

Beavers Lodge Playgroup

Packed Lunch Policy

Introduction/ Aim

At Beavers Lodge Playgroup, we are committed to promoting healthy eating habits that support children's overall well-being and development. Our Packed Lunch Policy aims to ensure that children aged 2-5 years receive balanced, nutritious meals while in our care. This policy is in line with the government's guidance on healthy eating, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework, and other relevant recommendations to promote the health and development of young children.

Rationale

The early years are a crucial period for establishing lifelong healthy eating habits. According to the Department of Health and Social Care (2020), childhood nutrition directly influences growth, cognitive development, and overall health. Our playgroup recognizes the importance of providing a balanced diet to support each child's physical, mental, and emotional development.

The EYFS framework (2021) emphasizes the importance of health and well-being, particularly through the "Physical Development" and "Personal, Social, and Emotional Development" areas of learning. It highlights that children should be taught the benefits of healthy choices and have access to nutritious food during their time in early education settings. This Packed Lunch Policy aligns with these principles, ensuring that parents and carers are informed about appropriate foods to include in their child's packed lunch.

Government and EYFS Guidance

According to the *School Food Standards* (2015), all childcare settings must provide meals that contribute to children's nutritional requirements. Though Beavers Lodge Playgroup does not provide hot meals, it is important that packed lunches sent from home reflect these same standards. Key guidelines include:

- Providing a variety of fruits and vegetables.
- Including starchy foods like bread, rice, potatoes, or pasta.
- Offering a source of protein, such as meat, fish, eggs, beans, or pulses.
- Avoiding foods high in sugar, salt, and fat.
- Providing appropriate dairy products like cheese, milk, or yogurt.

Guidelines for Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are encouraged to pack healthy and balanced lunches for their children. To support this, we recommend the following:

- **Sandwiches, wraps, or pasta** as a source of carbohydrates for energy.
- **Vegetables or salad** (e.g., cucumber sticks, cherry tomatoes, carrots).
- **Fresh fruit** (e.g., apples, bananas, grapes) as a nutritious snack.
- **Protein** options like cheese, lean meats, or hummus.
- **Water** or diluted juice as a drink—sugary drinks and fizzy drinks should be avoided.

Foods to Avoid

To ensure all children can benefit from healthy eating practices, we kindly ask parents to refrain from including:

- Foods high in sugar, such as sweets, chocolates, and sugary pastries.
- Fizzy or sugary drinks.
- Highly processed foods, such as crisps or pre-packaged cakes.
- Nuts or nut-based products, due to potential allergies.

Allergy Awareness

Beavers Lodge Playgroup has a **nut-free** policy to protect children with allergies. If your child has any dietary restrictions or allergies, please inform the staff in advance so that we can take appropriate measures to ensure their safety.

Monitoring and Support

Our staff will monitor packed lunches to ensure compliance with this policy and will offer guidance to parents where necessary. We encourage open communication with families to support them in providing healthy, balanced meals for their children.

Conclusion

This Packed Lunch Policy is designed to ensure that every child at Beavers Lodge Playgroup receives nutritious, balanced meals that contribute to their development and learning. By working together with parents, we can instill healthy habits in young children that will benefit them for life.

References:

- Department of Health and Social Care (2020) *Childhood Nutrition Guidelines*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk (Accessed: 20 March 2025).
- Department for Education (2021) *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2 (Accessed: 20 March 2025).
- Public Health England (2015) *School Food Standards*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk (Accessed: 20 March 2025).