Growing together, hand in hand

Early Years Nutrition Policy

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Issue 1.0

Audience:	Governors/Staff
Frequency of Review:	Annually
Post-holder responsible for Review:	Nursery Manager

Early Years Nutrition Policy:

Policy Statement:

At Gorsemoor, we offer high-quality Early Years education for children aged two years and above. We understand that nutrition plays a vital role in children's health, development, and ability to learn. As part of our commitment to promoting wellbeing and lifelong healthy habits, we ensure that all food and drink provided in our setting supports the physical, emotional, and educational needs of our children.

Following the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) nutrition guidance (2025), we promote balanced eating, support positive food attitudes, and encourage all children to enjoy healthy, social mealtimes in a safe and inclusive environment.

Aims of this Policy:

This Nutrition Policy is designed to ensure that the food, drink, routines and mealtime practices within our Early Years provision (Leaflings, two-year-old provision, Nursery and Reception) fully reflect the expectations set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance 2025.

Our aims are:

- **To ensure that all food and drink provided in school meets national nutritional standards**
  Meals, snacks and drinks follow the recommended portion sizes, food group guidelines and nutritional balance set out in the 2025 EYFS guidance. This includes limiting salt, sugar and processed foods, ensuring appropriate drink choices, and providing opportunities to experience a variety of foods.
- **To support healthy physical growth, brain development and sustained concentration**
  Children are offered food that meets developmental needs and provides energy for learning. Routines within our Early Years classrooms are structured to help children feel well, alert and ready to engage with the curriculum.
- **To promote healthy eating habits, food confidence and positive attitudes towards food**
  Children are encouraged to explore new flavours and textures in a relaxed, supportive environment. Staff use positive language about food, model interest and enjoyment, and help children develop long-term healthy habits.
- **To create mealtime environments that support social development, emotional wellbeing and learning**
  Mealtimes are calm, sociable and unhurried. They support children's independence, self-esteem, communication skills and understanding of routines and expectations.
- **To develop children's independence and self-care skills through food routines**
  Children are encouraged to pour drinks, prepare simple foods (e.g. spreading and cutting toast), make choices, tidy away, and understand waste and recycling systems. These experiences support the Prime Areas of Learning within the Early Years foundation Stage.
- **To work in partnership with families to promote consistency between home and school**
  Parents are supported through shared guidance, lunchbox expectations, information about healthy choices, and ongoing communication about their child's eating habits and dietary needs.
- **To ensure that food provision is inclusive and respectful of all children's needs**
  All food and drink provision takes account of medical requirements (allergies, intolerances),

cultural or religious dietary practices, and ethical choices. The Traffic Light Allergy System is used to ensure clarity, safety and consistency for every child.

- **To ensure all mealtime, food handling, and allergy procedures follow statutory safety standards**
  Staff receive appropriate food hygiene and allergy-awareness training. Food handling, storage, preparation and serving comply with safety expectations to prevent cross-contamination and ensure children eat safely.

These aims ensure that we provide a safe, healthy, inclusive and developmentally appropriate environment, enabling every child to flourish within our Early Years classrooms.

Early Years Snack Time:

During snack times, our Early Years classrooms provide a calm and sociable space for children to eat safely and with confidence. Across our provision, we support children in developing good hygiene habits, independent skills, and an early understanding of healthy choices.

Snacks:

- A **mid-morning snack** is provided for all children in our Early Years classes. This includes **fresh fruit** and **milk**. Parents also have the option to purchase additional items. In Leaflings cereal will be available for the children and toast is available for nursery children and will be introduced for Reception in January 2026.
- Where **cereal** is provided in Leaflings, we ensure it is low in sugar, wholegrain where possible, and served in measured, age-appropriate portion sizes. This supports healthy energy levels, avoids excessive sugar consumption, and aligns with the EYFS Nutrition Guidance 2025. Milk or water may be served with cereal depending on children's dietary needs.
- **Toast** is served in appropriate portion sizes and made from wholegrain or 50:50 bread.

In our **Leaflings class** (2-year-olds), children sit together as a group with familiar adults to enjoy snack and drink as part of a nurturing and predictable routine. They are supported to wash their hands before eating and to develop positive mealtime routines in a warm, language-rich environment.

As children progress to our **Lotus and Lavender classes** (3- and 4-year-olds), they begin to access a self-service snack table, where they develop increased independence and responsibility. After washing their hands, children will independently join the snack table and are encouraged to:

- **Spread their own topping** (e.g., low-fat spread on toast).
- **Use child-safe knives** to cut their toast into manageable pieces.
- **Clear their own space** after eating, placing food scraps and packaging into the appropriate bins (food waste and recycling).
- **Peel their own fruit**

These routines support children to build confidence, self-care skills, and environmental awareness, while fostering a positive and inclusive attitude towards food.

As the children progress to Reception, snack time is embedded as a calm, social, and structured part of the daily routine, supporting children's independence, hygiene, and positive attitudes toward food.

Each morning, following the phonics input, children are invited in small groups to either use the toilet (if needed), and wash their hands thoroughly in preparation for snack time. They then collect their snack from their locker and return to their carpet space to enjoy it.

During the warmer months, snack time often moves outdoors to create a “picnic-style” experience. This provides a change of environment, supports well-being, and gives children the opportunity to practise safe and sociable eating habits outside. Children sit together in a designated area and must remain seated while eating. Adults supervise closely, offering support, modelling good manners, and engaging in conversation to promote social interaction.
Throughout the year, we promote independence and responsibility by encouraging children to:

- **Open their own packaging** or containers.
- **Dispose of their rubbish** correctly, using the appropriate bins (including the fruit waste bin).
- **Retrieve their own drink** (either from their personal water bottle or by collecting a milk carton from inside).

This routine not only supports self-care and independence but also reinforces healthy eating behaviours and respectful mealtime habits, contributing to each child’s personal, social and emotional development.

Early Years Lunch:

At Gorsemoor, mealtimes are a valued and integral part of the daily routine. They are carefully structured to provide the children with a **calm, positive, and sociable environment**, where food is not only a source of nourishment but also an opportunity for learning, conversation, and the development of important life skills.

In both our **Leaflings (2-year-old provision)** and **Lotus and Lavender classes (3–4-year-olds)**, children eat their lunch within their own classrooms. This ensures they remain in a quiet, familiar space that supports their sense of security and wellbeing.

From **Reception onwards**, children begin transitioning to eating in the school hall, preparing them gradually for the routines and expectations of the wider school environment.

Across all our Early Years classrooms, we ensure:

• Good hygiene is embedded and consistently reinforced
Hand washing is a clear and consistent expectation before and after eating. Visual prompts and adult modelling help children understand the importance of hand washing before eating.

• Lunchtimes are unhurried, calm and respectful
Children are given the time they need to eat comfortably and without pressure. Routines are gentle and predictable, helping children feel safe and confident.

• Lunchtime routines promote independence and responsibility
Children are supported to take ownership of their mealtime experience. The children in our nursery classes are encouraged to open their food items in their lunch boxes and peel fruit. The children in reception are supported to collect their own hot lunches from the catering team and carry their tray to the table.

• Staff sit with children and actively model positive food behaviours
Adults engage in meaningful conversation, demonstrate good table manners, and encourage healthy choices. They offer sensitive support with skills such as pouring drinks and using cutlery, celebrating children's growing independence.

• Lunchtimes foster social development and communication
The children build friendships, practise conversation skills, and share experiences related to food, home life and culture.

• Children with additional needs are supported sensitively
Adjustments are made for children who require additional support to ensure that lunchtimes are accessible and supportive.

What is available at lunch time?

All children who attend our Nursery provision (Leaflings and Lotus) bring a **packed lunch from home**. To support families in providing nutritionally balanced lunches, we share healthy lunchbox guidance through Class Dojo and our school social media pages. We also signpost parents to trusted external resources, including NHS and government-approved healthy eating guidance, and regularly share examples of what a healthy, age-appropriate lunchbox might include.
Families are encouraged to send their child with a named water bottle each day, filled with water only, in line with the EYFS Nutrition Guidance 2025, which recommends water and milk as the preferred drinks for young children. Water bottles remain accessible throughout the day to promote regular hydration.

Reception children are entitled to **Universal Free School Meals**, and we actively encourage families to take advantage of this offer. Our school catering team provides a nutritious, balanced and varied menu, planned in accordance with the School Food Standards and the EYFS Nutrition Guidance 2025. Menus are shared with families regularly, and feedback from parents and carers is welcomed and reviewed.

Reception children may also choose to bring a packed lunch from home. Parents are encouraged to follow the same healthy lunchbox expectations shared with Nursery families to ensure consistency, promote good eating habits, and support children's overall wellbeing.

Additional information regarding food items:
Some foods provided at snack and lunchtime may be cut in half (lengthways) or into smaller pieces to reduce the risk of choking, in line with safety guidance for young children. This practice is used particularly within our Leaflings and Lotus Nursery provision to ensure all food is developmentally appropriate and safe to eat. Children in **Lotus class** (where appropriate) and **Reception** may receive whole pieces of fruit, as they have developed the motor skills and oral control needed to manage these safely, while still being supervised closely during all eating times.

Examples of food items that may be cut up to reduce the risk of choking:

- **Grapes** – cut lengthways into halves or quarters
- **Cherry tomatoes** – cut lengthways into halves or quarters
- **Mini sausages / hot dog pieces** – cut lengthways, then into small pieces
- **Cheese chunks** – cut into thin strips rather than cubes
- **Cucumber rounds** – cut into sticks rather than circles
- **Carrot rounds** – cut into thin matchsticks or cooked until soft
- **Strawberries** – cut into halves or quarters depending on size.

Supervision:

Supervision during all mealtimes is a priority within all of our Early Years provision. In our Nursery classrooms (Leaflings and Lotus), we always maintain the required staff-to-child ratios based on the ages of the children. Where possible, an adult is seated at each table to act as a positive role model, promote high expectations, support children's developing independence, and ensure close, continuous supervision.

In Reception, children are supported by trained lunchtime supervisors who encourage positive behaviour, good manners, and healthy eating, offering support and guidance as needed.

Across Early Years, all staff members hold an up-to-date paediatric first aid certificate, and we have also ensured that lunchtime supervisors supporting our Early Years children are fully trained too. During any period in which children are eating, there will always be a qualified paediatric first aider present, ensuring children's safety and wellbeing at all times.

Special Dietary Needs and Allergies:

When children join us at Gorsemoor, we collect detailed information about any allergies, intolerances, or dietary requirements as part of the admissions process. This information is shared with all relevant staff to ensure that every team member is aware of the specific needs of the children they work with. Allergy information is displayed discreetly inside classroom medical cupboards and is also shared with our catering team to support safe meal preparation.

Within Nursery, we seat children with allergies or intolerances together at one table where appropriate, enabling staff to monitor them closely and ensure that they eat safely. We maintain an up-to-date, whole-school register of children's allergies, intolerances, and cultural or religious dietary needs, which is reviewed regularly.

What do we do?

- All allergen information is clearly displayed and consistently followed in all food preparation and serving areas.
- All staff receive training in allergy awareness, and emergency response procedures.
- We work in partnership with parents and, where necessary, healthcare professionals to develop individual care plans, ensuring the needs of each child are understood and safely supported.

Cultural and Dietary Preferences

We are committed to ensuring that our food provision is inclusive and respectful of all children's needs. Dietary requirements linked to religion, culture, family practices, or ethical beliefs are fully acknowledged and accommodated within our Early Years setting. We work closely with parents and carers to gather accurate information and ensure that children's dietary preferences are understood and consistently supported. Families are encouraged to share any updates or changes so that we can continue to plan meals and snacks that are appropriate, inclusive, and sensitive to individual needs.

Celebrations and Special Occasions:

Here at Gorsemoor, we love to celebrate birthdays, cultural festivals, and special events with the children, and we do so in a way that is safe, inclusive, and aligned with the EYFS Nutrition Guidance 2025. If families choose to send cakes or sweets from home to mark a birthday, these

are not given out during the school day. Instead, they are passed to parents at the end of the day so that families can decide if and when their child may have them.

Throughout the year, we celebrate a wide range of cultural and seasonal festivals, and we often provide food-tasting opportunities linked to these events. All foods used for celebrations are prepared by our school catering team to ensure they are nutritious, appropriate for young children, and fully compliant with food safety and allergen management procedures. This approach allows us to honour special occasions while maintaining a healthy and safe food environment for all children.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review:

- **This policy is reviewed annually** or sooner if there are updates to statutory guidance or changes to national nutritional expectations.

- **Menus and food practices are reviewed regularly**, ensuring they remain aligned with nutritional standards and incorporating feedback from children, families, staff, and the catering team.

- **Compliance is monitored by the leadership team** through routine audits of food provision, mealtime practice, and allergy management procedures.

- **All staff are kept up to date** with any changes to guidance, procedures, or training requirements to ensure safe, consistent and compliant practice across Early Years.