EYFS Food Safety and Eating Supervision Policy

'Love one another as I have loved you.'

Commitment to equality:

We are committed to providing a positive working environment which is free from prejudice and unlawful discrimination and any form of harassment, bullying or victimisation. We have developed a number of key policies to ensure that the principles of Catholic Social Teaching in relation to human dignity and dignity in work become embedded into every aspect of school life and these policies are reviewed regularly in this regard.

This EYFS Food Safety and Eating Supervision Policy is submitted for approval and adoption by the Governing Body.

Approval date: October 2026 Review date: September 2027

Chair of Governors: Jenny Stuart-Collins

Headteacher: J Burns

1. Purpose and scope

At St Nicholas, this policy sets out safe classroom food practice and supervision of Reception children while eating. It covers milk and fruit time, classroom snacks, cooking and tasting activities, celebrations, food used in play and food at Forest School or on visits where provided. It also covers EYFS staff observing and supporting children eating school dinners or packed lunches in the dining hall.

Our EYFS provision is Reception only. Leeds City Council catering staff manage school lunch preparation, kitchen food safety and school meal special diet arrangements, including special diet meetings. This policy does not set procedures for the catering kitchen. School staff communicate children's allergies and special diets and any changes to the kitchen, liaise over concerns and remain responsible for safe supervision and appropriate support while children eat.

2. Relationship with the whole school allergy policy

The St Nicholas Allergy Safety Policy 2026 applies fully to Reception. It is the main policy for allergy leadership, identification, healthcare and allergy action plans, staff training, emergency medicines, allergy incident reporting and review. Staff must read and follow it alongside the Medical Conditions Policy and medicines procedures. These arrangements and forms are not duplicated here.

This EYFS policy retains the practical checks needed before every food activity, meal and snack. Staff use the shared school allergy register and individual plans, not a separate EYFS allergy register. Intolerances, coeliac disease and other dietary needs must also be recorded and met through the school medical and food provision arrangements.

3. Statutory basis and responsibilities

This policy is informed by the EYFS statutory framework for group and school based providers effective September 2026, its food and drink and safer eating provisions, DfE food safety advice and EYFS nutrition guidance. Food and drinks must be healthy, balanced and nutritious, and fresh drinking water accessible. The school checklist in Appendix 1 records our implementation; EYFS does not prescribe this particular form.

The Headteacher ensures suitable school staffing, training and supervision arrangements. The EYFS Lead briefs staff, checks classroom practice and liaises with the school allergy lead, SENCO, parents and Leeds City Council catering staff. EYFS staff handling classroom food must be competent and appropriately trained. The kitchen manages school meal ingredients, preparation and special diet provision through its own procedures.

For every eating session, identify a named adult responsible for checking that each child receives suitable food and drink. The adult remains responsible until another briefed adult explicitly accepts the handover. Teachers and Key Persons ensure dietary information is current; lunchtime, cover and visiting staff must know the arrangements before taking responsibility.

4. Dietary information and allergy checks

Obtain dietary requirements, preferences, allergies, intolerances and relevant medical or swallowing information before admission. Keep this current through ongoing conversations with families and appropriate health professionals. Confirm that relevant plans, prescribed medicines and trained staff are available; escalate missing information or medicines immediately and arrange safe provision.

For classroom snacks, milk, fruit and tasting activities, match each child to their current dietary plan and suitable portion or drink. Check actual packaging, ingredients and substitutions, including milk alternatives and precautionary allergen warnings. Ingredients can change. Retain reliable ingredient information until the food has been consumed. Never guess; withhold an uncertain item and provide a verified suitable alternative.

Prevent allergen cross contact through clean hands, surfaces and equipment, separate preparation and covered special portions. Do not remove an allergen from a plate and serve the remainder. Prevent food and utensil sharing. A coloured plate or identifier supports, but does not replace, the adult check. Use the school allergy plans and training for detailed controls.

5. Classroom food, milk, fruit and hygiene

Adults preparing or handling classroom food must be competent and appropriately instructed, with suitable food hygiene training for their tasks. Children and adults wash hands with soap and water before food handling and eating; hand gel does not replace washing. Children taking part in preparation work under close adult supervision.

Clean and disinfect food areas appropriately, following product instructions. Keep preparation separate from toileting, messy play, animals and cleaning chemicals.

Wash fruit and vegetables before preparing or serving them. Check quality, use by dates, packaging and storage instructions. Remove spoiled items and prepare portions to reduce choking. Check each child receives the correct milk or agreed alternative; never substitute without checking their dietary plan. Prevent bottle, cup and food sharing.

Store milk and other perishable classroom foods according to their labels, keeping them chilled as required and out of refrigeration only for the necessary serving time. Use clean cups and utensils. Do not offer food or milk with an uncertain storage history, damaged packaging or an expired use by date. These are classroom controls; catering kitchen temperature and cooking records are managed by Leeds City Council catering.

Classroom cooking or baking must have a planned safe method covering ingredients, allergies, hygiene, storage, cooking where needed, cooling and adult control of equipment. Seek competent food safety advice for activities beyond staff training. Follow school illness procedures; anyone with vomiting or diarrhoea must not handle food until at least 48 hours after symptoms stop.

Do not let children taste uncooked flour, raw dough or raw cake mixture. Adults control hot equipment, sharp knives and handling of raw animal products. Check the finished texture and remove skewers, cocktail sticks and other non-food items.

6. Supervision at snack and lunch times

For classroom food and drinks, the named adult checks each child's portion for dietary suitability, texture, cutting and temperature before serving. In the dining hall, EYFS staff work with the kitchen's established special diet identification and serving arrangements to confirm the right meal reaches the right child. Staff do not repeat kitchen preparation checks, but must pause an uncertain meal and resolve it with catering staff before the child eats.

Children sit upright on suitable seating in a calm designated eating area. They do not eat while walking, running, climbing or lying down. Adults position themselves to see faces, watch actively and prevent food sharing. Children remain within sight and hearing throughout; supervision continues until eating has finished.

School procedure requires a staff member with a current full paediatric first aid certificate in the room throughout eating. Arrange cover before that adult leaves. Outdoor eating and visits require equivalent immediate first aid availability, safe seating and explicit supervision arrangements in the risk assessment.

Reception children go to the dining hall earlier so EYFS staff can observe them eating and provide appropriate support. Staff position themselves to see children's faces, watch how they manage food, notice signs of choking or an allergic reaction and identify children needing extra help. Observation must be active throughout eating, rather than a brief check on arrival. Any handover to lunchtime staff must be explicit, with dietary needs, individual support and first aid cover communicated and accepted.

7. Choking prevention and food preparation

Use the following guide when preparing classroom or Forest School food and when checking that food is suitable for a child to eat. It also helps staff recognise concerns at lunch and raise them promptly with catering staff. Leeds City Council catering manages preparation of school meals. Apply the school precautions across Reception, including children who have turned five, taking account of individual eating skills and clinical advice. Cutting reduces risk but never replaces supervision.

Food or hazard	Required preparation or school control
Grapes cherry tomatoes and small round fruit	Cut lengthways into quarters; cut smaller where needed. Never serve whole or as round halves. Cut strawberries lengthways into quarters.
Apples carrots and other hard produce	Use thin slices or grate; soften where needed for the child. Do not serve hard chunks. Remove stones, pips and tough parts.
Sausages and similar cylindrical foods	Cut lengthways into thin strips; never serve coin shaped slices or chunks.
Popcorn	Do not offer in Reception.
Other firm round sticky or chewy foods	Assess before use and modify or replace. Never assume that a commercially supplied snack or a food brought from home is safe.

8. Individual needs and family partnership

Seek advice for coughing during meals, repeated gagging or choking, food pocketing or difficulty managing textures. Liaise with parents, the SENCO and relevant health professionals. Follow prescribed texture and positioning guidance precisely; staff must not invent a texture modified diet. Provide any assessed adult support and communicate the plan to everyone supervising eating.

Support sensory and restricted eating needs calmly. Any food exploration must follow the same allergy and choking checks. Children are never required to taste a food to participate.

9. Food from home cooking and visits

Tell families how to prepare packed lunches safely, including quartering grapes and avoiding the listed hazards. Check before eating; where an item cannot be made safe, set it aside, offer an appropriate alternative and explain the reason sensitively to parents. Maintain suitable storage arrangements and ask families to use insulated lunch bags with cool packs where needed.

Birthday treats, donations and home baking must be agreed in advance. Do not distribute food without reliable ingredient and allergen information. Use an alternative celebration where safety cannot be established. Apply identical checks during Stay and Learn, parent workshops, religious celebrations and visitors' sessions.

Plan cooking and tasting activities in advance, identifying ingredients, participating children, safe utensils, supervision and alternatives. Check food used in sensory play, dough and crafts for allergens and foreseeable mouthing risks. Keep play food clearly separate from food intended for eating.

Where food or drinks are offered at Forest School or on visits, agree in advance who provides, prepares, checks and supervises them. Communicate children's dietary needs to the provider, confirm ingredients and safe portions, and arrange handwashing, safe seated eating, medicines, first aid and emergency access. Do not assume that Forest School food is covered by the school kitchen's arrangements. Apply the same choking precautions and active observation as at classroom snack time.

10. Emergencies records and review

Choking: stop eating and summon the paediatric first aider immediately. Follow current paediatric first aid training and call 999 for severe obstruction or deterioration. Do not leave the child alone or perform a blind finger sweep. Give the emergency call handler the location and follow instructions. Obtain medical assessment after abdominal thrusts and whenever symptoms persist or injury is suspected.

For an allergic reaction, use the child's allergy action plan and school emergency arrangements. For suspected anaphylaxis, give the prescribed adrenaline auto-injector immediately according to its instructions and call 999 without delay; another adult should call while treatment is given where possible. If there is no improvement after 5 minutes, use a second device if available. Never delay adrenaline while making a call or waiting for parents. Keep the child lying down, allowing a supported position if breathing is difficult, and do not let them stand or walk. Follow current training and emergency call handler instructions. This brief reminder does not replace staff training or the individual plan.

Record choking interventions and food safety concerns through school incident procedures, including food, preparation, symptoms, timings, actions and parent contact. Tell parents about choking requiring staff intervention. Use the existing whole school allergy incident and near miss form for allergic reactions or exposures; do not create a duplicate EYFS allergy reporting system. The Headteacher manages applicable external notifications.

The EYFS Lead reviews practice and completed checks at least termly and after incidents, including first aid cover, lunch handovers and food preparation. Keep records securely under the school retention arrangements. Review this policy annually and sooner following incidents, changes to children's needs or revised guidance.

Appendix 1 Classroom and Forest School food check

Complete for classroom milk, fruit, snacks, cooking or tasting, and Forest School food where applicable. This is not a kitchen preparation or school dinner production record. For lunch, use the established catering meal identification arrangements and maintain the supervision and handover described in section 6. Correct any failed check before offering the affected food.

Date: _____ Time: _____ Location: _____

Session or activity: _____

Checking adult: _____ Full PFA adult: _____

Check before food is offered	Yes or action needed
Current child register and dietary plans checked; changes and cover briefed.	
Each child reliably identified and matched to their food and drink.	
Labels recipes and substitutions checked; suitable alternatives confirmed.	
Hands surfaces and utensils clean; allergen cross contact prevented.	
Classroom food and milk safely stored; any cooking completed safely and food at a safe eating temperature.	
Each portion cut and textured appropriately; choking hazards removed.	
Children seated safely; allocated adults can actively see and hear every child throughout eating.	
Full PFA cover confirmed; relevant emergency plans and medicines available.	

Child specific checks and alternatives provided: _____

Action taken or handover needed: _____

Checker signature: