



Bilton Grange Early Years Safer Healthy Eating Policy

Lent 2026

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This policy sets out Bilton Grange’s approach to ensuring that all food and drink provided to Early Years children is safe, healthy, balanced and nutritious, in accordance with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework and the EYFS Nutrition Guidance.

2.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff working with Early Years children at Bilton Grange, including The Nest (pre-school class) and Reception and is shared with Parents. It covers all meals, snacks and drinks provided by the school, as well as food provided as part of the taught curriculum, or special events.

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3.1 Legislative Framework and Statutory Requirements

The EYFS statutory requirement states: Where children are provided with meals, snacks and drinks, these must be healthy, balanced and nutritious. From September 2025, providers must have regard to the EYFS Nutrition Guidance when implementing this requirement.

3.2 Aims and Principles

The aims of this policy are to ensure that:

- All children receive healthy, balanced and nutritious food and drinks that support their growth, development, health and wellbeing;
- Children develop positive eating habits and relationships with food from an early age;
- All food is prepared and served safely to minimise the risk of choking and food-borne illness;
- Food allergies and special dietary requirements are effectively managed to keep all children safe;
- Mealtimes are positive, social experiences that support children’s emotional and social development;
- Parents and carers are partners in promoting healthy eating and food safety.

3.3 Roles and Responsibilities

The Head of Pre-Prep:

- Has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy;
- Ensures all staff are aware of, and trained in, food safety and choking prevention;
- Oversees menu planning and ensures compliance with nutrition guidance;
- Works with catering staff to plan nutritious menus;
- Maintains records of children’s dietary requirements and allergies.

All Early Years Staff:

- Follow this policy at all times when preparing, handling or serving food;
- Supervise children during mealtimes and understand choking first aid procedures;
- Know which children have allergies and how to respond to allergic reactions;
- Communicate with parents/carers about children’s eating and drinking.

Catering Staff:

- Prepare food in accordance with food safety regulations and this policy;
- Ensure all food is prepared appropriately to prevent choking hazards;
- Manage allergen information and prevent cross-contamination.

Parents and Carers:

- Provide accurate information about allergies and dietary requirements;
- Follow school guidelines when providing food from home;
- Work in partnership with the school to support their child’s healthy eating.

3.4 Healthy, Balanced and Nutritious Food

All food and drinks provided to children at Bilton Grange must be healthy, balanced and nutritious. This means:

- Meals contain appropriate amounts of nutrients and energy for growing children;
- A wide variety of foods from all food groups are offered across the day and week;
- Foods high in saturated fat, salt and sugar are limited or avoided;
- Portion sizes are appropriate for children’s age and development.

Providing healthy, balanced nutrition helps prevent children from becoming overweight or obese, supports optimal growth and development, and establishes positive eating habits that can impact long-term health.

3.5 The Four Food Groups

Children’s meals and snacks are planned around the four main food groups:

1. Fruit and vegetables

- Fresh, frozen, tinned (in juice, not syrup) or dried;
- At least one portion at each main meal and as part of some snacks.

2. Starchy carbohydrates

- Bread, potatoes, pasta, rice, cereals and other grains;

- A portion at each main meal (breakfast, lunch and tea);
- Wholegrain options provided regularly throughout the week.

3. Dairy and dairy alternatives

- Milk, cheese, yoghurt and fromage frais;
- Three portions daily (including those provided at home).

4. Proteins

- Beans, pulses, lentils;
- Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, tofu and meat alternatives;
- A portion at lunch and tea each day, with variety across the week.

3.6 Food and Drink Guidelines

We follow a Provide, Limit, Avoid framework:

PROVIDE:

- A variety of fruit and vegetables at each meal and some snacks;
- Wholegrain starchy foods regularly;
- Plain unsweetened dairy products or fortified alternatives;
- A variety of protein sources including plant-based options;
- Oily fish (salmon, sardines, mackerel) at least once every three weeks;
- Low/No sugar versions of snack foods.

LIMIT:

- Processed meat products (sausages, breaded chicken) to once per week;
- Processed fish products (fish fingers, fish cakes) to once per week;
- Fried foods to maximum once per week;
- Baked beans to once per week when counted as a vegetable;
- Oily fish to maximum twice per week.

AVOID:

- Foods high in saturated fat, salt and sugar (cakes, biscuits, chocolate, confectionery, crisps, sweet pastries);
- Sugary drinks including fruit juice, squash and smoothies;

- Artificial sweeteners;
- Dried fruit as a snack (only provided as part of meals);
- Traditional puddings (only fruit or unsweetened yoghurt/fromage frais offered as second course);

3.7 Drinks Policy

The only drinks provided to children are:

- Fresh tap water (available throughout the day);
- Plain milk (whole or semi-skimmed cow's milk or unsweetened fortified plant-based alternatives).

We do not provide follow-on formula, growing-up milks, fruit juice, squash, smoothies, flavoured milk or any other sugary drinks.

3.8 Foods to Limit or Avoid

The following foods should be limited or avoided for all children:

For all Early Years children:

- Foods high in saturated fat, salt and sugar should be avoided;
- Choose low-salt bread and breakfast cereals (check traffic light labels);
- Opt for tinned fruit in juice, not syrup;
- Choose tinned vegetables and pulses with no added salt and sugar.

3.9 Portion Sizes and Responsive Feeding

Portion sizes should be appropriate for each child's age, body size and appetite. For young children, a portion is roughly the size of their clenched fist.

- Start with small servings, children can ask for more if still hungry;
- Never force children to finish everything on their plate;
- Do not offer rewards (stickers, dessert) for finishing food;
- Respond to children's hunger and fullness cues;
- Adjust portions based on individual children's needs.

3.10 Menu Planning and Provision

Menus are planned in advance to ensure variety and nutritional balance:

- Menus are designed to cover a three-week rolling programme;
- Menus include a variety of foods from all four food groups;
- Different textures, colours, flavours and cultural foods are incorporated;
- Menus are reviewed and updated at least twice yearly to include seasonal produce;
- Menus and allergen information are shared with parents/carers;
- Parents/carers are consulted about cultural preferences and dietary requirements.

Each lunch and tea consists of two dishes: a main dish plus an additional dish (starter, side dish or second dish such as plain yoghurt, sugar free jelly or fruit).

3.11 Choking Prevention and Food Safety

Choking is a serious risk for young children. All staff must understand and implement choking prevention measures at all times. Tragically, a child dies in the UK every month from choking, with food being the most common cause.

- All food must be prepared to an appropriate size, shape and texture for each child's age and development;
- Staff must know the difference between gagging (normal learning process) and choking (emergency);
- Never leave children unsupervised while eating;
- All staff working with Early Years children must complete paediatric first aid training.

Understanding gagging vs choking:

Gagging (normal, protective):

- Loud coughing/spluttering, watering eyes, red face;
- Child may retch or vomit;
- Child is breathing and can cough;
- Usually resolves on its own; do not intervene unless choking develops.

Choking (emergency):

- Difficulty breathing, speaking or coughing;
- Red, puffy face or blue colour;

- Signs of distress, pointing to throat or grasping neck;
- Quiet and unable to make sounds;
- Requires immediate first aid response.

3.12 Choking Hazard Foods

The following foods are choking hazards and must either be avoided or modified appropriately:

Foods to AVOID for children under 4 years:

- Whole nuts and seeds;
- Popcorn;
- Raw jelly cubes;
- Marshmallows;
- Whole grapes, cherry tomatoes (must be quartered lengthways);
- Hard sweets, jelly beans, chewing gum;
- Chunks of meat or cheese;
- Hot dogs or sausages with skin (unless skin removed and cut into strips).

Foods requiring modification:

- Raw carrots, apples, celery; must be cooked until soft or grated;
- Grapes, cherry tomatoes, berries; cut lengthways into quarters;
- Stone fruits (peaches, plums); remove stones and cut appropriately;
- Sausages; remove skins and cut lengthways into thin strips;
- Hard cheese; grate or cut into thin strips.

3.13 Food Preparation to Prevent Choking

All food must be prepared safely according to children's developmental stage.

For Nest children:

- Support to cut food into small pieces (approx. 1cm);
- Cook hard vegetables (carrots, apples) until soft enough to pierce with a fork;
- Remove seeds, pits and skins from fruits;
- Grate or thinly slice hard cheeses;
- Cut cylindrical foods (sausages, hot dogs) lengthways into thin strips;

- Quarter round foods (grapes, tomatoes) lengthways.

Food Standards Agency posters on preparing food safely to avoid choking are displayed in food preparation areas.

3.14 Safe Eating Environment and Supervision

To minimise choking risk, the following rules must be followed at all times:

- Children must always sit upright while eating; never lying down, walking, crawling or running;
- Mealtimes are calm with minimal distractions and no rushing;
- At least two staff members (and according to ratios) must be present and actively supervising at all times during eating;
- Children are reminded to take small bites, chew thoroughly and swallow before talking;
- No games or play with food during mealtimes;
- Adequate time is allowed for meals and snacks.

3.15 Paediatric First Aid Requirements

Whilst children are eating, there must always be a member of staff in the room with a valid paediatric first aid certificate.

- All Early Years staff must maintain current paediatric first aid certification;
- Staff must be confident in administering choking first aid for infants and children;
- Staff must know when and how to call emergency services;
- Regular refresher training is provided to maintain competency.

3.16 Food Allergies and Intolerances

Food allergies can be life-threatening and must be taken very seriously. Children can be allergic to any food, not just the major allergens listed above.

Food intolerances

Food intolerances (e.g. lactose intolerance, non-coeliac gluten sensitivity) are different from allergies. They:

- Do not involve the immune system;
- Are not life-threatening;
- Cause unpleasant symptoms (abdominal pain, bloating, diarrhoea, rashes);

- Must still be carefully managed in consultation with parents/carers and health professionals.

Coeliac disease

Coeliac disease is a serious autoimmune condition requiring strict avoidance of all gluten-containing foods and prevention of cross-contamination.

3.17 Managing Allergies and Special Dietary Requirements

We must obtain information about food allergies BEFORE a child is admitted to the setting.

- Parents/carers complete detailed allergy information forms;
- Allergy action plans are developed with parents/carers and, where appropriate, healthcare professionals;
- All staff are informed of which children have allergies;
- Allergy information is kept up-to-date and reviewed regularly;
- Photos of children with allergies may be displayed in food preparation areas;
- Catering staff are responsible for the serving of correct foods to the correct children. Once labelled/boxed foods have been signed over to staff it then becomes their responsibility to ensure it gets to the right child.

Prevention of cross-contamination:

- Foods containing allergens are stored separately from allergen-free foods;
- Staff must be aware at all times of particular children with allergies to ensure cross contamination is prevented;
- Staff wash hands thoroughly before and after handling allergen-containing foods;
- Visitors are informed of rules about bringing food into the setting;
- Children are taught not to share food.

3.18 Anaphylaxis Emergency Procedures

Anaphylaxis is a severe, life-threatening allergic reaction requiring immediate treatment.

Symptoms may include:

- Swelling of throat, tongue or airways;
- Difficulty swallowing or breathing;
- Wheezing, noisy breathing, persistent cough;
- Dizziness, confusion, sudden sleepiness;

- Feeling faint or loss of consciousness;
- Pale, clammy skin.

Emergency response:

All staff working with children with known severe allergies are trained in recognising anaphylaxis, emergency response protocols and using adrenaline auto-injectors.

3.19 Religious and Cultural Dietary Needs

We respect and accommodate religious and cultural dietary requirements:

- Engage in open communication with parents/carers about specific requirements;
- Provide halal, kosher or vegetarian/vegan options as required;
- Incorporate traditional foods from different cultures into menus;
- Ensure inclusive mealtimes where all children can participate.

3.20 Children with Additional Support Needs

Some children may have specific dietary needs related to physical, developmental or sensory needs:

- Sensory needs related to food (sensitivity to textures, tastes, smells); menus are adapted, and mealtime environment adjusted;
- Medical conditions requiring special diets or adaptations; written confirmation from healthcare professional required;
- Dietitian recommendations are followed for children with complex needs.

3.21 Food Brought from Home

Food may not be brought in from home unless in exceptional circumstances agreed between the Head of Pre-Prep and the catering team. This is usually under the advice of specialists and in conjunction with the School Nurse.

Birthday treats are taken home to be eaten, and alternatives are provided to children with dietary needs where required.

3.22 Food Hygiene and Storage

All staff involved in preparing and handling food must be competent to do so and follow food safety regulations.

- All staff complete food hygiene training appropriate to their role;

- Hands are washed thoroughly before preparing, handling or serving food;
- All food preparation surfaces and equipment are cleaned before and after use.

3.23 Communication with Parents and Carers

Effective communication with parents and carers is essential for promoting healthy eating and food safety. We:

- Share menus in advance;
- Share timing of meals and snacks;
- Provide this policy to all parents/carers and discuss our approach to food;
- Use Form Teacher relationships to maintain ongoing dialogue about children's eating and drinking, and careful monitoring/tracking where necessary;
- Provide opportunities for Parents to understand more about safe healthy eating, through Parents talks.

3.24 Food Activities and Learning

Food activities help children develop a positive relationship with food and learn about healthy eating:

- Cooking activities and food workshops are planned to teach about nutrition, food safety and cultural foods;
- Growing activities in the Organic Garden (herbs, vegetables) connect children to where food comes from;
- Children learn about the four food groups through play and activities;
- Stories, songs and discussions about food are incorporated into the curriculum;
- Mealtimes are used as learning opportunities (colours, textures, counting);
- Children are never forced to participate in cooking activities involving their allergens.

Cooking and food activities always follow hygiene and safety procedures, with particular attention to allergen management.

3.25 Mealtime Environment

Mealtimes should be positive, social experiences that support children's development:

- Staff help to create a calm, relaxed atmosphere;

- Tables are set appropriately with child-sized utensils, and safe seating appropriate for the age of the children;
- Children are encouraged to serve themselves to certain foods (with support) to develop independence;
- Conversation and social interaction are encouraged;
- Staff model good eating behaviours and try new foods alongside children;
- Children are encouraged but never forced to try new foods;
- Positive language is used about all foods;
- Food is never used as a reward or punishment;
- Children’s choices and preferences are respected;
- Adequate time is provided so mealtimes are not rushed.

The mealtime environment promotes children’s emotional wellbeing, social skills, independence and positive relationships with food.

4.0 POLICY OWNER

Assistant Head Pre-Prep – Katie Gedye

This policy is owned by the Head of Pre-Prep and is reviewed annually or in response to changes in statutory guidance.

Policy approved: Lent 2026

Next review date: Lent 2027

5.0 RELATED POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

In forming this policy, we follow all statutory guidance in the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Bilton Grange Early Years Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Allergy Management Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Medicines Policy

- Inclusion and Equality Policy

6.0 FURTHER INFORMATION

This policy is informed by:

- Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework 2024
- Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance (May 2025)
- Food Standards Agency guidance on food safety and allergen management
- NHS guidance on infant feeding, weaning and choking prevention