GARDENER SCHOOLS GROUP LIMITED – FOOD AND NUTRITION POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

This policy has been developed in accordance with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) 2025 requirements and with regard to the Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance, May 2025. It recognises that good nutrition is fundamental to children's health, development, and learning outcomes.

Our Aims:

The Gardener Schools Group ensures the provision of nutritious and balanced meals and snacks to promote the health, growth, and development of all children within the Early Years at Ravenscourt Park Preparatory School, Kew Green Preparatory School, and Kew Green Nursery. We are committed to creating positive mealtime experiences, not only supporting children's physical development, but also promoting lifelong healthy eating habits through enjoyable, social dining experiences.

The safety and wellbeing of all children remains paramount during all aspects of food preparation, serving, and consumption, with robust procedures in place to protect every child in our care. We work collaboratively with parents and carers as partners to meet each child's individual dietary needs, recognising that consistency between home and school supports the best outcomes for children.

We view food experiences as valuable opportunities for holistic learning and development, incorporating nutrition education naturally into our curriculum.

2. STAFF SUPERVISION AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

2.1 Staff Positioning During Meals

All staff members are required to sit facing pupils whilst eating, ensuring continuous visual supervision and the ability to respond immediately to any situation that may arise, particularly choking incidents.

2.2 First Aid Requirements

When Early Years children are eating, a member of staff holding a current Paediatric First Aid qualification is present. This essential safety requirement applies to all meal and snack times without exception, ensuring that should any emergency arise, particularly choking incidents which can occur silently and require immediate intervention, appropriately trained staff are immediately available to respond. Staff rotas are carefully arranged to ensure this requirement is consistently met, with first aid qualified staff clearly identified and their qualifications maintained through regular updates and renewal programmes.

3. PRE-ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

3.1 Essential Information Required:

Before any child joins the school community, we obtain information about each child's dietary requirements and preferences to support inclusion, ensure we cater to allergies accurately and ultimately ensure that every child feels safe and valued during mealtimes.

We gather information on food preferences and familiar foods that enable children to feel comfortable and secure in their new environment. Critical to child safety, we collect thorough documentation regarding any food allergies, including medical information and emergency procedures that must be followed in the event of an adverse reaction. Additionally, we record information about food intolerances, documenting associated symptoms and the specific management strategies that have proven effective for each child. We also gather information about any special health requirements that may impact nutrition or feeding practices, ensuring we can provide appropriate care that supports each child's individual needs.

3.2 Weaning and Food Texture Information

In our Nursery, staff engage in ongoing, detailed discussions with parents on their child's current stage in introducing solid foods, recognising that this is a highly individual journey, and one which varies significantly from child to child. We strive to develop a clear and sensitive understanding of each child's familiarity and comfort with specific food textures, recognising that individual progress may vary and that some children may advance or require additional support outside typical developmental milestones. We recognise that assumptions must never be made based on age alone, as children develop at their own pace and may have unique circumstances affecting their food journey. Parents update us as children progress through different food stages, and therefore we maintain current knowledge of each child's capabilities and comfort levels. We also carefully document any specific feeding methods or specialised equipment that individual children require to eat safely and comfortably.

4. MEAL AND SNACK PROVISION

4.1 Nutritional Standards

Both our Primary Schools, Ravenscourt Park Preparatory and Kew Green Preparatory, and our Kew Green Nursery, have regard for the Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance, May 2025, and follow these guidelines unless there are documented reasons for alternative approaches.

4.2 Meal Scheduling

Meals and snacks are thoughtfully provided regularly throughout the day, in accordance with *Promoting Healthy, Balanced and Nutritious Meals* (DfE), paying careful attention to children's natural rhythms and nutritional needs. Understanding the high energy demands of early childhood growth and development, we ensure that children are offered a meal or snack regularly throughout

the school day, supporting sustained energy levels and healthy appetites for nutritious foods. Portion sizes are carefully calibrated to be age-appropriate while allowing children the opportunity to request additional servings, supporting their natural ability to self-regulate their intake. Mealtimes at our schools are seen as opportunities to encourage positive social interactions.

4.3 Food Quality and Variety

All food served is carefully selected to meet the comprehensive nutritional requirements necessary for growing children during these critical developmental years. Menus are thoughtfully designed to offer a varied and balanced selection of nutritious foods that reflect a range of cultural influences and promote healthy eating habits. We prioritise fresh, wholesome ingredients wherever possible, recognising that quality nutrition forms the foundation for optimal physical and cognitive development. Throughout all aspects of food preparation, we adhere strictly to relevant health and safety guidelines, maintaining the highest standards to protect the wellbeing of every child in our care.

5. RESPONSIBILITY AND MONITORING

5.1 Designated Responsibility

At each mealtime and snack time, including during the extended day, there is a designated member of staff responsible for checking that the food being provided meets all requirements for each child. This is done through careful communication with kitchen staff, clearly labelled allergy awareness posters displayed around the setting, and staff being fully aware of the health and dietary requirements of every child.

5.2 Daily Checks Include:

Our comprehensive daily monitoring ensures that each child's special dietary requirements are met with accuracy, consistency, and careful attention to individual needs. Allergenic foods are robustly managed through appropriate separation, labelling, and handling procedures that eliminate cross-contamination risks. Children with specific dietary requirements are served by a designated member of the Kitchen Team, trained in allergy management, and the staff member sitting with the children acts as an additional check, ensuring children are being accurately served. Their meals are verified through a dual-check process and served on a blue plate to ensure clear visual differentiation from standard menu items. This approach supports both the safeguarding of children's health and our school's inclusive ethos, which fosters understanding, respect, and celebration of individual dietary needs.

Staff ensure that food textures are appropriate for each child's current developmental stage and comfort level, avoiding both foods that are too advanced and those that may not provide appropriate challenge for developing oral motor skills. Additionally, we check that portion sizes are suitable for each child's age, developmental stage, and appetite patterns, supporting healthy growth while respecting individual differences in nutritional needs.

5.3 Record Keeping

For nursery children, regular verbal communication is shared with parents on a child's intake of food. In our Reception classes, this level of detailed monitoring is provided for children with specific dietary or developmental needs, as agreed in collaboration with their families. This comprehensive information enables parents to understand their child's nutritional intake and eating development while maintaining consistency between home and school approaches.

All adverse reactions or concerns are thoroughly documented, including the specific foods involved, symptoms observed, timing, and actions taken, creating a comprehensive record that supports both immediate care and long-term health management.

Our Early Years Staff update parents about children's eating patterns, sharing both successes and any areas where additional support might be beneficial, should nutritional concern arise.

6. ALLERGY AND SPECIAL DIETARY MANAGEMENT

6.1 Allergy Management

We create detailed individual *Health and Dietary Care Plans* for children in our schools, including those who require additional support or have food allergies. For children with significant needs, these plans are developed in collaboration with parents and healthcare professionals to ensure every aspect of the child's condition is fully understood and properly managed. Clear labelling and physical separation of allergenic foods is maintained throughout our food preparation, storage, and serving processes, with dedicated equipment and preparation areas used where necessary to prevent cross-contamination.

All Kitchen and Early Years staff receive thorough training on recognising the early signs of allergic reactions and responding appropriately, including when and how to seek emergency medical assistance. Emergency medication prescribed for individual children is kept readily available in designated, easily accessible locations, with multiple staff members trained in its proper administration and emergency protocols clearly posted and regularly reviewed.

6.2 Special Diets

We are committed to accommodating medical and dietary needs and, as far as reasonably possible, respecting religious and cultural practices, recognising that food is often central to family identity and wellbeing. Review meetings with parents ensure that our understanding of each child's special dietary needs remains current and accurate as children grow and family circumstances evolve. When complex medical dietary requirements are involved, we actively seek consultation with healthcare professionals to ensure our approach is both safe and nutritionally appropriate. For every child with specific dietary needs, we provide suitable alternative options that are equally nutritious, ensuring no child feels excluded or different during mealtimes.

7. DRINKS PROVISION

7.1 Healthy Drink Options

We only serve water and semi-skimmed milk, recognising these as the healthiest options for supporting both dental health and overall physical development in young children, over the age of two.

8. CHILD INVOLVEMENT AND INDEPENDENCE

8.1 Active Participation

Children, in both schools, are actively involved in age-appropriate food preparation activities supporting their development while building positive relationships with food and cooking. These meaningful opportunities extend to table setting, food serving, and clearing activities, helping children develop independence and understanding of mealtime routines. We encourage and support self-feeding and self-serving skills appropriate to each child's developmental stage, providing guidance and assistance as needed while fostering growing independence. Food exploration activities are thoughtfully incorporated into our broader learning programme, using cooking and food preparation as natural opportunities to develop fine motor skills, mathematical concepts, scientific understanding, and cultural awareness.

8.2 Choice and Autonomy

Children are empowered to decide which foods they will eat from the healthy options provided, supporting their developing autonomy while ensuring all available choices are nutritionally beneficial. We maintain a firm policy that food is never used as a reward or punishment, recognising that such practices can create unhealthy relationships with eating that may persist throughout life. Children's individual preferences are respected and accommodated where possible, while gentle encouragement is provided to try new foods and expand dietary variety. We trust in children's natural ability to self-regulate their appetite and nutritional intake, allowing them to eat according to their hunger cues rather than imposed adult expectations about portion sizes or food combinations.

9. PARENT PARTNERSHIP

9.1 Communication

Weekly menus for the School-Day and Aftercare are available to parents through the School's online portal and linked into our weekly bulletin. They are also physically on display to parents on each school's site. Ready access to the menus enables parents to make informed decisions about complementary meals and snacks provided at home.

9.2 Education

We are committed to working in partnership with parents to promote children's health and nutrition beyond the setting. Our Early Years Team Leaders develop and implement strategies that support healthy growth, development, and learning, while encouraging positive lifelong eating habits. We

ensure inclusion and equality in all aspects of food provision and meet all statutory health, safety, and safeguarding requirements. To further support families, we share useful food safety, food preparation and nutritional resources through our online platforms, helping parents to reinforce healthy and safe practices at home.

10. CELEBRATIONS AND SPECIAL OCCASIONS

10.1 Healthy Celebrations

Birthdays and special occasions are recognised as important moments in children's lives and are celebrated in ways that uphold our commitment to healthy nutrition and safeguarding. Food-based treats from home are not included in our celebration practices. Instead, we encourage non-food alternatives and meaningful activities that create enjoyable, inclusive experiences for all children. When food forms part of a planned celebration, it is carefully integrated within our balanced menu approach. Cultural and religious occasions are acknowledged with sensitivity and respect, ensuring that all celebrations promote children's health, inclusion, and wellbeing.

11. HEALTH AND SAFETY

11.1 Food Safety

All staff involved in food handling receive comprehensive training in food hygiene principles, with regular refresher training provided to ensure knowledge remains current with evolving best practices. Throughout all food-related activities, we maintain a clean and hygienic eating environment that supports both health and the enjoyment of mealtimes. All Early Years staff hold a Level 2 qualification in Food Safety and Hygiene. All Kitchen and Aftercare staff hold both Allergy Training and Level 2 qualification in Food Safety and Hygiene.

11.2 Choking Prevention

Age-appropriate food textures and sizes are carefully provided for each child, taking into account not only chronological age, but also individual developmental readiness and familiarity with different food types.

When preparing food, small fruits including grapes, olives, raspberries, strawberries and cherry tomatoes are cut lengthways and then halved again (quarters).

Continuous, attentive supervision is maintained during all eating times, with staff positioned to observe all children clearly and respond immediately to any signs of difficulty. Our Paediatric Training requirements ensure that all staff receive thorough training in choking response procedures, including recognition of choking signs and appropriate emergency interventions. Seating arrangements are deliberately planned to ensure clear visibility of all children and enabling rapid response to any emergency situation. Reasonable adjustments are made for children with specific needs.

12. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

12.1 Regular Review

This policy undergoes comprehensive review annually or more frequently, as required by changes in regulatory guidance, best practice recommendations, or specific needs identified within the school community.

Our commitment to continuous improvement is demonstrated through our willingness to adapt practices based on emerging research, best practice developments, and the evolving needs of our school community.

12.2 Training and Development

Regular, comprehensive staff training programmes cover all aspects of nutrition, food safety, and management of special dietary needs, ensuring all EYFS staff members have the knowledge and skills necessary to support children's nutritional wellbeing effectively. Training is carried out every two years for all staff involved in the preparation and service of food for children aged five and under. This includes Level 2 Food Safety & Hygiene as well as Administering Medications. In addition, we adhere to the paediatric training requirements set out in the DfE's guidance for early years settings.

Our training includes:

- A recognised full paediatric first aid qualification appropriate for children aged 0–5, with timely renewal and re-qualification as required.
- Training on administering medication (including insulins or other prescribed treatments) and managing children's medical conditions safely.
- Safe food handling and hygiene awareness, especially where children have special dietary needs or food allergies.
- Safeguarding, health & safety and welfare training appropriate for early years practitioners.

We ensure that our training covers all of these elements and that staff records are maintained to demonstrate ongoing compliance.

When guidance or regulations change, immediate updates are provided to all relevant staff members, with additional training sessions arranged as needed, to ensure smooth implementation of new requirements.

This policy demonstrates our commitment to providing the highest standards of nutrition and food safety for all children in our care, while supporting overall development and wellbeing.

Review Details:

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