

**School Food – Policy for Packed Lunches**

**(brought in from home)**

**This policy has been drawn up in line with other Durham County schools following guidance from the Local Authority and includes updated information from DFE Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance 2025**, as part of the Early Years Reforms.

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| Date reviewed:  Next Review: | September 2025  September 2026 | (date) |
| Headteacher |  |  |
| Signed on behalf of the governing body |  | |
| Name of signatory |  | |
| Role of signatory |  | |



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**Introduction**

At Aclet Close Nursery School, we prioritise the wellbeing, health, and development of every child. This Packed Lunch Policy is designed to ensure that packed lunches brought from home provide nutritious, balanced, and safe food that supports children’s growth, learning, and holistic development in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Nutrition Guidance and Early Years Reforms 2025.

**Aims**

* To promote healthy eating habits in children.
* To ensure all packed lunches meet the nutritional needs of young children aged 9 months to 4 years.
* To minimise the risk of allergies and choking incidents.
* To support parents and carers as partners in providing healthy food for their children.
* To align with the school’s vision of nurturing capable, healthy, and happy children.

**Guidance for Packed Lunch Contents**

Parents and carers are encouraged to provide packed lunches that:

* Include a variety of foods from the main food groups: fruits, vegetables, starchy foods (like bread, rice, pasta), protein (meat, fish, eggs, beans), and dairy.
* Contain at least one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetables or salad every day.
* Include healthy snacks such as yoghurt, cheese, or unsalted crackers.
* Avoid sugary drinks and sweets. Water or milk are recommended drinks.
* Minimise foods high in sugar, salt, and saturated fats.
* Include foods that are age-appropriate and prepared to reduce choking risks (e.g., cut into small, manageable pieces).
* Respect any medical, cultural, or religious dietary needs and preferences.

**Food Safety and Allergies**

* Parents must inform the school of any food allergies, intolerances, or special dietary requirements their child has.
* Staff will share allergy information with all relevant personnel to ensure safety.
* Children must always be supervised while eating; staff will be alert to any signs of choking.
* Children will be seated safely while eating, ideally in a designated area with minimal distractions.
* The school follows the British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology (BSACI) guidance and NHS advice on food allergies and anaphylaxis.

**Storage and Handling**

* Packed lunches should be brought in appropriate containers that keep food fresh and safe.
* The school are unable to provide refrigerated storage, so parents should ensure perishable items are packed with ice packs to maintain freshness. The school cannot take legal responsibility for foods prepared at home and then brought into school.
* Staff will encourage children to wash their hands before eating.

**Role of Parents and Carers**

* Parents and carers are partners in promoting healthy eating and are encouraged to follow this guidance when preparing packed lunches.
* The school will provide information and support about healthy packed lunches through newsletters, meetings, and workshops.
* Parents should regularly review and update the school about any changes in their child’s dietary needs.

**Safer Eating and Choking Prevention**

Children must always be supervised by a member of staff with a valid paediatric first aid certificate while eating.

Children should be seated safely in an appropriately sized chair or highchair in a designated eating area with minimal distractions.

Children must be within sight and hearing of staff at all times during mealtimes. A Paediatric First Aid trained member of staff will sit with the children during lunch times.

To minimise the risk of choking, parents and carers are strongly advised to prepare packed lunch foods in a way that is safe for young children.

**This includes:**

* Cutting round foods such as grapes, cherry tomatoes, sausages, and carrots into long quarters rather than small round pieces, which can block the airway.
* Avoiding hard, small, or sticky foods that are known choking hazards unless they are appropriately prepared.
* Ensuring foods are soft enough for the child’s developmental stage and chewing ability.
* Staff will be alert to signs of choking and will follow established procedures if a choking incident occurs. Any choking incidents will be recorded, and parents/carers will be informed immediately.
* The school follows guidance from the British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology (BSACI) and NHS advice on food allergies, intolerances, and anaphylaxis management.
* Ongoing communication with parents and carers will support the safe introduction of new foods and textures in line with each child’s development.

**Dining Facilities for Pupils Bringing Packed Lunch**

The school will provide an appropriate area where children can eat their packed lunches.

**Waste and Disposal**

The school will, within reason, send any uneaten packed lunch food items back home. The rationale for this is that parents can also monitor what their child has consumed during the day and then raise any concerns over their child’s food intake with the school.

**Implementation**

This packed lunch policy fits within a wider context of promoting a whole school approach to food and healthy eating. Children’s packed lunches should be based on the **‘Eatwell Guide’** model which shows items in the 5 main food groups; (Food Standards Agency).

**Bread, Rice, Potatoes, Pasta**

These starchy foods are a healthy source of energy. Packed lunches should include 2 or more portions.

**Fruit and Vegetables**

These foods provide vitamins, minerals and fibre. Lunches should include at least 1 portion of fruit and 1 portion of vegetables/salad, or more.

**Milk and Dairy Foods**

These foods provide calcium for healthy bones and teeth. Include 1 portion at lunch.

**Meat, Fish, Eggs, Beans**

These foods provide protein for growth. Packed lunches should include 1 portion of these foods.

**Foods and Drinks High in Fat and/or Sugar**

It is important not to fill up on too many foods that are high in fat and/or sugar at the expense of other more nutritious foods. Limiting high fat and sugar foods will help protect young people from becoming overweight as well as helping prevent tooth decay, heart disease, stroke and diabetes. This is why sweets, chocolate, crisps, cereal bars, fruit bars, toffee/salted popcorn, squash and fizzy drinks are no longer available in schools. Please support the school by not including these items in a packed lunch.

**Drinks**

Any drinks provided in lunch boxes should only include either plain water, milk (semi-skimmed), unsweetened fresh fruit juice, diluted fresh fruit juice, fruit or dairy based smoothies.

**Please note that we are very happy to provide fresh drinking water every day.**

**To ensure consistency and to keep packed lunches in line with food standards for school meals, packed lunches should NOT contain the following:**

* Fizzy/sugary drinks in cartons, bottles or cans
* Chocolate-coated products/sweets/confectionary
* Cereal bars, fruit bars (containing nuts)
* Hazelnut/Chocolate spread as a filling for sandwiches (contains nuts)
* Chewing gum
* Nuts

**Items below are NOT to be included in a school packed lunch for children under 5 due to the risk of choking.**

* Popcorn – all varieties
* Marshmallows
* Jelly cubes
* Ice cubes

OFSTED are required to report on how the school promotes the personal development and well-being of all pupils – this may include food provision including packed lunches brought into school. The Local Authority will work with the school to review packed lunch provision and will provide advice and support to members of the school community.

**Monitoring and Review**

* Staff will monitor the contents of packed lunches and provide gentle guidance to parents if improvements are needed.
* This policy will be reviewed annually and updated in line with the latest EYFS nutrition guidance and school priorities.



