

Fully Funded Days - Food from Home Policy

Aim of this policy

This policy covers the 10hr (8am–6pm) and 5hr (8am–1pm or 1pm–6pm) funded days for families who wish to provide food from home alongside government funding. Please refer to the funding policy for details. Its purpose is to ensure all home-supplied food at nursery is nutritious, safe, and allergy-aware to support children's health and development.

At **Lancaster Lodge Childcare Ltd** we are committed to children eating healthy, nutritious and balanced meals and snacks which meet individual needs and requirements, following the Department for Education nutrition guidance.

This policy supports the health, safety and well-being of all children in our care and reflects the requirements of our insurers.

Parents opting out of meal charges on fully funded days must supply food for their child's day that meets our policy. If the food supplied does not meet this policy or poses a risk to allergens and choking this food will not be given to the child and the food items will be sent home. If parents consistently provide unsuitable food, we will arrange a discussion to resolve the issue together to maintain our standards.

If parents do not provide food as expected and in line with this policy, the child will receive the full nursery menu and the parents will be charged.

Please provide healthy meals for your child at nursery. To meet statutory welfare requirements, we avoid foods high in saturated fat, salt, and sugar, as these can impact children's health and development. Please ensure food from home matches our nutritious standards, so children get consistent messages about healthy eating.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Nutrition and mealtimes policy, the Allergies and allergic reactions policy and the Caring for babies and toddlers policy (for babies who are not yet weaned).

Our facilities

- Parents must provide fully labelled insulated lunch boxes and ice packs as we are unable to refrigerate food from home.
- Food from home will be kept in your child's bag on their peg
- We will not be providing cooking or reheating services for children when food is brought in from home on funded days.
- We ensure that fresh, plain tap water is always readily available
- We operate a strict nut free environment
- We work with parents to ensure that food from home abide by the standards listed below

Food from home guidelines

All food for the day must be brought in on a daily basis to ensure freshness. All food that is brought in from home needs to be ready to eat with no preparation at nursery required. Alongside this consideration needs to be made regarding perishable items that may be expected to be consumed later in the day. As this food may be unrefrigerated beyond the 4hr recommended limit.

Recommendations are that after four hours at temperatures above 8°C, bacteria risk rises and food may be unsafe. During very hot weather, perishable food in particular must be eaten within two hours of removing it from the fridge.

If at the mealtime a perishable or high-risk food item is no longer cold, we will be unable to give this to your child in accordance with food safety. This is why insulated lunch boxes/bags and ice packs are essential to ensure all food is kept cold and safe for the children to consume. If this situation occurs, we will provide a nursery meal if this is not possible the parents will be contacted.

It is the responsibility of the parents to clearly label the meals for when they are intended. For example, separating the meals into individual labelled sandwich/freezer bags within the lunchbox so staff can identify which food to provide the child with at each mealtime.

It is recommended that food from home should include the following on a daily basis:

- A portion of breakfast cereal
- A AM snack of fresh fruit (fully prepared)
- A PM snack of a ready to eat carbohydrate (rice cake, cracker, breadstick, fruit loaf etc)
- At least one portion of fresh fruit or vegetables to be consumed at lunchtime. All mentioned should be expected to be consumed cold.
- At least one portion of fresh fruit or vegetables to be consumed at teatime. All mentioned should be expected to be consumed cold.
- A starchy food for energy and concentration, e.g. any bread, wrap, chapatti, pasta, rice, noodles, potatoes. All mentioned should be expected to be consumed cold.
- Meat, fish, eggs or another plant-based source of iron and protein, e.g. lentils, kidney beans, chickpeas, hummus. All mentioned should be expected to be consumed cold.
- Dairy or dairy alternative food, e.g. cheese, plain unsweetened yoghurt or fromage frais.

Recommended non-perishable foods to bring from home daily for teatime include:

- Savory snacks – crackers, rice cakes, oatcakes, breadsticks
- Fruits – Banana (uncut fruit that can be peeled by the child or eat it as it is)
- Sweeter options – Nut free cereal bar, malt loaf

To reduce risks of allergens or choking, the following items must NOT be included:

- Nuts – whole nuts, nut products including those which use nuts in preparation (for example, nut oil)

- Any drinks. Fresh water is provided for all children, and alternative drinks will not be served to the children
- Popcorn, chewing gum, marshmallows, raw jelly cubes, sweets (boiled, hard, gooey or sticky).

Food preparation requirements

- See the Food Standards Agency 'Early years food choking hazards' advice for preparing food for babies and children under five years olds: <https://tinyurl.com/EYchokinghazards>
- All food provided from home must be fully prepared and ready to eat
- To reduce choking risks, the following must be followed:
 - Hard pips or stones removed from fruit; consider removing the skin for very young children
 - Small round fruits (such as grapes, cherry tomatoes, cherries, berries) cut into quarters lengthways
 - Fresh fruit to be fully prepared and cut into thin slices to reduce choking risk
 - Vegetables such as carrots, cucumber and celery cut into narrow batons
 - Sausages/hot dogs peeled and cut into short thin strips
 - Meat/fish deboned and cut into thin strips
 - Cheese grated or cut into short strips.
- Use easy-to-open containers/packaging where possible, as where appropriate children will be expected to do this themselves to promote your child's independence
- Ensure all food is within the use-by date
- Ensure all lunchboxes/ice packs/containers/bags are clearly marked with your child's name

Management of food safety, allergies and dietary needs

- All staff are aware of children with food allergies or intolerances and individual dietary requirements are respected. Information from parents is shared with staff.
- Where appropriate, we will carry out a risk assessment in the case of known allergies and work alongside parents to put into place an individual dietary/allergy plan for their child. This will be regularly reviewed and any changes shared with all staff
- All children's food containers must be clearly labelled. Containers and their contents will be checked before use to avoid allergen and choking risks.
- We give careful consideration to seating to avoid cross contamination of food from child to child
- Children will always be within sight and hearing of a member of staff while eating and, where possible, an adult will sit facing children while they eat, to minimise risks from choking and allergic reactions. In addition, a member of staff with a full and valid paediatric first aid certificate will be in the room.
- At each meal and snack time, we ensure all staff are responsible for checking that the food being provided meets all the requirements for each child
- Where appropriate, discussions will also take place with children about allergies and potential risks to make them aware of the dangers of sharing certain foods

- Staff show sensitivity towards children's diets and allergies. They do not use a child's diet or allergy as a label for the child, or make a child feel singled out because of their diet or allergy
- Cultural differences in eating habits are respected.
- All packaging and rubbish will be sent home for disposal.

Our policy is reviewed on a regular basis.

This policy was adopted on	Signed on behalf of the nursery	Date for review
March 2026	C A Underwood	March 2027