

Innsworth Preschool Food and Nutrition Policy

Last Updated: 1st January 2026

1. Purpose and Scope

1.1 Overview: This policy sets out the framework for the provision and management of all food and drink at Innsworth Preschool.

1.2 Objective: Its purpose is to ensure that every child receives safe, healthy, and nutritious food in a hygienic environment, and to protect children and staff with severe, life-threatening allergies. Our procedures are not a matter of preference; they are the direct result of our legal duties to keep children safe.

2. Key Definitions

To ensure clarity and consistency across our policies (including the Fees Schedule and Parent-Provider Agreement), the following terms apply:

- **Meals (Full Nourishment Plan):** The optional, paid in-house meal service covering Breakfast, Snack, Hot Lunch, and Afternoon Tea.
- **Packed Lunch:** Food provided by parents who have opted out of the in-house meal service.
- **Emergency Meal:** A safety intervention meal provided by the setting when a Packed Lunch is deemed unsafe or non-compliant.
- **Restricted Allergen List (Cohort-Specific):** The list of ingredients currently prohibited in the setting based on the specific medical needs of attending children and the Allergy Risk Assessment.

3. Legal and Statutory Framework

3.1 Compliance: This policy is underpinned by and ensures full compliance with:

- The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS): specifically the Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements (Food and Drink).
- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974: our duty to identify risks and protect health.
- The Equality Act 2010: recognising severe allergies as a potential disability requiring reasonable adjustments.
- The Food Safety Act 1990 & Food Information Regulations 2014: ensuring accurate allergen information and safe handling.
- DfE Guidance: We have regard to DfE early education and childcare statutory guidance on charging for meals/consumables and optional extras, and we operate within EYFS welfare requirements.

4. Our Recommended Pathway: In-House Meal Service

4.1 The Service: To ensure the highest standards of safety and nutrition, we provide an in-house Meal Service (Full Nourishment Plan).

- **Safety:** Meals are prepared in our dedicated, allergen-controlled kitchen, offering the highest practicable level of protection against cross-contamination.

- **Recommendation:** Our strong recommendation is to use the Meal Service, as it is the safest and simplest way to ensure your child's nutritional needs are met without the logistical burden of packed lunches.

5. Food in the Curriculum: The Farm School Experience

As part of our curriculum, children participate in the "Farm School Experience," involving growing, harvesting, handling, and cooking food. We manage the specific risks as follows:

5.1 "Seed to Spoon" (Horticulture): Children learn to grow and harvest produce.

- **Hygiene:** Hand-washing is mandatory immediately after gardening sessions and before any eating.
- **Safety:** Children are taught never to eat produce directly from the plant without permission. All harvested produce is washed thoroughly using potable water in designated food-prep sinks before consumption.

5.2 "Animal Husbandry" (Egg Collection): To prevent Salmonella and zoonotic infections:

- **Handling:** Eggs are collected using designated baskets/trays.
- **Hygiene:** Children must wash hands with soap and warm water immediately after leaving the animal enclosure.
- **Consumption:** Eggs collected by children are taken to the kitchen for cooking/storage. They are never consumed raw.

5.3 "Mini Food Tech" (Cooking):

- **Allergens:** All ingredients used in cooking activities are subject to the same strict allergen checks as our main kitchen.
- **Safety:** Activities involving heat or sharp tools are led by staff and risk-assessed; children participate in safe, age-appropriate steps under direct supervision.

6. Parent-Provided Food (Packed Lunches)

6.1 Opting Out: In line with funding rules, parents may opt out of the meal service. By choosing this option, you act as the primary food provider and assume **primary responsibility** for compliance with the safety standards below.

- **Dietary Needs:** All dietary needs, allergies, and medication requirements are managed under the **Allergy Management Policy** and the child's IHCP.

6.2 Restricted Allergens (Cohort-Specific): Packed lunches must comply with the current Prohibited Items / Restricted Allergen List set out in the **Allergy Management Policy** and cohort risk assessment.

- **Current Restrictions:** Parent-provided packed lunches must be strictly free from **Nuts, Peanuts, and Sesame** (including "may contain" warnings).
- **Review:** This list is reviewed termly based on the medical needs of the children currently attending. If a child with a severe airborne allergy joins (e.g. to egg or dairy), we reserve the right to add items to this restricted list on safety grounds. Parents will be notified in writing.

6.3 Healthy Eating Standards: In line with the EYFS, parents must provide a healthy, balanced meal.

- **Prohibited Items:** Fizzy drinks, energy drinks, sweets, chocolate bars, and chewing gum.
- **Limited Items:** Cakes and biscuits should be occasional only.

- **Adjustments:** We will take account of allergies, sensory needs, and Individual Healthcare Plans (Equality Act reasonable adjustments).
- **Suitability:** The Manager's decision on immediate food safety suitability applies for that session and will be recorded with reasons. Parents may request a review meeting.

6.4 Food Storage (External Facility): To comply with fire safety and space constraints, lunch bags are stored in our designated external storage facility.

- **Safety:** The storage area is pest-controlled, weather-protected, and kept closed/secured.
- **Temperature:** We do not provide refrigeration. Parents **must** provide a suitable insulated cool bag with a **frozen ice pack** every day to ensure food remains safe. Staff may refuse items that are warm, leaking, or unsafe.

6.5 Choking Prevention: All food items that could pose a choking hazard must be prepared at home to safety standards. We follow current NHS/UKHSA safer eating guidance and will apply additional controls for younger children.

- **Requirement:** Grapes, cherry tomatoes, blueberries, olives, and sausages must be cut lengthways into quarters (or smaller where appropriate).
- **Prohibition:** Whole round foods are strictly prohibited.

7. Inspection and Enforcement

7.1 Checks: Packed lunches may be checked at drop-off and/or before eating.

7.2 Non-Compliance Procedure: If an item is non-compliant (e.g. contains nuts, whole grapes, or is unsafe/warm):

- **Rectification:** You will be contacted to return immediately to rectify it (e.g. bring a safe replacement). We expect a replacement within **one hour** where practicable.
- **Emergency Meal:** If you are unable to return within this time, we will provide an Emergency Meal to ensure your child does not go hungry. Emergency meals are only provided where needed to protect welfare. Charges apply only where parents have pre-authorised this in the Enrolment Form/Parent Agreement and are set out in the Fees Schedule.
- **Refusal:** If we cannot safely provide an emergency meal due to allergies/dietary restrictions, we may require immediate collection of the child.
- **Disposal:** Unsafe items will be removed and returned to you at collection.

7.3 Consequences: Repeated or serious breaches will trigger a recorded safety review and may lead to refusal of entry for that session and/or escalation under the **Suspension and Termination of Place Policy**.

8. Monitoring and Review

8.1 Review: This policy is reviewed annually or following any serious incident or change in legislation.

