FOOD AND DRINK POLICY

Last reviewed:	July 2025
Next review due:	July 2026

Aim

It is always the aim of The Little Firefly to ensure that the children in our care receive high quality nutrition at snack, lunch and tea times. The Little Firefly provides a morning snack and afternoon tea, where parents will provide a packed lunch with their child.

Healthy eating paired with physical activity is vital for proper growth and development, and we recognise our position to have a positive influence on the attitudes that children and their parents/carers have towards food and a healthy lifestyle. We encourage children to eat healthily and teach them that healthy eating is not about denying foods that they enjoy but is having a varied and balanced diet and enjoying lots of different foods.

We regard snack and mealtimes as a social time for children. We encourage children and staff to gather to enjoy food together at these times. Equally we do not force any child to eat if they do not want to but remind them of the benefits of eating as a source of energy for more play, to keep warm on cold days and to experience new tastes and textures.

The Little Firefly will ensure that staff preparing food are appropriately trained and that consistent and high levels of food hygiene practices are maintained.

Process

Our responsibilities are to obtain and keep updated records around a child's dietary needs, preferences and allergies. Our staff must be fully trained and competent at delivering food safety. We must ensure that our outdoors environment is equipped to meet food safety and hygiene standards in all temperatures. We should work in partnership with families to educate about nutritious meals for their child. Finally we should ensure that each child eats well and builds a good relationship with food and drink.

<u>Record keeping</u>

Upon joining the setting each child's individual dietary needs, preferences and any allergies are requested on the enrolment information. This information is discussed with the child's family, and regular consultation is held to ensure the information held is correct.

Information about children's individual dietary needs and allergies is clearly displayed (digitally - on a daily register and in a medical folder and physically visible - on-site within the snack box and in a locked shed) and all educators, staff, students and volunteers are fully informed.

Food hygiene, training and environment

The Little Firefly have a Health and Safety (inc COSHH) Policy and a Hygiene Policy that both reference food hygiene. The Little Firefly is registered as a food business with the local environmental health department.

Food should be stored, prepared and presented in a safe and hygienic environment. This is especially important when providing food for young children, as they may have a low resistance to food poisoning. It is also important that children are taught basic hygiene themselves.

Training
To ensure that food prepared is done so in the best possible conditions all or most of our staff are required to obtain a Food Hygiene certificate prior to, or within, the first three months of employment. Practitioners are required to get a Level 2 in Food Hygiene, where managers are required to get a Level 3 in Food Hygiene.

To maintain high levels of hygiene in food preparation areas we will:

- Provide staff with procedures for food preparation.
- Ensure that food preparation areas are kept clean.
- Ensure that appropriate clothing, such as aprons and gloves, are worn by those preparing food where necessary
- Check all food purchased for expiry dates and quality.
- Store foods in such a way that those with the longest shelf life are stored behind one another.
- Check all food at the time of use to ensure that it is still in date.
- Food which has been opened is labelled with the date opened and date for disposal (in accordance with the instructions on the packaging).
- Note the temperatures of the foods post heating
- Notify Ofsted if there is an outbreak of food poisoning, within 14 days

We will also:

- Ensure children wash their hands with soap and water before eating
- Ensure children do not eat food that has fallen on the floor
- Wash tea towels, kitchen cloths and sponges daily
- Regularly clean kitchen equipment and their storage boxes

Kingston Blount
We have access to electricity, a working fridge/freezer and kettle from within the farm's shop, located just outside the forest school setting. We also have access to the farm's taps for fresh drinking water. Staff will store snack and tea ingredients in the fridge until required and have a cool bag and cool packs to keep items cool once taken on site. Staff will fill up a hot water container each morning to have on site to use for washing up, cleaning and hand hygiene where needed.

Lunch storage: children's lunchboxes are stored in a shady area on the forest school site. Parents are advised to send with a coo lpack in the warmer weather.

Upton

We have access to the farm's taps for fresh drinking water and if needed, a kitchen where we can access electricity to boil water. Staff will fill up a hot water container each morning to have on site to use for washing up, cleaning and hand hygiene where needed. Fruit and dairy will be kept in a well insulated coolbox containing multiple cool packs and kept in a shaded area. Dairy will be brought onsite on day of use. Any dairy not used that day will be disposed of.

Lunch storage: children's lunchboxes are stored in a shady area on the forest school site. Parents are advised to send with a cool pack in the warmer weather.

Food

Food provided by The Little Firefly will be nutritious and of high quality and will not contain large quantities of saturated fat, sugar, salt, artificial additives, preservatives and colourings. In addition, foods described as 'low fat' will not be used nor will any food containing nuts or nut products.

Children will generally receive fruit and vegetables at snack time as part of their recommended five portions a day and we aim to provide a variety throughout the week.

Where possible, we source food locally.

Children bring their own packed lunch, made at home. We ask that parents keep packaging to a minimum and follow our guidelines below when preparing food for their child to reduce the risk of choking. Staff will check all children's lunchboxes for choking risks, and may remove or cut food up according to guidelines, with communication to parents.

Risk of choking

Children can choke at any age. However, younger children are at greater risk as their narrow airways are more easily blocked. Staff will always supervise children and ask them to remain seated when eating.

We:

- remove any stones and pips from fruit before serving
- cut small round foods, like grapes, strawberries and cherry tomatoes, lengthways and into quarters
- cut large fruits like melon, and hard fruit or vegetables like raw apple and carrot into slices instead of small chunks
- cut sausages and similar shapes lengthways
- do not serve meat or fish with bones
- are a nut-free setting (this includes nuts in protein bars etc from home)
- do not serve whole seeds
- cut cheese into strips rather than chunks

- do not give popcorn, marshmallows, jelly cubes, mini eggs or hard sweets as a snack or for messy play

All or most of our staff are trained in paediatric first aid. There will always be a staff member who is trained in paediatric first aid sitting with the children while they are eating, as per the Early Years Statutory Framework guidance.

Birthday and celebratory treats

From time to time, parents may want to bring in a birthday cake or other treats to celebrate their child. The Little Firefly allows this but families may want to offer non-food treats like bringing in bubbles, face paint or stickers. We ask that parent/carers speak with the staff to find out any dietary requirements of children on the day, so we can ensure there is something to offer everyone. Please also follow our nut-free policy and any choking hazard guidance e.g. no mini-eggs, marshmallows or similar. Birthday cake and sweet treats will be not be a regular occurrence and staff will limit the children's intake to an appropriate amount.

Drinks

Children are asked to bring a named water bottle with them. The bottles are stored in the same place each day so the children are able to get water for themselves whenever they are thirsty. Staff remind children to drink water at snack, lunch and tea times and inform children that they can ask for more water at any point during the day. Children can also access extra drinking water themselves whenever needed. We have more frequent reminders on particularly hot days.

On walks, we often take a large water container and plastic cups so we can offer drinking water without the need for staff to carry the extra weight of water bottles.

Policies, procedures and risk assessments referred to (or relevant to) in this document:

- COSHH Risk Assessment
- Fire and Cooking Risk Benefit Analysis
- Food Preparation Procedure
- Staff Development and Training Policy
- Daily register
- Medical needs and allergies document for each setting

External references:

- Help for early years providers : Food safety
- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2
- Example menus for early years settings in England: part 1
- The Eatwell Guide - NHS