4.5 Safer Eating Policy

Statement of Intent

St Mary's Nursery is committed to providing a safe, calm, healthy and enjoyable eating experience for every child.

We recognise that children aged 2–4 years are developing their eating skills and may be at increased risk of choking. We therefore consider safe eating practices, appropriate food preparation, effective supervision, allergy management and appropriate emergency procedures to be essential.

We work in partnership with parents and carers to encourage healthy eating, promote positive mealtime experiences and ensure that food brought into the nursery is suitable and safely prepared for young children.

St Mary's Nursery operates as a **nut-free setting**. Procedures are in place to minimise the risks associated with choking, allergies and unsuitable foods during all meals and snack times.

Lunch Arrangements

Children eat lunch together in a relaxed, social and supervised environment. Appropriate staff-to-child ratios are maintained throughout lunchtime.

All children remain seated while eating and are closely supervised by staff.

Staff encourage children to:

- Eat slowly.
- Take small bites.
- Chew food thoroughly before swallowing.
- Avoid talking with food in their mouths.
- Drink regularly.
- Develop safe and appropriate eating habits.

- Become increasingly independent while eating safely.

Children are never left unattended while eating.

Healthy Packed Lunches

Parents and carers are responsible for providing a healthy packed lunch that meets their child's nutritional needs.

Packed lunches should include a balance of foods from the main food groups and may include:

- Sandwiches, wraps, pasta or rice.
- Fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Dairy products or suitable alternatives.
- Protein foods such as meat, fish, eggs or pulses.
- Water or another suitable drink.

Parents and carers are encouraged to limit foods that are high in sugar, salt and saturated fat.

The nursery encourages families to provide nutritious foods that support children's health, development and wellbeing.

Prohibited Foods

To support children's health, reduce choking risks and maintain our nut-free environment, certain foods are not permitted at St Mary's Nursery.

Parents and carers must not provide:

Nuts and Nut Products

- Peanuts.

- Tree nuts.
- Nut butters.
- Products containing nuts.

Parents and carers are asked to check food labels carefully before providing food for children.

Foods Not Permitted for Health or Safety Reasons

The following foods and drinks are also not permitted:

- Popcorn.
- Chewing gum.
- Sweets intended as confectionery.
- Energy drinks.
- Fizzy drinks.
- High-sugar foods, including iced cakes, iced biscuits, Party Rings and similar highly sugary biscuits or confectionery-style snacks.
- Foods containing excessive amounts of added sugar that are not considered suitable for a healthy nursery lunch or snack.

The nursery may identify additional foods as unsuitable where they present a choking, allergy, nutritional or other safety risk.

Where possible, families are encouraged to choose healthier alternatives such as fresh fruit, vegetables, sandwiches, wraps, plain crackers, breadsticks and other nutritious foods suitable for young children.

Lunch Box Checks

Before children begin eating, staff will visually check lunch boxes to ensure that:

- Food appears suitable for young children.

- Food has been prepared safely.
- Choking risks have been reduced.
- Prohibited foods have not been included.
- Known dietary and allergy requirements are being followed.

Staff will not routinely remove food simply because they consider it unsuitable; however, where a food clearly breaches this policy or presents an immediate health or safety risk, staff will take appropriate action.

If a lunch box contains nuts or a food that presents an immediate choking or allergy risk, the item will not be served and parents or carers will be informed at the earliest opportunity.

Where concerns continue, the manager will work sensitively with the family to support safe and healthy lunch choices.

Rolling Snack Time

St Mary's Nursery operates a rolling snack time to encourage children to develop independence, make healthy choices and enjoy positive social experiences around food.

Children may attend snack time when they are ready. A designated snack table is provided where children can sit and enjoy their snack in a calm environment.

A member of staff will remain with the children at the snack table at all times.

Children will remain within the staff member's sight and sound and will be closely monitored throughout snack time.

Children are encouraged to:

- Sit while eating.
- Make choices where appropriate.
- Eat at their own pace.

- Take small bites.
- Chew food thoroughly.
- Follow good hygiene practices.

Snack Provision

Parents and carers may provide suitable snack donations to support our healthy eating approach.

Suitable snack donations include:

- Fresh fruit.
- Vegetables.
- Breadsticks.
- Crackers.

St Mary's Nursery provides **semi-skimmed milk where appropriate** as part of its snack provision. Water is available to children throughout the day.

All snacks are prepared by staff following appropriate food hygiene procedures.

Staff ensure food is prepared appropriately for young children, including cutting, slicing, squashing, grating or otherwise adapting foods where necessary to reduce choking risks.

Nuts and nut-containing products must not be provided.

High-sugar foods, including iced cakes, iced biscuits, Party Rings and similar products, are not considered suitable for routine nursery snack provision.

Safe Food Preparation and Choking Prevention

Parents, carers and nursery staff all have a responsibility to ensure that food is prepared safely for young children.

Particular care must be taken with foods that can present a choking risk.

Examples of appropriate preparation include:

- Grapes, cherry tomatoes and similar round foods should be cut lengthways into quarters.
- Sausages should be cut lengthways and into small, manageable pieces.
- Large blueberries should be squashed.
- Hard fruits and vegetables should be grated, cooked or cut into thin slices or small pieces.
- Stones, pips and bones must be removed.
- Food should be prepared in a form that is appropriate for the child's age and individual needs.

Food provided by St Mary's Nursery will be prepared in accordance with appropriate food hygiene and safer food preparation guidance.

Children will be encouraged to sit upright while eating and will be actively supervised throughout meals and snacks.

Choking Emergency Procedure

St Mary's Nursery recognises that, despite appropriate food preparation and supervision, a choking emergency may still occur.

All staff must follow their **paediatric first aid training and the nursery's emergency procedures** if a child is choking.

The recognised paediatric choking response must be commenced promptly and emergency medical assistance must be sought where required.

Staff must not delay:

- Calling the emergency services.
- Providing appropriate paediatric first aid.
- Beginning resuscitation where required.

Where a choking incident occurs:

1. Staff will immediately assess the situation.
2. The recognised paediatric choking procedure will be carried out without delay by appropriately trained staff.
3. Emergency medical assistance will be called as required.
4. First aid and resuscitation procedures will continue as necessary.
5. Parents or carers will be informed as soon as practicable.
6. The incident will be recorded and reported in accordance with the nursery's Accident and Incident Reporting Procedure.
7. The incident will be reviewed to identify any learning or changes required to practice, supervision or risk assessments.

Eating Supervision and Staff Responsibilities

Staff are responsible for maintaining safe eating practices throughout the nursery day.

Staff will:

- Maintain appropriate staff-to-child ratios.
- Ensure children remain within sight and sound during eating.
- Actively supervise all meals and snacks.
- Ensure children are seated while eating.
- Encourage safe eating behaviours.
- Monitor children's eating and identify potential choking risks.
- Understand age-appropriate food preparation.
- Follow allergy and dietary information provided by parents and carers.
- Follow individual healthcare plans and allergy action plans where applicable.
- Understand and follow paediatric first aid and choking emergency procedures.
- Record and report choking incidents, accidents and relevant near misses.

Mealtime and Snack Risk Assessment

St Mary's Nursery completes regular risk assessments to ensure eating and drinking experiences are safe and suitable.

Risk assessments will consider:

- Supervision arrangements.
- Staff positioning.
- Staff-to-child ratios.
- Choking hazards.
- Food preparation.
- Food hygiene.
- Allergies and dietary requirements.
- Individual children's needs.
- Children's developmental abilities.
- Emergency response arrangements.

Risk assessments will be reviewed regularly and following any significant incident, near miss, change in guidance or change in children's individual needs.

Children with Additional Needs

Children with allergies, medical conditions, swallowing difficulties, developmental needs or additional eating requirements will have appropriate arrangements developed in partnership with parents or carers and relevant professionals.

Where appropriate, an individual healthcare plan, allergy action plan or other relevant plan will be put in place.

Staff will be informed of the child's individual requirements and will follow the agreed procedures at all mealtimes and snack times.

Allergy Safety and Management

St Mary's Nursery recognises that food allergies can be serious and, in some cases, life-threatening.

We are committed to protecting children with allergies through safe eating practices, effective communication with families, prevention of accidental exposure and appropriate emergency procedures.

Managing Allergies

Parents and carers must inform St Mary's Nursery of any known:

- Food allergies.
- Food intolerances.
- Dietary requirements.
- Relevant medical conditions.

Where a child has an allergy:

- Parents will provide relevant medical information.
- An individual healthcare plan or allergy action plan will be completed where appropriate.
- Staff will be made aware of the child's allergy, symptoms and emergency procedures.
- Food provided by parents or the nursery will be checked carefully.
- Cross-contamination risks will be considered during food preparation, serving and storage.
- Staff will follow the child's individual allergy or healthcare plan.

Allergy Awareness

Staff will understand:

- Common signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction.
- The importance of following individual allergy plans.
- How to respond appropriately in an emergency.
- The importance of clear communication between staff and families.
- The importance of preventing accidental exposure to known allergens.

Food Provided by the Nursery

All snacks provided by St Mary's Nursery will be checked before being offered to children.

Staff will consider allergen information when preparing and serving food.

St Mary's Nursery is a **nut-free setting**. Nuts and nut-containing products must not be brought into the nursery for lunches, snacks, celebrations or other activities involving food.

Emergency Allergy Response

If a child shows signs of an allergic reaction, staff will follow the child's individual allergy action plan and emergency procedures immediately.

Where emergency medication has been prescribed for the child, staff will follow the child's individual healthcare or allergy plan and seek emergency medical assistance as required.

Any allergic reaction, suspected reaction or allergy-related incident will be recorded, reviewed and shared with parents or carers as appropriate.

Hygiene and Safe Eating Practices

Staff and children will follow appropriate hygiene practices before, during and after meals and snacks.

Children will be encouraged to:

- Wash their hands before eating.
- Use appropriate utensils.
- Keep food and drinks for themselves.
- Avoid sharing food unless specifically organised and approved by staff.
- Follow staff instructions during mealtimes.
- Keep their eating area clean.

Staff will follow appropriate food hygiene procedures when handling, preparing, storing and serving food.

Working with Parents and Carers

St Mary's Nursery values its partnership with families and will provide guidance regarding:

- Healthy lunch choices.
- Healthy snacks.
- Safe food preparation.
- Choking prevention.
- Prohibited foods.
- Allergy awareness.
- Individual dietary requirements.

Where concerns arise regarding a child's lunch, snack or eating habits, staff will discuss these sensitively with parents or carers.

The aim is to work collaboratively with families to support children's health, safety, development and wellbeing.

Incidents, Accidents and Near Misses

Any choking incident, suspected choking incident, allergic reaction, food-related accident or significant near miss will be:

- Responded to immediately in accordance with relevant emergency procedures.
- Reported to the manager or designated senior member of staff.
- Recorded in accordance with the nursery's Accident and Incident Reporting Procedure.
- Communicated to parents or carers as appropriate.
- Reviewed to identify whether further action or changes to practice are required.

Following a significant incident, relevant risk assessments and procedures will be reviewed and updated where necessary.

Monitoring and Review

The manager will monitor the implementation of this policy through:

- Mealtime and snack observations.
- Staff discussions and supervision.
- Accident and incident records.
- Choking and near-miss records.
- Risk assessments.
- Allergy management reviews.
- Checks of emergency equipment.
- Feedback from children, parents and carers.
- Staff training and awareness.

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if legislation, statutory guidance, professional guidance or nursery procedures change.

Related Documents

This policy should be read alongside:

- Healthy Eating Policy.
- Food Hygiene Policy
- Snack Time Risk Assessment.
- Allergies and Anaphylaxis Policy.
- First Aid Policy.
- Health and Safety Policy.
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- Accident and Incident Reporting Procedure.
- Individual Healthcare Plans.
- Allergy Action Plans.

This Policy was adopted by	St Mary's Nursery, Camberley,	*(name of provider)*
Last reviewed On	1st September 2026	*(date)*
Date to be reviewed	1st September 2027	*(date)*
Signed on behalf of the provider		
Name of signatory	Sue Dunn	
Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner)	Acting Chairperson	