



Home Prepared Food Policy Blackberries Childcare Group

At Blackberries Childcare Group, we are committed to ensuring that all children, including those with allergies or special dietary requirements, can enjoy their meals safely. Contamination of allergens can have severe and life-threatening consequences. To prevent food-related accidents, we have a robust Healthy Eating and Food Safety Policy in place. Our chefs and staff are trained to follow strict procedures to maintain a safe eating environment.

To maintain flexibility for families who choose to provide home-prepared meals, we have outlined clear guidelines for Packed Lunches to minimise the risk of food contamination and to support healthy eating habits.

Food Safety Guidelines:

-  All packed lunches must include a cold ice pack to ensure food is stored at a safe temperature.
-  Dairy, cold meats, and fish must not be consumed without an ice pack, as harmful bacteria can multiply on food stored at room temperature.
-  A Packed Lunch Questionnaire must be completed each month to inform staff of allergens present in your child's lunch. This information is confidential and only shared with necessary staff members.

Restricted Foods – Do Not Include:

To protect children with severe allergies, the following foods must not be included in packed lunches:

-  Crustaceans and shellfish (e.g., prawns, crayfish, mussels, clams, squid, etc.)
-  Peanuts and tree nuts (e.g., almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, cashews, peanut butter, nut-containing spreads, etc.)
-  Sesame seeds and sesame-based products
-  Any food that requires reheating

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-  Rice dishes brought from home
-  Canned foods requiring heating (e.g., beans, spaghetti hoops)
-  Bread intended for toasting
-  Sugary drinks (e.g., fruit shoots, Ribena, fizzy drinks, squash)

Healthy Eating Guidelines:

A variety of foods should be included in your child's lunchbox, as their preferences may change daily. Providing choices encourages independence and better eating habits.

Sugary treats such as cakes, sweets, chocolate, and biscuits should be limited to one per day.

Sugary drinks are not allowed, as they can lead to sugar crashes, irritability, fatigue, and hunger. Water or milk is encouraged.

Grapes and cherry tomatoes must be cut in half lengthways to prevent choking hazards.

If your child is a fussy eater, consider trying our nursery-cooked meals, which provide a variety of nutritious foods and encourage social mealtime experiences.

Special Diets & Exemptions:

If your child has a medically verified dietary requirement requiring any restricted food, please inform the Nursery Manager so that an individual health care plan can be created.

If a child's packed lunch contains restricted food, it will not be served.

If a completed Packed Lunch Questionnaire is not received, we cannot serve the packed lunch to your child. A nursery meal will be provided at the standard charge if we are unable to contact you for an alternative.

For additional guidance, we provide a Healthy Lunchbox Ideas leaflet with practical tips and recipes for nutritious, balanced meals. For more information on food allergies, visit [NHS Food Allergy Guidance](#).

Thank you for your cooperation in maintaining a safe and healthy eating environment for all children at our nursery!

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