Circadian Nest Nursery

Food and Drink Policy

Reviewed: 20 September 2026 · Next review due: 20 September 2027

At Circadian Nest Nursery we believe that food is an important part of a child's day — both for growth and development, and as a social and cultural experience. Lunches are provided from home by parents and carers; the nursery provides breakfast (around 9:30am), an afternoon snack (around 3:00pm) and fresh drinking water, and a warm, unhurried mealtime environment. This policy sits alongside our Packed Lunch Policy and Allergies and Allergic Reactions Policy.

Packed lunches from home

The Packed Lunch Policy sets out the nutritional expectations, foods to avoid (including choking hazards), storage and reheating arrangements, and the procedure where a lunch does not meet the expected standards. Staff may remove food items that present an allergen or choking risk in line with that policy, but will not otherwise add to or alter a child's lunch without parental agreement.

Breakfast and snacks provided by the nursery

- Breakfast is served at around 9:30am and an afternoon snack at around 3:00pm each day.
- Breakfast and snacks are simple, healthy and age-appropriate: typically fresh fruit, vegetable sticks, plain crackers, breadsticks, rice cakes, cheese or yoghurt.
- Whole or chopped grapes, whole nuts, popcorn, marshmallows and other known choking hazards are never offered.
- Allergen information for breakfast and every snack is available in the kitchen and displayed at the serving point.

Drinks

- Fresh drinking water is available to all children at all times from a clearly signed water station.
- Children are encouraged to drink frequently, especially in warm weather and after physical activity.
- Milk is offered with snacks (full-fat cow's milk or an appropriate alternative agreed with parents).

- Squash, fruit juice and other sugary drinks are not offered.

Children's cups, beakers and bottles

Children drink from the nursery's own open cups, which have no lids, seals or valves. Parents may instead send a named open cup, free-flow cup or water bottle from home.

- We ask families not to send cups with non-spill valves, such as 360-style cups. These designs can have hidden seals that are easily missed when cleaning, and the NHS recommends open or free-flow cups for young children.
- Cups and bottles from home go home at the end of each day. If a child's cup is left at home, they are given one of the nursery's open cups.
- Where a parent asks for a cup or bottle to be kept at nursery, a member of staff checks it on arrival for removable parts (lids, seals, valves, straws and handles) and asks the parent for the manufacturer's cleaning instructions or details of any removable parts. Any special instructions are recorded and shared with the room team.
- Every cup or bottle washed at nursery is fully taken apart each time it is washed, including seals and valves, and cleaned in hot soapy water with a clean brush, following the manufacturer's instructions (for example, some cups must not be boiled or steam sterilised).
- Parts are air-dried separately on a drying rack and are not put back together until completely dry. Cups kept at nursery are stored taken apart, in a clean, covered container labelled with the child's name.
- Before each use, staff check every part for mould, staining, residue or damage. A cup showing any of these is not used: it is set aside and returned to the parent, the child is given a nursery cup, the parent is told the same day, and the Nursery Manager is informed so the matter can be recorded.
- Milk sent from home is labelled with the child's name and stored in the fridge on arrival. Milk left in a cup after a drink is thrown away and not offered again, and any unused milk is discarded at the end of the day.
- Cup and bottle cleaning is checked daily on the Daily Kitchen Risk Assessment Checklist.

Babies and infant feeding

Feeds for babies under 12 months (breastmilk or formula) are brought from home, clearly labelled with the child's name and the date of expression or preparation. Bottles are stored in the fridge and warmed as needed using a bottle warmer,

following NHS guidance on safe preparation and storage. Breastfeeding parents are welcome to feed their baby on the premises at any time. Where weaning foods are provided from home, parents supply each day's food in a labelled container, and staff assist the child at mealtimes.

Allergies, intolerances and special diets

An up-to-date allergy and dietary list is cross-referenced to each child's photo and displayed in every room and the snack serving area. Parents are asked to inform the nursery of any allergy, intolerance, cultural or religious requirement, or parental preference; we will do everything reasonably possible to accommodate these in our snack and drink provision, and we liaise with parents on any food-related risk arising from their child's packed lunch. See our Allergies and Allergic Reactions Policy for the full procedure.

Mealtimes

Lunchtimes are social occasions. Children eat their packed lunches with their key person and peers at a table. Staff sit with the children, model good table manners and conversation, and encourage children to eat at their own pace. Children are never rushed, pressured or bribed, and leftover food is sent home in the lunchbox so parents can see what their child has eaten.

Hygiene

- Children wash their hands before all snacks and lunches, and after using the toilet.
- Tables are cleaned before and after every meal with food-safe sanitiser.
- Staff who handle food directly (serving snacks, supporting babies) wash their hands and wear disposable gloves where appropriate.
- Packed lunches are stored in the fridge on arrival and returned to the lunchbox at the end of lunch.

Promoting healthy choices

We promote healthy food and drink as part of our curriculum. Children help to prepare their snacks where practical, learn about where food comes from, and grow herbs and vegetables in the garden in season. We share information with parents

about the EYFS nutrition guidance and suggest practical ideas for a healthy packed lunch.

Safeguarding and food

Concerns about a child's eating, weight, hunger, or the consistent content or quantity of their packed lunch are treated sensitively and discussed with parents at the first opportunity. Where the pattern raises a safeguarding concern, it is referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Samina Farooq) in line with our Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy.

Related policies

- Packed Lunch Policy
- Allergies and Allergic Reactions Policy
- Sickness and Illness Policy
- Medication Policy

Promoting good oral health

Good oral health is part of children's overall health and wellbeing, and we promote it through our food, drink and daily routines:

- We offer only water and milk to drink; squash, fruit juice and other sugary drinks are not provided.
- We limit foods that are high in sugar and offer healthy, balanced meals and snacks.
- We talk with children about looking after their teeth and include oral health in our learning and everyday routines in age-appropriate ways.
- We share oral health messages with parents and encourage them to register their child with an NHS dentist.

Adopted (initial)	Reviewed	Next review	Signed on behalf of the nursery
1 February 2026	20 September 2026	20 September 2027	Suhail Farooq, Director