provide fruit and other foods that are appropriately prepared for young children. Foods that may present a choking risk must be cut and prepared appropriately before being brought into school.

Popcorn, marshmallows, jelly cubes from a packet and hard sweets must not be provided to EYFS children. Other foods known to present a choking risk must be prepared in accordance with current DfE and Food Standards Agency guidance.

Safe Eating and Choking Prevention

Whenever EYFS children are eating, including during meals and snack times, there will always be at least one member of staff in the room who holds a current full paediatric first aid (PFA) certificate.

The school recognises that young children are at increased risk of choking and takes appropriate steps to reduce this risk.

- Food is prepared and served in an age-appropriate manner, taking account of its size, shape and texture.
- Children are seated safely and upright while eating and drinking.
- EYFS children must never be left alone while eating and must always be within sight and hearing of a member of staff. Where possible, staff should sit facing children while they eat so that they can monitor safe eating, prevent food sharing and identify signs of choking or an unexpected allergic reaction.
- Children are encouraged to eat calmly, take their time and chew their food thoroughly.
- Staff remain alert to potential choking hazards and ensure that food is prepared appropriately before it is offered to children.
- Parents and carers are asked to ensure that food brought from home is suitable for young children and prepared appropriately.
- Food must not be shared between children.
- Staff must remain attentive to children's safety and wellbeing while they are eating and drinking and must not rely solely on general classroom supervision.
- Staff will follow the school's first aid and emergency procedures in the event of a choking incident. Any choking incident requiring intervention by a member of staff, such as back blows, will be recorded in accordance with the school's accident/incident procedures and parents/carers will be informed. Incidents will be reviewed to identify whether any changes are required to food preparation, supervision or individual arrangements.
- Staff responsible for supervising children while eating will be familiar with appropriate procedures for responding to choking.

Storage of Food

Food is stored hygienically in clean, airtight containers. Chilled food is kept on appropriate fridge shelves and stored at appropriate temperatures. All food is checked regularly and used within its **use-by date**. Food is stored in a manner that reduces the risk of contamination and cross-contamination, including the separation of foods where appropriate. Any food that is no longer suitable for consumption is disposed of safely.

Food and Hygiene

Staff undertake food hygiene training and follow the recommended procedures. When preparing and serving food staff wear aprons; they tie their hair back; cuts and sores are covered with a waterproof (highly visible) dressing and jewellery is kept to a minimum. If gloves are worn handwashing should take place before putting them on and gloves should be changed when handling different foods. Plates, mugs, utensils, etc. are thoroughly washed in the dishwasher and then left to air dry or dried with a clean cloth before storing in suitable cupboards. The designated food preparation areas are kept hygienically clean and the tables are cleaned before and after every use with antibacterial wipes/antibacterial spray. Raw meat is only prepared in the Hall kitchen.

The Practice of Good Manners

Adults are expected to model good manners towards children and vice versa, using "please" and "thank you" appropriately, to reflect a respectful and caring attitude towards others. This is particularly emphasised and encouraged at social occasions such as eating together and group activities. Children are supported to develop independence during snack and mealtimes, including serving themselves where appropriate, using utensils and clearing away after eating. Children are encouraged to enjoy eating together as a social experience and to develop positive attitudes towards food.

Children with SEND or Additional Feeding Needs

We work in partnership with parents, carers and relevant professionals to support children with special educational needs, disabilities, medical conditions or feeding difficulties. Reasonable adjustments are made to ensure all children can access food safely, comfortably and with dignity.

Oral Health

We promote good oral health by providing tooth-friendly foods and drinks, limiting sugar and encouraging water and milk consumption. We support families with information about healthy eating and oral hygiene in line with public health guidance. The school promotes water and milk as appropriate drinks for children and operates a juice-free setting. Children are supported to understand that making healthy food and drink choices contributes to healthy teeth and gums.

Breastfeeding

We are a breastfeeding-friendly setting and offer a suitable place for nursing mothers if they need to feed their child. We support breastfeeding families in a welcoming, respectful and non-judgemental manner.

Monitoring and Review

The policy is reviewed annually by the EYFS Lead, Head Teacher and Governing Body, or may be revised sooner if there are significant changes to legislation, government guidance or school practice.