

Blue Windmill Nursery

Provision of Food Policy

At Blue Windmill, we believe mealtimes are an important part of children's health, wellbeing, social development and learning. Meals and snacks provide opportunities for children to develop independence, communication skills, confidence and positive relationships with food.

We aim to create calm, sociable mealtime experiences where children can enjoy healthy food in a relaxed and supportive environment. Mealtimes also help children develop important self-help skills, including serving, using cutlery, making choices and participating in shared routines.

Our nursery meals and snacks are freshly prepared and designed to support healthy growth and development in line with current early years nutrition guidance.

Our food provision supports:

- Consistency in healthy eating messages
- Safe management of allergies and dietary requirements
- Age-appropriate portion sizes and safer eating practices
- Calm and positive mealtime routines
- Opportunities for children to build independence and confidence
- School readiness through shared dining experiences

Voluntary Food Charges

Government-funded childcare hours cover early education and care but **do not include meals, snacks or consumable food items.**

Families may therefore choose whether to:

- Purchase nursery meals and snacks
- Provide suitable packed food from home in line with our lunchbox guidance

Any charges relating to food are voluntary and apply only to meals and snacks provided by the nursery.

Nursery Meal Provision

We offer a meal package where meals and snacks are prepared inhouse by our nursery kitchen. Meals are designed to be balanced, varied and suitable for young children, and

we work with families wherever possible to support dietary, cultural and medical requirements.

Our menu includes:

- Breakfast
- Morning snack
- Two course meal at lunchtime
- Afternoon snack
- Teatime meal

Fresh drinking water and milk are available throughout the day.

Packed Food from Home

Families who choose to provide food from home are asked to support our healthy eating and safer eating procedures.

We ask that packed food:

- Supports a balanced and nutritious diet
- Is suitable for the child's age and stage of development
- Is prepared and packed safely and hygienically
- Is clearly labelled with the child's name
- Does not contain nuts or nut-based products
- Avoids foods which present increased choking risks unless appropriately prepared
- Does not include sweets, chocolate or drinks (water is provided)

To support consistency with current nutrition guidance, we encourage families to include:

- Fruit and vegetables
- A starchy food such as bread, wraps, pasta or rice
- A protein source
- Dairy foods or suitable alternatives where appropriate

Safer Eating and Allergies

The nursery has a duty to manage allergies and safer eating practices for all children. Parents may be asked to provide ingredient information if required for allergy or safety

purposes. Staff may discreetly check lunchbox contents where necessary to help ensure compliance with allergy management and safer eating procedures.

Parents are responsible for informing the nursery of any allergies, intolerances or dietary requirements and for ensuring food brought from home is suitable and safely prepared.

We ask parents to prepare foods in line with current safer eating guidance for young children. For example:

- Grapes, cherry tomatoes and similar foods should be cut lengthways and appropriately sized
- Stones and pips should be removed from fruit
- Foods should be suitable for the child's developmental stage

A separate Safer Eating, Allergies and Nutrition Policy sets out our procedures in more detail.

Storage and Food Handling

As nursery fridge capacity is limited, we are unable to refrigerate all packed lunches brought from home. Parents should therefore provide insulated lunch bags and ice packs where needed to help keep food cool and safe throughout the day.

For food safety reasons:

- We are unable to heat food brought from home
- Packed meals should be ready to eat
- Glass containers must not be used

Drinks

Fresh drinking water is available throughout the day and at all mealtimes.

Parents should not provide drinks with packed lunches. Drinks other than water or milk will not normally be given during nursery sessions.

Positive Mealtime Experiences

We aim to create a welcoming and inclusive dining environment where children can enjoy meals together safely and comfortably.

Children are encouraged to:

- Develop independence at mealtimes
- Explore new foods without pressure
- Practice social skills and conversation
- Learn about healthy eating habits

Staff supervise children closely during meals and snacks and support children according to their age and individual needs.

Partnership with Families

We value positive partnerships with parents and carers and recognise that families have different preferences, routines, cultural traditions and dietary needs.

Where concerns arise regarding food brought from home, staff will discuss these sensitively and supportively with families.

We may share guidance, resources and ideas to support healthy lunchbox choices and safer eating practices in line with current early years guidance.

Failure to Provide Suitable Food

If suitable food has not been provided for the day, the nursery will work with families to identify a safe and appropriate solution wherever possible.

In some circumstances, nursery meals may be provided and charged in line with our ad hoc meal rates.