



Little LODGE

0 - 4 YEARS CO-EDUCATIONAL DAY NURSERY

Food Allergen Policy

Approved by: Natalie Snyders, Nursery Manager

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1. Policy Statement and Legal Framework

Little Lodge Nursery recognises that food allergies can be life-threatening conditions and is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children in our care. This policy sets out our approach to managing food allergens in accordance with statutory requirements and best practice guidance.

1.1 Legislative and Regulatory Compliance

This policy is informed by and complies with:

- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework safeguarding and welfare requirements (made under section 39(1)(b) of the Childcare Act 2006)
- EYFS Nutrition Guidance (September 2025) – providers must have regard to this guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
- Food Standards Agency guidance on food allergy management and allergen labelling
- Equality Act 2010 (duty to make reasonable adjustments for children with allergies)
- SEND Code of Practice 2015 and SEND Code of Practice 2025 (supporting children with medical conditions)

2. Scope and Definitions

2.1 Scope

This policy applies to all food and drink provided or consumed at Little Lodge Nursery, including:

- Meals and snacks provided by the school kitchen
- Food used in learning activities (cooking, sensory play, art and craft)
- Food brought in for celebrations or special occasions (subject to strict allergen labelling requirements - see Section 5.5)

2.2 Understanding Food Allergies

Food Allergy: A food allergy develops when the body's immune system reacts against food proteins which it sees as invaders. Food allergies can be life-threatening and must be taken very seriously.

Symptoms of an allergic reaction may include coughing, wheezing, breathlessness, noisy breathing, red raised rash (hives), tingly or itchy feeling in the mouth, sneezing, stomach pain, vomiting, swelling of face/lips/tongue/eyes, difficulty swallowing, diarrhoea, feeling dizzy or lightheaded, appearing pale or floppy, suddenly sleepy, or collapse/unconsciousness.

Anaphylaxis: A severe, potentially life-threatening allergic reaction requiring immediate emergency response. Symptoms include swelling of throat/tongue/upper airways, difficulty swallowing, wheezing/noisy breathing, severe breathing difficulties, becoming pale or floppy, and collapse or unconsciousness.

Food Intolerance: Different to food allergy, intolerance occurs when the body has difficulty digesting certain foods. Intolerances do not involve the immune system and are not life-threatening, causing symptoms such as abdominal pain, diarrhoea, bloating, constipation, red rash, itching or eczema flares.

Coeliac Disease: A serious autoimmune condition requiring strict avoidance of gluten (found in wheat, barley, and rye). Children with coeliac disease must avoid ordinary wheat flour, bread, breakfast cereals, crackers, biscuits, pastry, pasta, and many packaged/processed foods.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Nursery Manager and Deputy Nursery Manager/SENDCo

- Overall responsibility for implementing and monitoring this policy
- Ensuring all staff are trained in food allergy awareness and emergency response

- Maintaining Individual Healthcare Plans (IHCPs) for children with diagnosed allergies
- Liaising with parents/carers and healthcare professionals
- Ensuring appropriate medication is available and in date
- Reviewing and investigating any allergy-related incidents or near-misses

3.2 All Staff Members

- Familiarise themselves with children's allergies and dietary requirements
- Follow allergen management protocols at all times
- Check food labels and allergen information sheets
- Prevent cross-contamination through proper food handling and hygiene practices
- Be vigilant during mealtimes and activities involving food
- Recognise symptoms of allergic reactions
- Report any concerns, incidents or near-misses immediately to the SENDCo/Nursery Manager

3.3 Level 3+ Qualified Staff (Room Leads and Senior Practitioners)

- Authorised to serve food to children with severe allergies under the Red Plate System Protocol
- Verify meals are safe and allergen-free before serving
- Complete and sign Red Plate Sign-Off Forms
- Provide close supervision during mealtimes for children with severe allergies
- Be trained in emergency medication administration (EpiPen/antihistamine)

3.4 Parents and Carers

- Inform the setting of any diagnosed allergies, intolerances or dietary requirements
- Provide up-to-date medical information and healthcare plans
- Supply prescribed medication (EpiPens, antihistamines) and ensure it is in date
- Work collaboratively with staff to develop and review Individual Healthcare Plans
- Adhere to the setting's policy prohibiting food from home except for celebrations (where full allergen labelling is mandatory)

3.5 School Kitchen Staff

- Prepare meals in accordance with allergen information provided by the nursery
- Provide comprehensive allergen information sheets for all meals and snacks
- Label all food items with clear ingredient and allergen information
- Follow food safety and allergen management protocols in meal preparation

4. Identification and Assessment of Food Allergies

4.1 Information Gathering

Upon admission and throughout a child's time at the nursery, parents/carers are required to provide full details of:

- Any diagnosed food allergies
- Specific allergens to be avoided
- Severity of allergic reactions
- Symptoms to watch for
- Prescribed emergency medication and how to administer it
- Food intolerances or dietary preferences
- Religious or cultural dietary requirements

4.2 Individual Healthcare Plans (IHCPs)

For children with diagnosed food allergies, the SENDCo will work with parents/carers and healthcare professionals to develop an Individual Healthcare Plan (IHCP) that includes:

- Child's name, date of birth, and photograph
- Known allergens and foods/ingredients to avoid
- Signs and symptoms of allergic reaction
- Emergency response procedures
- Medication details (storage location, administration instructions)
- Parent/carer emergency contact details
- Healthcare professional contact details
- Review dates (at minimum annually or when circumstances change)

4.3 Staff Communication

The SENDCo ensures that:

- All staff are aware of children with food allergies and their specific requirements
- IHCPs are accessible in each child's room and shared with all relevant staff
- Visual reminders (photographs, allergy alert notices) are displayed in food preparation and eating areas
- Information is shared with supply staff, students and volunteers working in the room

4.4 Suspected Food Intolerance

If staff or parents/carers suspect a food intolerance, we will work together to keep a food diary documenting meals eaten at the setting and at home and any symptoms experienced. This information will be shared with parents/carers to discuss with a healthcare professional. However, we will not unnecessarily restrict a child's diet without valid medical reason, as this can negatively impact nutrition.

5. Food Provision and Allergen Management

5.1 School Kitchen Provision

All meals and snacks at Little Lodge Nursery are prepared by the school kitchen. The school kitchen provides:

- Comprehensive allergen information sheets detailing all ingredients and potential allergens in each dish
- Clearly labelled food items with ingredient information
- Allergen-checked cereals, snacks and fruit options
- Communication with nursery staff regarding any menu changes or ingredient substitutions

Staff must check allergen information sheets before serving food to any child with allergies or dietary requirements.

5.2 Three-Tier Operational Approach

Little Lodge Nursery operates a three-tier system for managing dietary needs and allergies:

Tier 1: Red Plate Protocol (Severe Allergies Requiring EpiPen or Antihistamine)

For children with diagnosed severe food allergies requiring emergency medication (EpiPen or antihistamine), the Red Plate System Protocol is implemented. See Section 6 for full details.

Tier 2: Preference/Intolerance Table

For children with food intolerances (not life-threatening) or dietary preferences (including religious/cultural requirements), staff ensure appropriate meals are served and supervise to prevent accidental consumption of unsuitable foods. These children are seated at a designated table during mealtimes for easier monitoring.

Tier 3: Standard Seating Arrangements

Children without allergies, intolerances or dietary requirements follow standard mealtime arrangements with appropriate supervision.

5.3 Menu Planning and Ingredient Labelling

- Menus are shared with parents/carers including allergen information to help balance food provided at home
- All foods are clearly labelled with ingredients
- When creating menus, the school kitchen considers substitutions and replacement ingredients for children with allergies, intolerances, coeliac disease, and religious/cultural requirements
- Staff seek feedback from parents/carers on menus to ensure meals meet individual needs

5.4 Preventing Cross-Contamination

Staff must always think about food allergies when food is being stored, delivered, sorted, prepared and served. We avoid mixing foods that are safe with those that can cause allergic reactions through:

- Thorough handwashing before and after handling food
- Using colour-coded equipment and utensils, or labelling individual children's cups/plates with their names
- Storing foods containing allergens separately from other foods
- Having separate preparation areas for allergen-containing foods where possible
- Cleaning surfaces and equipment thoroughly between uses
- Supervising children appropriately at mealtimes to avoid food sharing
- Implementing the Red Plate System for children with severe allergies

5.5 Food from Home: Celebrations Policy

Little Lodge Nursery does not permit food to be brought from home for regular consumption. All daily meals and snacks are provided by the school kitchen.

Exception for Celebrations:

On occasion, parents/carers may wish to bring food for special celebrations such as birthdays. When this occurs, the following strict requirements must be met:

- **Mandatory allergen labelling: All food items must have complete, clear allergen labels showing all ingredients and identifying the 14 major allergens (cereals containing gluten, crustaceans, eggs, fish, peanuts, soybeans, milk, nuts, celery, mustard, sesame seeds, sulphur dioxide/sulphites, lupin, molluscs)**
- Food must be commercially produced and packaged with full ingredient lists, or accompanied by homemade recipes with complete ingredient information
- Staff must check all allergen labels before any food is shared with children
- Any food that does not meet allergen labelling requirements will not be distributed to children
- Parents/carers must provide advance notice (minimum 24 hours) if planning to bring food for celebrations
- Children with severe allergies may not be able to partake in celebration foods, and alternative arrangements will be made to ensure their inclusion

Alternative Celebration Options:

To ensure all children can participate safely and inclusively in celebrations, parents/carers are encouraged to consider non-food alternatives such as:

- Stickers or small toys
- Bubbles
- Books for the nursery book corner
- Special activities or games

All parents/carers are informed about this policy upon admission and through regular communications. The

policy is designed to protect all children from allergen exposure while maintaining opportunities for inclusive celebrations.

6. Red Plate System Protocol for Severe Allergies

For children with diagnosed severe food allergies requiring emergency medication (EpiPen or antihistamine), the Red Plate System Protocol is a critical safety measure that must be followed at all times without exception.

6.1 Food Preparation and Service

- All meals and snacks for children under this protocol must be served on red plates/bowls with red drinking cups and red cutlery
- Only a designated member of staff with Level 3 qualification or above is authorised to plate up food for these children
- This must preferably be the Room Lead, or in their absence, another Level 3+ qualified practitioner
- Before serving, the designated staff member must verify that the meal is safe and free from the child's specific allergens by checking the allergen information sheet
- The designated staff member must complete and sign the Red Plate Sign-Off Form for each meal/snack

6.2 Red Plate Sign-Off Form

For every meal and snack served to a child under the Red Plate Protocol, the designated Level 3+ staff member must document:

- Date and time
- Meal/snack description
- Confirmation that the meal is allergen-free
- Staff member name and signature

6.3 Supervision During Mealtimes

- The Level 3+ staff member who has served the food must wear a red apron during mealtimes to ensure they are clearly identifiable
- The designated staff member must always sit directly next to the child whilst food is present in the room
- This close supervision is essential to prevent cross-contamination from other children's food
- The designated staff member must remain vigilant throughout the entire mealtime

6.4 Post-Mealtime Protocol

Once the child has finished eating, the designated staff member must escort them away from the eating area if:

- The child needs to sleep
- The child wishes to leave the table
- Other children are still eating

The child may only return to the room once all food has been:

- Completely removed from the room, OR
- Placed securely out of the child's reach

This protocol minimises the risk of accidental exposure to allergens.

6.5 Record Keeping

- Red Plate Sign-Off Forms must be kept in a designated folder within the child's room
- This folder must be easily accessible to all Level 3+ staff for reference
- Forms are retained in accordance with the setting's record retention policy

- The SENDCo will review these records regularly as part of IHCP monitoring

6.6 Staff Responsibilities Under Red Plate Protocol

- All staff must be aware of which children are under the Red Plate Protocol and their specific allergies
- Only staff members with Level 3 qualifications or above are authorised to serve food to children under this protocol
- The Room Lead should take primary responsibility for this task wherever possible
- All staff must support the designated Level 3+ staff member in maintaining this protocol
- Any concerns or near-miss incidents must be reported immediately to the SENDCo and/or Nursery Manager

This protocol is a critical safety measure and must be followed at all times without exception.

7. Food Activities and Learning

7.1 Cooking and Food Preparation Activities

- Staff must check allergies before planning any cooking or food preparation activities
- Activities must be adapted to ensure all children can participate safely
- Alternative ingredients are used where necessary (e.g., gluten-free flour, dairy-free milk)
- Children are supervised throughout to prevent accidental consumption of allergens

7.2 Sensory Play, Art and Craft Activities

Staff must avoid activities involving foods that a child is allergic to, including:

- Play dough or pasta containing wheat/gluten
- Birdseed or music shakers containing nuts or pulses
- Any craft materials containing milk, egg, or other allergens
- Lentils, rice, or cereals that may contain allergens

Alternative materials must be sourced to ensure inclusive activities for all children.

8. Emergency Procedures

8.1 Recognising Anaphylaxis

Anaphylaxis is a severe, life-threatening allergic reaction requiring immediate action. Symptoms may include:

- Swelling of throat, tongue or upper airways
- Difficulty swallowing or breathing
- Wheezing or noisy breathing
- Severe breathing difficulties
- Becoming pale or floppy
- Collapse or unconsciousness

8.2 Emergency Response to Anaphylaxis

If a child shows signs of anaphylaxis:

- **Administer the child's autoinjector (EpiPen) immediately**
- **Call 999 for emergency ambulance**
- Inform emergency services that the child is experiencing anaphylaxis
- Contact the child's parents/carers immediately
- Use the child's second autoinjector if they have one and haven't improved after 5 minutes
- **Never allow a child showing signs of anaphylaxis to walk to a new location - carry them if necessary to a safe location away from the allergen**

- Follow the Individual Healthcare Plan for additional specific instructions

8.3 Medication Storage and Administration

- All emergency medication (EpiPens, antihistamines) is stored in accessible locations known to all staff
- Medication must be clearly labelled with the child's name and photograph
- Storage locations are documented in the child's Individual Healthcare Plan
- Expiry dates are checked regularly by the SENDCo, and parents/carers are informed when replacement is needed
- At least two members of staff per room are trained in administering emergency medication

8.4 Incident Recording and Review

Following any allergic reaction or near-miss incident:

- The incident must be recorded in detail in the child's records and accident book
- Parents/carers must be informed immediately and provided with a written incident report
- The SENDCo and Nursery Manager will investigate the incident to identify the cause
- A review meeting will be held with parents/carers to discuss the incident and any necessary changes to the IHCP
- Staff training and procedures will be reviewed and updated as necessary
- Serious incidents must be reported to Ofsted as required under safeguarding and welfare requirements

9. Staff Training and Competence

9.1 Mandatory Training Requirements

All staff working at Little Lodge Nursery must receive training in:

- Food allergy awareness and the difference between allergies and intolerances
- Recognising the signs and symptoms of allergic reactions
- Preventing cross-contamination
- Reading and understanding allergen information sheets and food labels
- Individual Healthcare Plans and how to access them
- The Red Plate System Protocol and other allergen management procedures

9.2 Emergency Medication Training

At least two members of staff in each room must receive specific training in:

- Administering EpiPens (adrenaline auto-injectors)
- Administering antihistamine medication
- Emergency response procedures for anaphylaxis
- When and how to call 999

9.3 Training Resources and Updates

- Training is provided by qualified healthcare professionals or recognised training organisations
- The Food Standards Agency's free food allergy training is utilised
- NHS resources on food allergies in babies and young children are shared with staff
- Training is refreshed annually and updated when new children with allergies join the setting
- All staff training records are maintained by the SENDCo
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9.4 Induction for New Staff, Students and Volunteers

Before working with children, all new staff members, students and volunteers must:

- Receive induction training on this Food Allergen Policy
- Be informed of specific children's allergies in their designated room
- Know how to access Individual Healthcare Plans
- Understand emergency procedures and who to contact

10. Communication with Parents and Carers

10.1 Initial Information Gathering

- Allergies and dietary requirements are discussed during the admission process
- Parents/carers complete comprehensive health and dietary information forms
- Medical evidence (allergy action plans from GPs or consultants) is requested for diagnosed allergies
- Transition meetings include discussion of allergen management strategies

10.2 Ongoing Communication

- Menus are shared with parents/carers, including allergen information
- Parents/carers are informed of any menu changes or ingredient substitutions
- Regular updates are provided on children's dietary management and any concerns
- Parents/carers are reminded to update the setting if allergies develop or change
- The setting's policy prohibiting food from home (except for celebrations with mandatory allergen labelling) is clearly communicated

10.3 Partnership Working

- Parents/carers are involved in developing and reviewing Individual Healthcare Plans
- Staff work with parents/carers to balance safety and inclusion for each child
- Feedback from parents/carers on menus and allergen management is welcomed and acted upon
- Parents/carers are encouraged to share guidance from healthcare professionals

10.4 Wider Parent Community Communication

- All parents/carers are informed about the importance of allergen management in the setting
- The policy prohibiting food from home is explained to prevent allergen exposure risks
- Celebration policies and allergen labelling requirements are communicated to ensure understanding and compliance
- The setting promotes an inclusive culture where all children's needs are respected

11. Inclusion and Supporting Children with Allergies

Little Lodge Nursery is committed to ensuring children with food allergies can participate fully and safely in all activities. Our approach balances safety with inclusion and independence.

11.1 Creating an Inclusive Environment

- Activities are planned to ensure all children can participate safely
- Alternative ingredients and materials are sourced for cooking and craft activities
- Children with allergies are not singled out or made to feel different
- Menus offer variety and choice to accommodate all dietary requirements
- Celebrations and special occasions are adapted to be inclusive for all children

11.2 Developing Children's Understanding

In an age-appropriate way, staff help children to:

- Understand their own allergies and which foods to avoid
- Develop confidence in asking about food ingredients
- Recognise when they need help or when they don't feel well
- Develop appropriate independence in managing their dietary needs

All children in the setting learn about respecting each other's needs and not sharing food.

11.3 Reasonable Adjustments

Under the Equality Act 2010, the nursery makes reasonable adjustments for children with food allergies, including:

- Implementing the Red Plate System Protocol for children with severe allergies
- Providing alternative ingredients for cooking and sensory activities
- Ensuring additional supervision during mealtimes
- Training staff in emergency medication administration
- Adapting learning experiences to ensure full participation

12. Policy Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

12.1 Regular Monitoring

The Deputy Nursery Manager/SENDCo is responsible for:

- Monthly review of Red Plate Sign-Off Forms
- Regular checks of medication expiry dates
- Monitoring staff compliance with allergen management procedures
- Reviewing Individual Healthcare Plans (minimum annually or when circumstances change)
- Investigating and learning from incidents or near-misses

12.2 Annual Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Nursery Manager and Deputy Nursery Manager/SENDCo, taking into account:

- Changes to statutory guidance and legislation
- Updated best practice guidance from the Food Standards Agency and NHS
- Feedback from staff, parents/carers, and health professionals
- Learning from incidents, near-misses and safeguarding reviews
- Ofsted inspection feedback and recommendations

12.3 Links to Other Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Policy
- Administering Medicines Policy
- First Aid Policy