



Packed Lunch Policy

This policy is in place for those who opt out of consumable charges for government fully funded places.

The aim of this policy

The aim of this policy is to ensure that all packed lunches brought from home and consumed at Dragonflies Ditcham, including during outings and trips, provide children with healthy, nutritious and balanced food to support their growth, development and overall wellbeing. This policy also aims to minimise the risk of food allergies, choking and food-related illness, and to ensure that all children are kept safe while eating.

At Dragonflies Ditcham, we are committed to promoting healthy eating and providing children with nutritious, balanced meals and snacks that meet their individual needs. Our approach is informed by current Department for Education nutrition guidance and relevant food safety recommendations.

This policy supports the health, safety and wellbeing of all children in our care and reflects the requirements of our insurance arrangements.

Parents and carers are asked to ensure that packed lunches provided for their children comply fully with this policy. Where a food item presents a significant allergen, choking or other safety risk, staff reserve the right to remove the item and discuss this with the parent or carer. Where packed lunches regularly do not meet the requirements of this policy, parents or carers will be invited to discuss the concerns with the nursery. Our aim will always be to work collaboratively with families to identify practical solutions and ensure the policy is consistently followed.

Our Daily Packed Lunch & Allergen Declaration is to be completed by the parent/carer each day that food is brought into the nursery.

Healthy Eating

We are required to support you with information to help you provide healthy meals for your child to bring to nursery. To meet our statutory welfare requirements, we avoid foods which are high in saturated fat, salt, and sugar as these are proven to negatively affect children's health, development and overall well-being. We wish for food brought from home to align with the healthy and nutritious meals we provide, so children are receiving 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).



Dragonflies Ditcham is committed to helping children develop positive attitudes towards healthy eating from an early age.

In line with statutory welfare requirements and current nutritional guidance, we encourage foods that are nutritious and avoid foods that are high in saturated fat, salt and free sugars. Regular consumption of these foods can have a negative impact on children's health and development.

We aim for food brought from home to complement the healthy and nutritious meals and snacks provided by the nursery. This ensures that children receive consistent messages about healthy eating both at home and at nursery.

Parents and carers are encouraged to use the following guidance when preparing packed lunches:

- **NHS Healthier Families – Healthier Lunchboxes:**
<https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes/>
- **Food for Life – Packed Lunches Guidance:**
<https://bit.ly/4t3Jb9d>

This policy should be read alongside the nursery's **Nutrition and Mealtimes Policy**, **Allergies and Allergic Reactions Policy**, and **Caring for Babies and Toddlers Policy**, particularly in relation to babies who have not yet been weaned.

Our facilities

- We operate a 'nut aware' environment
- We provide facilities for children bringing in packed lunches
- We ensure that fresh, tap water is always readily available
- We work with parents to ensure that packed lunches abide by the standards listed below
- We provide parents with guidelines for nutritious content and signpost to the NHS packed lunch guidance.
- We request parents use insulated lunch boxes and ice packs
- We do not provide *cooking/*reheating services for children's packed lunches.

Packed lunch guidelines and Food Labelling

With the exception of raw fruit and vegetables, all foods containing allergens should be provided in their original packaging wherever possible, with allergen information clearly visible.

All food provided for the day should be brought into nursery on a daily basis. This helps to ensure freshness and supports safe food storage.

It is recommended that packed lunches should include the following on a daily basis:

- A minimum of two portions of fruit or vegetables



- A starchy food for energy and concentration, e.g. any bread, wrap, chapatti, pasta, rice, noodles, potatoes
- Meat, fish, eggs or another plant-based source of iron and protein, e.g. lentils, kidney beans, chickpeas, hummus or any other suitable plant-based protein sources
- Dairy or dairy alternative food, e.g. cheese, plain unsweetened yoghurt

Foods and Drinks That Must Not Be Included

*To reduce the risk of allergic reactions, choking and other food-related risks, the following must **not** be included in packed lunches:*

- **Nuts**, including whole nuts, nut products and foods prepared using nuts or nut oils.
- Drinks other than plain water. Fresh drinking water is provided for all children, and alternative drinks will not be served.
- Flavoured dried rice, pasta or noodle products, including packets or pots of instant noodles, pasta or rice.
- Popcorn, chewing gum, marshmallows, raw jelly cubes, sweets (boiled, hard, gooey or sticky).

Parents and carers should also consider the ingredients and allergen information of all packaged foods before placing them in their child's lunch box.

Food Preparation and Choking Prevention

Dragonflies Ditcham takes children's safety during mealtimes very seriously.

Parents and carers should follow current **Food Standards Agency guidance on choking hazards for babies and young children** when preparing food for nursery.

Particular care should be taken to prepare foods in a way that reduces the risk of choking, parents and carers should ensure that:

- Hard pips and stones are removed from fruit.
- The skin is removed from fruit where appropriate for younger children.
- Small round foods, such as grapes, cherry tomatoes, cherries and similar fruits, are cut into quarters lengthways.
- Carrots, cucumber, celery and similar vegetables are cut into narrow batons.
- Sausages and hot dogs are peeled and cut into short, thin strips.
- Meat and fish are free from bones and cut into thin, manageable strips.
- Cheese is grated or cut into short strips.
- Food is prepared in an age-appropriate manner.

Parents and carers should refer to the Food Standards Agency's guidance for further information:

<https://tinyurl.com/EYchokinghazards>



Lunch Boxes and Equipment

To encourage children's independence and support safe mealtimes:

- Parents and carers should use containers and packaging that children can open independently where appropriate.
- All lunch boxes, containers and bags must be clearly labelled with the child's name.
- All food must be within its use-by date.
- Parents and carers should provide any cutlery their child requires, such as a spoon or fork.
- Dragonflies Ditcham will keep a small supply of spare cutlery available where required.
- Lunch boxes should be suitable for keeping food cool and should be used with an appropriate ice pack where necessary.

Management of food safety, allergies and dietary needs

Dragonflies Ditcham recognises that children may have allergies, intolerances, medical dietary requirements or dietary preferences linked to cultural or family practices.

We are committed to managing these requirements sensitively and safely.

- All staff are aware of children with food allergies or intolerances, and individual dietary requirements are respected. Information from parents is shared with staff involved in preparing and serving food
- Where appropriate, the nursery will complete an individual risk assessment and work with parents or carers to develop an individual dietary/allergy plan.
- Individual plans will be reviewed regularly and updated whenever a child's needs or circumstances change.
- Children's lunch boxes will be reviewed prior to giving the contents to the children to manage any risks from potential allergens or choking hazards
- Staff will carefully consider children's seating arrangements to reduce the risk of food being shared or cross-contamination occurring.
- 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, where possible
- At each meal and snack time, we ensure a nominated practitioner is responsible for checking that the food being provided meets all the requirements for each child
- Children will not be permitted to share food from their lunch boxes with other children. *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.

Dragonflies Ditcham recognises that effective management of children's nutrition, allergies and food safety requires a positive partnership between the nursery and families.

This policy has been developed in partnership with parents, carers, staff and, where appropriate, the children attending Dragonflies Ditcham.

It will be reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains current, effective and consistent with relevant legislation, statutory guidance, food safety recommendations and the needs of the children attending the nursery.

This policy was adopted on	Signed on behalf of the nursery	Date for review
<i>September 2026</i>	Francesca Ward	<i>September 2027</i>

DAILY PACKED LUNCH & ALLERGEN DECLARATION

To be completed by the parent/carer each day that food is brought into the nursery

Child's name:		Date:	
Parent/carer:		Room:	

FOOD PROVIDED TODAY

Please list every food and drink item provided today. For packaged foods, please give the product/brand where possible. Packed lunches must be ready to eat: the nursery will not heat or reheat food brought from home.

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ALLERGEN INFORMATION

Tick every allergen knowingly contained in the food or drink provided today, including allergens within manufactured ingredients/products.

☐ Celery	☐ Cereals containing gluten	☐ Crustaceans	☐ Eggs	☐ Fish	☐ Lupin	☐ Milk
☐ Molluscs	☐ Mustard	☐ Peanuts	☐ Sesame	☐ Soya	☐ Sulphur dioxide/sulphites	☐ Tree nuts

Other relevant dietary information / details of allergens:

PEANUTS & TREE NUTS

- ☐ I confirm that I have not knowingly included peanuts or tree nuts in my child's packed lunch or knowingly used them as an ingredient when preparing the food.
- ☐ I am unable to give this confirmation and have informed a member of nursery management.

PARENT/CARER DECLARATION

- I confirm that the information I have provided above is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge and relates to all food and drink I have provided for my child today.
- I understand that accurate information about the contents and allergens in food brought into the nursery is important for the safety of my child and other children, including children who may have serious or life-threatening food allergies.
- I understand that inaccurate or incomplete information could expose my child or another child with a food allergy to serious harm.
- I agree not to add, substitute or change any food or drink after completing this declaration without informing a member of nursery staff.
- I understand that the nursery may decide not to serve an item where its contents or allergen information cannot be established, or where the nursery considers that serving it could present an unacceptable safety risk.
- I understand that if food provided is considered unsuitable for the nursery to serve, or if its contents do not match the information declared on this form, the nursery will provide my child with a suitable nursery meal and I will be charged the nursery's applicable meal charge.
- I understand that the nursery will not heat or reheat food brought from home. Any packed lunch provided must therefore be suitable and safe to eat without heating.

Signed:		Time:	
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NURSERY RECEIVING CHECK

Received by:		Time:	
Checks:	☐ Lunch matched to declaration ☐ Child identified ☐ Concerns referred to manager		

Important: This declaration supports the nursery's food and allergen risk-management arrangements. It does not replace the nursery's own checks, individual allergy/healthcare plans, emergency procedures or staff responsibilities.