



Weaning policy

September 2025-September 2026

At Acorn Childcare Centre we are committed to providing a happy, healthy and nurturing environment for all our children to continue their weaning journey. 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 weaning 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.

Latest guidance in the NHS better start for life campaign recommends babies should be ready to begin the process of weaning around the age of 6months. Breast milk and first infant formula provide all the nutrients and energy that a baby's needs in their first 6months. Limiting babies to breast milk/formula in those first 6months gives the baby time to develop so they can fully cope with solid food.

Whilst we understand that it is advice the weaning process is best delayed until a baby is 6months old we will however work in partnership with parents who decide to begin the process before the 6month mark.

Starting the weaning process at 6months may mean that the baby may be able to go straight to having lumpy or mashed food and finger food rather than pureed as their mouths are more able to move food around to aid the chewing process.

There are three clear signs to look out for that will indicate to you that the baby is ready to begin the weaning process:

- Maintain a sitting position

- Fully coordinate eyes, hands and mouths. This will indicate they are able to pick up their food, examine it and then guide it into their mouths.
- The ability to swallow food without spitting it out.

Common behaviours seen in babies that are often confused with being 'weaning ready' wanting extra milk feeds including through the night and chewing hands and fists.

Drinking water will not be introduced to babies until they have begun the weaning process. Water will be provided in free flow cups without a valve as these are proven to be the best for dental hygiene.

Formula fed babies under the age of 6 months may take small sips of freshly boiled cool water during the warmer summer months.

Whilst babies are going through the weaning process, practitioners will ensure children are fully sat up right in suitable chairs with 3-point harnesses to ensure they remain safe and secure during mealtimes, chairs used for weaning usually have lap trays attached to offer the baby easier access to their food so they can feed themselves. A combination of self-feeding and adult led feeding will be used so babies are able to develop their hand eye coordination. Babies will be given soft plastic or rubber spoons and encouraged to self-feed.

All equipment used for weaning babies including bowls, cutlery and food pots are fully sterilised until the child has reached the age of 12 months.

It is common for babies who are weaning to take time to get used to new foods, it can take up to 10 tries of a food for the baby get used to the taste and texture. Practitioners will persist with foods even if the baby appears to not like it.

Shop bought baby food jars and pouches

Shop bought baby food in jars, pouches and trays offer a convenient solution to feeding children although it is recommended that they are only used occasionally as they are very often all the same texture and consistency and doesn't offer a varied range of texture. Shop purchased baby food can also be high in sugar and salt and lead to an increase in tooth decay.

Here at Acorn Childcare Centre parents can provide lunchboxes for children and babies, these can include shop bought baby food. We also allow parents to provide 'leftovers' that practitioners will reheat, however we do stipulate that the leftover food does not contain chicken or rice. Practitioners will ensure all food that is reheated reaches a minimum internal core temperature of 75°C but is then safely cooled down ready for baby to eat. Here at Acorn Childcare Centre when it comes to the light tea, we provide for the children at 3:30pm, Practitioners will use a combination of homemade weaning food and finger food. Working in partnership we encourage parents to share meal plans from home so we can trial them in the nursery too.

Children who bring tube style yoghurts in their lunch boxes will be encouraged to eat these using a spoon as sucking fruit purees and yoghurts directly into mouths has been proven to have a negative effect on oral health.

Nutrition during the weaning process

Homemade food prepared by practitioners to use during the weaning process will be vegetable based with beans and pulses and pasta added to offer a nutritious meal. Here at Acorn Childcare Centre, we have adopted a food sustainability approach to baby weaning, whereby we utilise the community food hub that aims to reduce commercial food waste by offering it free to the community. Food prepared for weaning very much depends on the seasonal produce on offer on a weekly basis. It is recommended that it is best to start the weaning process introducing bitter or less sweet vegetables first which helps broaden their palate.

As a setting we will never add sugar or salt to any food prepared for the children here onsite.

Pureed fruit pouches, jars and flavoured yoghurts are not recommended for children due to the possible high sugar content, here at Acorn Childcare Centre we will only provide plain Greek yoghurt and homemade fruit purees so that we can guarantee that the sugar content is only naturally occurring sugar.

We do not provide children with shop bought snacks such as puffed wheat style crisps, rusks, biscotti style biscuits for under the age of 12 months as it is not recommended for children of this age.

Breast fed babies

Here at Acorn Childcare Centre, we understand that Mothers nursing their children is a precious time for both Mother and baby and are happy to set aside a quiet space should a mother wish to pop in to Nursery throughout the day. We are also happy to store frozen expressed milk ready for our Practitioners to use throughout the day.

For further information on weaning and nutrition in the Early Years please visit

<https://www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/>

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

<https://www.nhs.uk/baby/weaning-and-feeding/babys-first-solid-foods/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/>

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