

## **1<sup>st</sup> Step Pre-school Ltd: Safer Eating Policy**

### **Our Commitment**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that children in our care are provided with a safe eating environment that supports healthy eating, minimises food-related risks, and ensures compliance with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, including the changes introduced in September 2025. We have regard to the 'Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance' and ensure that all food safety procedures are fully embedded in our day-to-day operations.

### **Health & Allergy Awareness**

We take food allergies and intolerances extremely seriously and have comprehensive systems in place to manage risk:

- Before your child starts, we'll ask you to share important information about your child's dietary needs, including allergies, intolerances, cultural or religious food preferences, and any medical conditions. This information will be shared with all staff involved in the preparation and handling of food
- Responsibility: At each mealtime and snack time, practitioners are clear about who is responsible for checking that the food being provided meets the requirements for each child
- Action Plans: For children with allergies, we'll create an individual Allergy Action Plan with your support (and healthcare professionals if needed). We will refer to the British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology
- Risk Assessment: A thorough risk assessment is carried out for children with food allergies, ensuring appropriate precautions are taken, including avoiding allergens in meals and snacks
- Ongoing Monitoring: Allergies and intolerances can develop over time. Please inform us of any changes immediately so we can update records, inform staff and keep your child safe
- Clear visual indicators are used such as:
  - Red plates/cups
  - Allergy information with child's name and restriction displayed (in food preparation and dining areas and where possible allocated to the child's seat)

### **Staff Training**

Staff will receive regular training in paediatric first aid, food safety, allergy management, and safe eating practices. This includes:

- Recognising signs of allergic reactions and anaphylaxis
- Administering emergency medication (e.g., EpiPen)
- The differences between allergies and intolerances
- Reading food labels for allergens
- Cross-contamination prevention
- Introduction of solid foods

### **Food Handling, Preparation, and Hygiene**

We ensure all staff involved in food handling and preparation follow strict hygiene protocols, including:

- Staff exhibiting signs of illness are prohibited from handling food
- All food preparation surfaces are cleaned before and after use with antibacterial spray
- Chopping boards, utensils, and equipment are thoroughly cleaned
- Hand hygiene is strictly observed — staff wash hands with soap and warm water before and after food preparation
- Food Hygiene training certificates are held by all relevant staff and regularly renewed
- All food will be stored at the correct temperature, in compliance with food safety regulations
- Safe Utensils and Equipment: All kitchen utensils and eating equipment will be safe and age appropriate for the children. Any broken or damaged items will be immediately replaced

## Safer Eating Practices

To minimise the risk of choking and ensure safe eating environments for young children, the following practices are implemented:

### Choking Hazards

- Staff will prepare food in a way to prevent choking and be vigilant to ensure foods sent in packed lunches have also been prepared safely
- Firm, spherical foods like grapes and cherry tomatoes must be sliced into quarters longways or segments
- Cylindrical foods such as cucumber, carrots and cocktail sausages must be cut lengthways into thin batons
- This guidance on food safety for young children includes advice on food and drink to avoid, how to reduce the risk of choking and links to other useful resources for early years settings
- If a child experiences a choking incident that requires intervention, staff will record details of where and how the child choked and parents and/or carers made aware
  - The records will be reviewed and risk assessed alongside other accidents / incidents at pre-school on a half-termly basis
  - Appropriate action will be taken to address any identified concerns

### Age-Appropriate Food Types:

- Foods will be served in a manner suitable for the child's developmental stage (e.g. food will be cut into small, manageable pieces for younger children)
  - Popcorn, marshmallows, jelly cubes and hard sweets are never permitted for children under 5

## Feeding Babies and Weaning Guidelines

We work closely with parents to support safe, responsive feeding routines for infants, including baby-led weaning.

### Questions we ask parents:

- Have lumps been introduced at home?
- Is your child following baby-led weaning or spoon-feeding?
- What foods have already been introduced?

Only a few pieces of food are served at a time to prevent overloading.

Children are not rushed — we allow adequate time for relaxed feeding.

## Healthy Eating and Nutrition

At 1<sup>st</sup> Step Pre-school Ltd, we believe that a healthy, balanced diet is essential for a child's physical and emotional development.

- We promote positive food experiences and will engage children in learning about food, nutrition, and healthy eating through age-appropriate activities and discussions
- Children are provided with healthy, balanced snacks and meals appropriate to their age and dietary needs
- Fresh drinking water is available to children throughout the day
- Cultural, religious, ethical, and medical dietary requirements are always respected and accommodated
- Parents are asked to inform us of any dietary requirements during registration.
  - Where dietary preferences are based on non-medical needs, parents may be asked to supply suitable alternatives in sealed, labelled packaging.

**Mealtime Environment:**

- Children will sit down in age-appropriate chairs. Babies will be safely seated in an appropriately sized low chair. Children will remain seated while eating and be given time to chew and swallow their food properly
- Distractions such as toys at the meal table are, wherever possible, discouraged
- All children are supervised during mealtimes and snack time. Children will be within sight and hearing of a member of staff whilst eating. Where possible, staff will sit facing children whilst they eat so they can be sure children are eating in a way to prevent choking and so they can prevent food sharing and be aware of any unexpected allergic reactions
- A paediatric first aid trained staff member is always present during meals
- Meals are social, enjoyable, and calm
- We encourage children to feed themselves when developmentally appropriate and give them time to explore new foods
- Food is never used as a reward or punishment

**Parent and Carer Involvement**

We believe that parents and carers play a key role in the nutritional care of their children. We encourage parents to share any concerns or preferences related to their child's diet, and we will maintain open lines of communication regarding food and mealtimes.

- **Special Occasions:** We love celebrating children's birthdays and occasions and will always make sure your child feels special on their big day. However, to keep all children safe from potential allergens and to comply with the latest guidance, we kindly ask that cakes, sweets, and birthday treats are not brought into the pre-school to share. Our team will celebrate in fun and creative ways, ensuring the day is memorable without the need for food-based treats.