



Nutrition and Mealtimes Policy

Ringle Rainbow Nursery

Updated: 01/09/2026

Review Date: 01/09/2027

1. Introduction

At Ringle Rainbow Nursery, we are committed to providing healthy, balanced and nutritious food and drink that supports children's growth, development, oral health and wellbeing. We recognise mealtimes as important social and learning experiences and work in partnership with parents and carers to meet each child's individual dietary, developmental, cultural and medical needs.

2. Statutory Framework and Guidance

This policy reflects the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for group and school-based providers effective 1 September 2026, including its statutory food, drink and safer-eating requirements. The nursery has regard to the Department for Education Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance and current food-safety guidance for children aged five and under. It also reflects Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026. Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026 is retained as supplementary safeguarding good-practice guidance.

Ringle Rainbow Nursery also follows applicable food hygiene and allergen requirements and its own Food Safety Management System/Safer Food Better Business procedures.

3. Healthy Eating and Nutrition

- Meals, snacks and drinks provided by the nursery will be healthy, balanced and nutritious. The nursery will have regard to the EYFS nutrition guidance when planning and providing food.
- Children will be offered a varied range of foods, flavours and textures appropriate to their age and developmental stage.
- Children will be encouraged to try foods without pressure, punishment, bribery or shame. Individual appetite and appropriate preferences will be respected.
- Foods and drinks high in free sugars will be limited in order to support healthy development and oral health.
- Fresh drinking water will always be available and accessible to children.
- Menus and food provision will be reviewed to ensure they remain suitable for the children attending the nursery.



4. Mealtime Environment, Safety and Supervision

Mealtimes will be calm, sociable and appropriately paced. Children will be supported to develop independence, communication and positive relationships with food while staff model safe and healthy eating practices.

Children must always be within sight and hearing of a member of staff while eating. Where possible, staff will sit facing children so they can observe eating, prevent inappropriate food sharing and identify choking or unexpected allergic reactions quickly. Babies and young children will be seated safely in an appropriate highchair or suitably sized low chair.

There will always be a member of staff in the room while children are eating who holds a valid full-course paediatric first aid certificate meeting the EYFS criteria.

Food will be prepared and served in a way that reduces choking risk and is suitable for each child's individual developmental stage. Staff will not make assumptions based only on a child's age. High-risk foods will be avoided or modified appropriately; for example, small round foods will be cut safely and whole nuts will not be given to children under five.

At each meal and snack time, a named/identified member of staff will be responsible for checking that the food and drink being served meets each child's dietary requirements and has been prepared in a way that is appropriate and safe for that child.

If a child experiences a choking incident requiring staff intervention, including back blows, the incident will be recorded and parents/carers informed. Choking records will be reviewed periodically to identify any trends or changes needed to food preparation or practice.

5. Allergies, Intolerances and Special Dietary Requirements

- Before a child starts at the nursery, parents/carers must provide information about special dietary requirements, preferences, food allergies, intolerances and relevant health requirements. This information will be recorded, acted upon and kept up to date through ongoing discussion with families.
- Allergy and intolerance information will be clearly communicated to staff involved in preparing, handling and serving food, including through the nursery's allergy boards and agreed visual systems. Staff will check allergy information and confirm children's identities before food is served.
- The nursery will work with parents/carers and, where appropriate, health professionals to develop and maintain allergy action plans. Staff will understand the symptoms and treatment of allergies and anaphylaxis and the difference between an allergy and an intolerance.
- Children may develop an allergy at any time. Staff will remain alert to unexpected reactions, particularly during the introduction of new foods, and will follow emergency procedures immediately where necessary.



- Ringle Rainbow Nursery will continue to work in partnership with its external catering provider, Zebedees, sharing necessary and up-to-date allergy and dietary information to support safe meal provision.
- All staff involved in food handling will receive appropriate food-hygiene training, and staff will receive allergy awareness appropriate to their responsibilities.

6. Babies, Weaning and Introduction of Solid Foods

Where applicable, staff will have ongoing discussions with parents/carers about the stage a child has reached in introducing solid foods, including the textures the child is familiar with. Food will be prepared to suit the child's individual developmental needs, and staff will work with families to support progression at a pace that is right for the child.

Safe weaning and food-preparation practices will follow current NHS and DfE early-years food-safety guidance. New foods will not be introduced on the basis of age alone without consideration of the child's individual development and information from parents/carers.

7. Food Hygiene and Safe Preparation

The nursery will ensure that facilities used for food preparation and service are hygienic and suitable. Staff responsible for preparing and handling food must be competent and appropriately trained in food hygiene.

Food will be stored, prepared, reheated and served in accordance with the nursery's food-safety procedures, Safer Food Better Business arrangements and relevant food-hygiene requirements. Cross-contact risks will be actively managed.

If food poisoning affects two or more children cared for on the premises, the nursery will notify Ofsted as soon as reasonably practicable and in any event within 14 days, as required by the EYFS.

8. Cultural, Religious, Ethical and Additional Needs

- We respect children's cultural, religious and ethical dietary requirements and will work with families to make appropriate arrangements.
- Reasonable adjustments will be made for children with SEND, medical conditions, sensory differences, feeding difficulties or other additional needs. Advice from relevant health professionals will be followed where appropriate.
- Children will be introduced to a range of foods and food traditions in an inclusive and respectful way.

9. Oral Health Promotion

- The nursery will promote good oral health through healthy food and drink choices, age-appropriate activities, stories and discussion.



- Parents/carers will be supported with appropriate information about oral health and healthy eating.
- Food and drink provision will support the EYFS requirement to promote children's good health, including oral health.

10. Safeguarding and Welfare

Mealtimes provide important opportunities for staff to observe children's wellbeing. Concerns such as persistent hunger, significant changes in eating, feeding difficulties, unexplained distress, neglect or other indicators of harm will be considered in the context of the child and reported in accordance with the nursery's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is Jack Nash. Deputy DSLs are Charlotte Baldock and Penny Reidy. Safeguarding concerns will be recorded appropriately and shared with relevant agencies where necessary in line with the EYFS and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.

Routine information and relevant incidents may be recorded securely on BabysDays in accordance with the nursery's safeguarding, confidentiality and data-protection procedures.

11. Partnership with Parents and Carers

- Parents/carers will be informed about the food and drinks provided for their child and are encouraged to keep the nursery updated about dietary, allergy, health, developmental and cultural needs.
- The nursery will maintain a regular two-way flow of information with families, including relevant information about what children have eaten and any concerns arising during meals.
- Feedback from families will be considered when reviewing menus and food provision.

12. Monitoring and Review

The Nursery Manager will monitor implementation of this policy, including safer-eating practice, allergy arrangements, staff competence and food-hygiene procedures. The policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if legislation, statutory guidance, a significant incident or changes in nursery practice make this necessary.

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By: P Reidy