St James Infant & Pre-School

Food and Nutrition Policy 2026-27

Non-statutory policy supporting statutory duties
Annual review

	October 2023			
Review date	Oct 2023	Sept 24	Jan '26	July '26
Reviewer's name	G Gynn	SOS	SO'S	SOS
Date minuted by committee meeting	Jan 2024 (staff Oct 2023)			
Next review due by	Oct 2024	Sept 25	Jan '28	July '27

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

St James Infant & Pre-School is committed to providing food and drink that is safe, nutritious, inclusive and enjoyable. Mealtimes should support children's health, development, independence, social communication and sense of belonging.

This policy applies to Preschool, Reception, Key Stage 1, breakfast provision, snacks, curriculum activities involving food, after-school provision, celebrations, visitors and school trips. It applies to employees, agency staff, volunteers, contractors and catering providers.

The policy supports compliance with the Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014, food hygiene and allergen law, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, Benedict's Law, Natasha's Law and the school's safeguarding and medical duties.

2. RELATED POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

Allergy Safety Policy 2026-27 and Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
First Aid Policy; Health and Safety Policy; Educational Visits Policy
InMAT Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
School Food Standards and the Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014
EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers and Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance
DfE Help for Early Years Providers: Food safety
Food Standards Agency guidance, including Safer Food, Better Business and allergen guidance
Food Information Regulations 2014 and Food Information (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2019 (Natasha's Law)

3. SCHOOL FOOD PROVISION

Cooked lunches are provided by Dolce through an InMAT-wide contract overseen by the Trust's Chief Operations Officer.
Universal Infant Free School Meals are offered to every Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 child.
Breakfast is available through the daily Bagel Bar / National School Breakfast Club arrangements.
Age-appropriate snacks and fresh drinking water are available. Preschool provision follows the EYFS nutrition guidance.
The school provides an appropriate packed lunch for children attending school trips where this forms part of the school-day food offer.
The school and caterer will work together to ensure menus, ingredients, allergen information, special diets, delivery, storage, service and incident procedures remain safe and compliant.

4. ROLES AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The governing body and InMAT will:

- assure compliance with statutory school food, EYFS, food-safety and allergy requirements;
- ensure that contract management and monitoring provide evidence that food is safe and meets the School Food Standards
- review implementation through appropriate governance and health-and-safety reporting.

The Headteacher and senior allergy lead will:

- ensure this policy and the Allergy Safety Policy are implemented and understood;
- ensure responsibilities for meals, snacks, breakfast provision and food activities are clear;
- ensure suitable staffing, paediatric first-aid cover, training and emergency arrangements;
- liaise with the caterer, trust, parents, health professionals and West Northamptonshire regulators as required
- review incidents, near misses, complaints, audit findings and required improvements.

The Early Years Lead will:

- plan safe staffing for every EYFS meal and snack period, including absence cover;
- ensure developmental feeding information, dietary needs and allergy action plans are current and known
- monitor safe preparation, seating, supervision, food sharing, incident recording and parent communication.

The catering provider and anyone managing food provision will:

- operate a documented food-safety management system based on HACCP principles;
- provide competent, trained staff and maintain evidence of training, temperatures, cleaning, traceability and allergen controls;
- provide accurate written ingredient and allergen information and comply with Natasha's Law where food is prepacked for direct sale
- notify the school immediately of substitutions, recalls, contamination risks, incidents or inspection actions.

All staff will follow individual dietary and allergy information, supervise children safely, prevent food sharing, report concerns and complete the training required for their role.

5. NUTRITION AND SCHOOL FOOD STANDARDS

Food provided by or on behalf of the school during the school day and extended school day will meet the applicable School Food Standards. Menus will provide variety across the week, including vegetables, salad, fruit, starchy foods and suitable protein sources, while limiting fried foods, pastry, foods high in fat, sugar or salt, confectionery and unsuitable drinks.

EYFS meals, snacks and drinks must be healthy, balanced and nutritious. The school must have regard to the statutory EYFS nutrition guidance. Fresh drinking water will always be available. Dietary provision will respect medical, developmental, cultural, ethical and faith needs wherever this can be achieved safely.

6. STAFF COMPETENCE, TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

The legal requirement is competence and adequate, role-appropriate training; food law does not require every food handler to hold a particular certificate. The EYFS nevertheless requires every member of staff involved in preparing or handling food to receive food-hygiene training.

St James adopts the following minimum operational standards:

Staff who regularly prepare or handle open food, including breakfast or snack preparation, must complete Level 2 Food Safety in Catering (or an equivalent accredited course) before working unsupervised and must receive local induction in the school's procedures.

A person directly managing an in-house food operation or supervising food handlers must have knowledge appropriate to that responsibility. Level 3 Food Safety Supervision (or equivalent) will be required by the school where the role includes designing, supervising or verifying the food-safety management system. The contracted caterer must determine and evidence equivalent competence for its managers.

Staff who only distribute sealed items or supervise children eating do not require a food-hygiene certificate solely for that task, but must receive instruction in hand hygiene, allergen controls, safe service, choking prevention and incident response.

All staff involved in food provision must complete allergy and cross-contamination awareness. Staff preparing food for a named child with an allergy must understand the child's plan and the specific controls before doing so.

Curriculum cooking and occasional food activities require a risk assessment and staff instruction proportionate to the ingredients, equipment and processes. Higher-risk food preparation must be led by a suitably trained person.

Training will be refreshed at intervals determined by risk assessment, changes in duties or guidance, and following an incident or evidence of unsafe practice. Records of training, expiry dates and competence checks will be maintained.

7. PAEDIATRIC FIRST AID AND EATING

Whenever EYFS children are eating, there must always be a member of staff in the room who holds a current full-course paediatric first aid (PFA) certificate meeting Annex A of the EYFS framework. This is additional to the general requirement for at least one current PFA-qualified person to be on the premises and available whenever EYFS children are present and to accompany outings.

PFA certificates must be renewed every three years.

Staff who obtained an approved Level 2 or Level 3 early-years qualification after 30 June 2016 must obtain PFA within three months of starting work to count in statutory ratios, subject to the framework's limited disability exception.

The Early Years Lead will roster enough full-course PFA-qualified staff to cover every room or eating space, staggered snacks, staff breaks, absences and emergencies.

PFA training must include recognition and treatment of choking, allergic reaction and anaphylaxis and must meet the full-course EYFS criteria.

A list of staff holding current PFA certificates will be available to parents, and certificates and expiry dates will be monitored.

8. EYFS SAFER EATING AND CHOKING PREVENTION

Before admission, the school will obtain information about each child's special dietary requirements, preferences, allergies, intolerances, health needs and, where relevant, stage of introducing solid foods and familiar textures. Information will be updated through ongoing discussion with parents and, where appropriate, health professionals.

At every EYFS meal and snack time:

- a named member of staff will be responsible for checking that the food provided matches each child's requirements;
- children will be seated safely in an appropriate chair and encouraged to remain seated while eating;
- a calm, designated eating space will be used where possible and avoidable distractions will be reduced;
- children will remain within sight and hearing of a member of staff at all times; choking can be silent;
- staff will sit facing children where possible, watch how they eat, prevent food sharing and remain alert to unexpected allergic reactions;
- food will be prepared for the child's individual developmental needs and familiar textures; assumptions will not be made from age alone; and
- children will never be hurried, forced to eat or left alone with food.

9. PREPARING FOOD TO REDUCE CHOKING RISK

Remove stones, pips, bones, tough skins and gristle.

Cut small round foods such as grapes, berries and cherry tomatoes lengthways and then into quarters.

Cut sausages into thin strips rather than round pieces and remove skins; high-salt sausages should be avoided for young children.

Cut cheese into strips, hard fruit and vegetables into suitable slices, and soften foods where developmentally necessary.

Do not provide whole nuts or whole seeds to children under five. Follow individual allergy controls for nut or seed products in any form.

Do not provide popcorn, hard sweets, marshmallows or raw jelly cubes; these must not be used for messy play where children may mouth them.

Consider the risk from doughy white bread and cut bread into suitable strips for very young children.

The current DfE food-safety guidance and EYFS nutrition guidance will be followed when menus or food-preparation methods are reviewed.

10. CHOKING RESPONSE, RECORDING AND REVIEW

If a child appears to be choking, staff will summon the paediatric first aider immediately, follow their PFA training and call 999 where required. Staff must not use untrained techniques or blindly sweep the child's mouth.

Every choking incident requiring staff intervention, including back blows, must be recorded with the food involved, its preparation, the location, supervision, circumstances, action taken and outcome. Parents or carers will be informed promptly and on the same day wherever possible. The Early Years Lead and DSL will review records periodically and after every significant incident to identify patterns and implement actions. Emergency-service or safeguarding advice will be followed.

11. ALLERGIES, INTOLERANCES AND ANAPHYLAXIS

Parents must provide complete, current information before admission and inform the school immediately of any change.

Individual allergy action plans will be developed with parents and, where appropriate.

All relevant staff will know the child, symptoms, emergency medication, storage arrangements and actions. Medication must be immediately accessible to trained adults, not locked away.

At every meal or snack, a named adult will verify the child, meal, label and dietary information. Substitutions will not be accepted without a fresh check.

Cross-contact will be controlled through handwashing, cleaning, separation, labelled storage, dedicated equipment where required and prevention of food sharing.

Allergy-related bullying, deliberate exposure or threats will be treated as a serious behaviour and safeguarding matter.

The school cannot guarantee an allergen-free environment; risk is reduced through robust controls, partnership and the dedicated Allergy Safety Policy.

12. FOOD HYGIENE AND SAFE OPERATION

Use a documented HACCP-based food-safety management system, such as Safer Food, Better Business where appropriate.

Apply the 4Cs: cleaning, cooking, chilling and preventing cross-contamination.

Maintain safe receipt, storage, preparation, cooking, holding, cooling, reheating and service temperatures and retain required records.

Use reputable suppliers, maintain traceability, check dates and packaging, and act promptly on product withdrawals or recalls.

Ensure effective handwashing, suitable protective clothing, clean equipment, pest control, waste management and separation of raw and ready-to-eat foods.

Food handlers must report vomiting, diarrhoea, infected wounds or other conditions that may affect food safety and must follow Food Standards Agency fitness-to-work guidance before returning to food handling.

Food brought from home, donated food and celebration food must comply with school rules and must not be shared or served without the required ingredient and allergen information.

13. TRIPS, BREAKFAST, CLUBS AND CURRICULUM ACTIVITIES

The same standards for dietary information, allergen control, safe preparation, storage, temperature, supervision and choking prevention apply away from the main dining room and on trips. EYFS outings must include a current full-course paediatric first aider. Packed lunches will be individually identified where special diets apply and must remain under school control until issued.

Breakfast, wraparound provision and curriculum cooking will have named responsible staff, appropriate food-hygiene competence, current dietary information and written risk controls. Food must not be used in play or learning where it presents an avoidable choking, allergy, contamination or cultural risk.

14. INCIDENTS, NOTIFICATIONS AND COMPLAINTS

Food safety, allergy, choking and near-miss incidents will be recorded and escalated to the Headteacher, senior allergy lead and relevant provider. Emergency treatment takes priority. The school will contact parents, health services, the catering provider, InMAT, West Northamptonshire Council Environmental Health, Ofsted or other agencies as required.

Where food poisoning affects two or more children cared for in registered early-years provision, Ofsted must be notified as soon as reasonably practicable and within 14 days. Other statutory reporting and safeguarding requirements will be followed. Complaints will be managed under the school complaints procedure without delaying safety action.

15. FOOD EDUCATION, INCLUSION AND PUPIL VOICE

Children will learn age-appropriate messages about healthy choices, hygiene, safe eating, allergies, food origins and respectful behaviour through the curriculum and daily routines. Staff will avoid moralising food or using food as a reward or punishment. Adjustments will support children with SEND, sensory needs, oral-motor or swallowing difficulties, restricted diets, anxiety or medical needs, working with parents and professionals.

16. MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Headteacher and relevant leads will monitor menus, training, PFA coverage, allergy plans, mealtime practice, incidents, food-safety records, contract performance and pupil or parent feedback. Actions will have an owner, deadline and review date. This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner after a significant incident, inspection finding, contractual change or change in national or West Northamptonshire guidance.

KEY NATIONAL AND LOCAL SOURCES

DfE – EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers
DfE – Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance
DfE – Help for Early Years Providers: Food safety
DfE – School Food Standards: resources for schools
Food Standards Agency – Starting a food business safely; Safer Food, Better Business; allergen guidance and training
West Northamptonshire Council – Safeguarding and welfare within the EYFS; food safety and Environmental Health information
BSACI – Allergy Action Plans for Children

Policy lead: Headteacher- Sarah O'Shea / senior allergy lead – Louise Drake
Reviewed: July 2026
Next review: July 2027, or earlier if guidance changes or an incident requires review