



Healthy packed lunch policy

September 2025-September 2026

At Acorn Childcare Centre we are committed to providing a happy, healthy and nurturing environment for all our children. It is our responsibility to ensure that children learn, develop well and are kept healthy and safe in accordance with the Early Years Statutory Framework. A key part of this is ensuring that the food and drinks children consume meet high standards of nutrition and safety. Our packed lunch policy has been written considering the strategies in the DfE Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition guidance 2025.

By following this guidance, Acorn Childcare Centre are committing to working in partnership with our families to embed healthy eating habits from an early age. National research has shown that the numbers of childhood obesity and dental decay within Lincolnshire are some of the highest in the country. It is estimated that over a fifth of children are overweight when they reach Primary school. Diet related illnesses such as Type 2 diabetes, rickets and iron deficiency anaemia. Iron deficiency anaemia is linked to slower cognitive development and poor behaviour.

Acorn Childcare Centre has pledged to demonstrate our commitment to providing a healthy and nutritious environment by demonstrating consistent messages about healthy eating, and we believe that a healthy lifestyle should be encouraged all the time. Our aim is to ensure that all aspects of food provision, food education and nutrition contribute to the health, educational benefits and wellbeing of our children, their families and the wider community.

For healthy development and growth, children need to eat a wide variety of food and access a balanced and nutritious diet. We will support your child to develop and maintain a healthy attitude to food. As an Early Years setting ideally placed to help you influence your child's diet and contribute significantly to improving their health, wellbeing and education.

Good nutrition is important for children under five to:

- Ensure they get the right amount of energy and nutrients that they need while their bodies are rapidly growing.
- Ensuring that they don't consume too much energy (calories) which may lead to weight gain or obesity and diet related illnesses in later life.
- Encourage them to eat a wide variety of foods and develop good dietary habits for later childhood and beyond.

Basic principles of a healthy lunchbox:

Children should be encouraged to eat a wide variety of foods from the four main groups. It is important to include different textures, which are essential for a child's development.

For children aged two years and above, the eat well guide (based on government guidance) shows what a balanced diet looks like. More information on the eat well guide can be found on the NHS website www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/the-eatwell-guide/

The Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance provides lots of information on which foods to provide, limit and avoid in your child's diet. Please use these guidelines as a basis for your child's healthy packed lunch:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-nutrition

In line with guidance, please do not include the following items in your child's packed lunch as they are high in saturated fat, salt and or sugar and does not form part of a balanced nutritious diet:

- Sugary drinks including flavoured water, we are a milk and tap water only setting.
- Foods that contain artificial sweeteners (they encourage to develop a taste for sweet foods)
- Cakes and pastries (e.g. sausage rolls and pain au chocolate)
- Crisps
- Chocolate spread, chocolate coated biscuits, chocolate bars or sweets n
- Processed meat products such as sausages, bacon and peperami

- Sweetened yoghurts, all yogurts provided for children must be in pots that require a spoon to eat. Yoghurts in tubes designed to be sucked can enhance tooth decay.
- Popcorn, popcorn is not recommended for any child under the age of five as it is a choking hazard
- Items that contain nuts as they can trigger a severe allergic reaction in some children.
- Leftover takeaway/fast food
- Any form of jelly sweet including fruit winders, Yoyo bear bars and fruity drops.

We are a water and milk only setting, water is readily available throughout the day.

As we have an obligation to ensure our children are provided with balanced and nutritious meals, we will monitor packed lunches to ensure they meet our policy. If packed lunches don't meet our guidelines, we will send a leaflet home in your child's packed lunch box and discuss this with you.

Allergens and food safety:

Parents and carers must notify us of any dietary requirements, food allergies and intolerances before your child begins at Acorn Childcare Centre. This will enable us to make sure all staff are aware of your child's needs and develop an appropriate allergy action plan.

Please ensure all food provided from home is prepared safely to avoid choking hazards. Children can choke on any food, but it is important to take steps to reduce the risk. Here is some useful information to help you:

- Remove any stones and pips from fruit before serving
- Cut small round foods, like grapes, strawberries and cherry tomatoes lengthways and into quarters
- Cut large fruit and vegetables (such as carrot and apple) and remove the skins when first given to babies from 6 months
- Sausages should be avoided due to their high salt content
- Remove bones from fish and meat
- Do not give whole nuts to children under the age of five years old
- Do not give whole seeds to children under the age of five years old
- Cut cheese into strips rather than chunks
- White bread can form a doughy ball in the throat, consider wholemeal or toasted bread and for very young children cut all types of bread into strips

- Do not give popcorn as a snack
- Do not give children marshmallows or jelly cubes from the packet either to eat or as part of messy play activities as they can get stuck in the throat
- Do not give children hard sweets

As we do not have facilities to refrigerate packed lunches brought from home, we recommend that they be sent in an insulated lunch bag that contains an ice pack to ensure food is kept cool, particularly in the summer months. We are unable to cool or heat food for children aged two or above, so please ensure all packed lunches are ready to eat items, food flasks containing food warmed at home are acceptable.

For health and safety reasons we are unable to reheat home cooked food provided for under twos that contains chicken or rice. We are happy for you to heat the food at home and use a hot food flask.

Please clearly label your child's lunchbox or bag with their name

This policy was adopted on	Signed on behalf of the nursery	Date for review
<i>September 2025</i>		<i>September 2026</i>