

Innsworth Preschool Food and Nutrition Policy

Last Updated: June 2026

1. Purpose and Scope

1.1 Overview: This policy sets out the framework for the provision and management of all food and drink at Innsworth Preschool.

1.2 Objective: Its purpose is to ensure that every child receives safe, healthy, and nutritious food in a hygienic environment, and to protect children and staff with severe, life-threatening allergies. Our procedures are not a matter of preference; they are the direct result of our legal duties to keep children safe.

2. Key Definitions

To ensure clarity and consistency across our policies (including the Fees, Funding and Charges Policy and Parent-Provider Agreement), the following terms apply:

- **Meals Service:** The optional, paid in-house meal service covering Brunch and Lunch, with free breakfast offered from 8:30am to 9:30am.
- **Packed Lunch:** Food provided by parents who have opted out of the in-house meal service.
- **Emergency Meal:** A safety intervention meal provided by the setting when a Packed Lunch is deemed unsafe or non-compliant.
- **Restricted Allergen List (Cohort-Specific):** The list of ingredients currently prohibited in the setting based on the specific medical needs of attending children and the Allergy Risk Assessment.

3. Legal and Statutory Framework

3.1 Compliance: This policy is underpinned by and ensures full compliance with:

- The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS): specifically the Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements (Food and Drink).
- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974: our duty to identify risks and protect health.

- The Equality Act 2010: recognising severe allergies as a potential disability requiring reasonable adjustments.
- The Food Safety Act 1990 & Food Information Regulations 2014: ensuring accurate allergen information and safe handling.
- DfE Guidance: We have regard to DfE early education and childcare statutory guidance on charging for meals/consumables and optional extras, and we operate within EYFS welfare requirements.

4. Our Recommended Pathway: In-House Meal Service

4.1 The Service: To support food safety, nutrition, and consistency, we provide an in-house Meals Service. The setting's meal service is usually the simplest option for parents because staff already manage food safety, allergen controls, ordering, storage, and preparation through the setting's own process.

- **Safety:** Meals are prepared in our dedicated, allergen-controlled kitchen, offering the highest practicable level of protection against cross-contamination.
- **Recommendation:** Our strong recommendation is to use the Meal Service, as it is the safest and simplest way to ensure your child's nutritional needs are met without the logistical burden of packed lunches.

5. Food in the Curriculum: The Farm Experience

As part of our curriculum, children participate in the "Farm Experience," involving growing, harvesting, handling, and cooking food. We manage the specific risks as follows:

5.1 "Seed to Spoon" (Horticulture): Children learn to grow and harvest produce.

- **Hygiene:** Hand-washing is mandatory immediately after gardening sessions and before any eating.
- **Safety:** Children are taught never to eat produce directly from the plant without permission. All harvested produce is washed thoroughly using potable water in designated food-prep sinks before consumption.

5.2 "Animal Husbandry" (Egg Collection): To prevent Salmonella and zoonotic infections:

- **Handling:** Eggs are collected using designated baskets/trays.
- **Hygiene:** Children must wash hands with soap and warm water immediately after leaving the animal enclosure.
- **Consumption:** Eggs collected by children are taken to the kitchen for cooking/storage. They are never consumed raw.

5.3 "Mini Food Tech" (Cooking):

- **Allergens:** All ingredients used in cooking activities are subject to the same strict allergen checks as our main kitchen.
- **Safety:** Activities involving heat or sharp tools are led by staff and risk-assessed; children participate in safe, age-appropriate steps under direct supervision.

6. Parent-Provided Food (Packed Lunches)

6.1 Opting Out: In line with funding rules, parents may opt out of the meal service. By choosing this option, you act as the primary food provider and assume **primary responsibility** for compliance with the safety standards below.

- **Dietary Needs:** All dietary needs, allergies, and medication requirements are managed under the **Allergy Management Policy** and the child's IHCP.

6.2 Restricted Allergens (Cohort-Specific): Packed lunches must comply with the current Prohibited Items / Restricted Allergen List set out in the **Allergy Management Policy** and cohort risk assessment.

- **Current Restrictions:** Food brought from home must not contain, or be labelled as "may contain", any allergen restricted by the setting. Standing restricted allergens include nuts, peanuts, and sesame. Additional restrictions may apply where a child has an allergy, allergy plan, medical need, or EpiPen requirement, including but not limited to fish and egg where these are restricted by the setting.
- **Review:** This list is reviewed termly based on the medical needs of the children currently attending. If a child with a severe airborne allergy joins

(e.g. to egg or dairy), we reserve the right to add items to this restricted list on safety grounds. Parents will be notified in writing.

6.3 Healthy Eating Standards: In line with the EYFS, parents must provide a healthy, balanced meal.

- **Prohibited Items:** Fizzy drinks, energy drinks, sweets, chocolate bars, and chewing gum.
- **Limited Items:** Cakes and biscuits should be occasional only.
- **Adjustments:** We will take account of allergies, sensory needs, and Individual Healthcare Plans (Equality Act reasonable adjustments).
- **Suitability:** The Manager's decision on immediate food safety suitability applies for that session and will be recorded with reasons. Parents may request a review meeting.

6.4 Food Storage (External Facility): To comply with fire safety and space constraints, lunch bags are stored in our designated external storage facility.

- **Safety:** The storage area is pest-controlled, weather-protected, and kept closed/secured.
- **Temperature and Containers:** We do not provide individual refrigeration. Parents must provide food in a compact, named, wipe-clean container, with an ice pack where needed, so food remains safe and can be stored, checked, and handed over safely. Staff may refuse items that are warm, leaking, unsafe, unsuitable, unlabelled, or not in a suitable container.

6.5 Choking Prevention: All food items that could pose a choking hazard must be prepared at home to safety standards. We follow current NHS/UKHSA safer eating guidance and will apply additional controls for younger children.

- **Requirement:** Grapes, cherry tomatoes, blueberries, olives, and sausages must be cut lengthways into quarters (or smaller where appropriate).
- **Prohibition:** Whole round foods are strictly prohibited.

7. Inspection and Enforcement

7.1 Checks: Packed lunches may be checked at drop-off and/or before eating.

7.2 Non-Compliance Procedure: If an item is non-compliant (e.g. contains or is labelled as "may contain" a restricted allergen, contains whole grapes, or is unsafe/warm):

- **Rectification:** You will be contacted to return immediately to rectify it (e.g. bring a safe replacement). We expect a replacement within **one hour** where practicable.
- **Emergency Meal:** If you are unable to return within this time, we may provide an emergency replacement meal where safe and suitable to do so, to ensure your child does not go hungry. Where the setting has to provide an emergency replacement meal because a parent has not provided suitable food or has not opted into the meals service, a £6 emergency meal charge may apply, subject to funding rules and any applicable legal requirements. This reflects the additional inconvenience, food cost, staff time, and disruption caused by arranging food at short notice. If there is any uncertainty about funded-hours rules or fee restrictions, the Manager will seek human review before relying on the charge.
- **Refusal:** If we cannot safely provide an emergency meal due to allergies/dietary restrictions, we may require immediate collection of the child.
- **Disposal:** Unsafe items will be removed and returned to you at collection.

7.3 Consequences: Repeated or serious breaches will trigger a recorded safety review and may lead to refusal of entry for that session and/or escalation under the **Suspension and Termination of Place Policy**.

7.4 Booked Meal Charges and Absence: Where a parent has selected the meal service, meals are planned, ordered, prepared, and staffed using the child's regular booking. Meal charges are therefore not normally removed or refunded because a child is absent, arrives late, leaves early, or does not eat the meal. Any exception is entirely at management's discretion and is managed under the Fees, Funding and Charges Policy.

8. Monitoring and Review

8.1 Review: This policy is reviewed annually or following any serious incident or change in legislation.

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