**Packed Meals Policy**

To grow and stay healthy, children need to eat a nutritionally well-balanced diet. Nurseries are an influential setting and can contribute significantly to improving the health and wellbeing of children.

Good nutrition in childhood can help to prevent a variety of health problems, both in the short-term and in later life. There is increasing concern that children are consuming too much fat, sugar and salt and too little fibre, fruit and vegetables.

Packed lunches/ meals can contribute to almost a third of a child’s weekly food intake and, therefore, need to be balanced and nutritious.

**Aims of this policy:**

To ensure that packed meals reflect the standards for nursery meals.

**Rationale:**

Nurseries are required to positively promote the health and wellbeing of children.

The content of packed meals need to reflect the requirement of nurseries’ need to meet minimum food and nutrition standards for children’s meals.

The contents of packed meals boxes/bags (including drinks) sent into nursery can sometimes be unhealthy.

Nurseries are required to encourage healthy eating habits from an early age and improve the overall nutrition of children:

The short-term effects of unhealthy packed meals and food intake can include poor growth, tooth decay, obesity, anaemia, constipation, poor concentration and behavioural problems which may have an impact on a child’s learning.

The longer-term effects of a poor diet in childhood can be an increased risk of stroke, cancer, heart disease and diabetes in adulthood.

**Objectives:**

To improve the nutritional quality of packed meals in nursery and the eating habits of children at mealtimes.

To develop an awareness in children, parents and carers that the nursery takes a proactive approach to promoting healthy eating.

To encourage healthy eating habits in childhood that can influence health and wellbeing in later life.

To ensure that food brought into nursery (packed meals and drinks) reflects and meets food standards in Early Years.

**What to put in your child’s packed meals:**

Children’s packed meals should include items from the five main food groups:

* Bread, rice, potatoes and pasta. These starchy foods are a healthy source of energy. Packed meals should include two or more portions of this food type, for example pasta salad or sandwiches.
* Fruits and vegetables. These foods provide vitamins, minerals and fibre. Packed meals should include at least one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetables/ salad, or more, for example carrot or cucumber sticks, cherry tomatoes, a piece of fruit.
* Milk and dairy foods. These foods provide calcium for healthy bones and teeth. Include one portion at lunch, for example a yoghurt, fromage frais or milk.
* Meat, fish, eggs and beans. These foods provide protein for growth. Packed meals should include one portion of these foods, for example boiled egg as a filling in a sandwich or a mixed bean salad.
* Drinks. Drinks need not be provided as part of your child’s packed meals. The nursery will provide your child with fresh water or milk.

**Please support nursery by not providing the following items in your child’s packed meals:**

* Foods which are high in sugar or salt
* Fizzy/ sugary drinks in cartons, bottles or cans
* Chocolate-coated products, sweets or confectionary
* Chocolate spread as a filling for sandwiches
* Sugared, toffee, salted or plain popcorn
* Crisps or any packet of savoury snacks which are high in salt and fat
* Any products containing nuts (or other nut-based products)
* Energy drinks
* Chips and fried foods (such as chicken nuggets)
* Meat on the bone
* Celery

**Choking hazards for children.**

Please do not provide any of the following in your child’s packed meals (we will endeavour to remove these items from packed meals boxes/bags when we see them to prevent possible incidents of choking):

* Whole grapes (these should be quartered if sent in a packed meal)
* Whole cocktail sausages or large sausages cut into circular shapes (these should be cut into longer baton shapes)
* Hot dog sausages
* Marshmallows
* Whole cherry tomatoes (these should be quartered if sent into nursery)
* Pieces of hard raw vegetables such as carrots or apples (these should be cut into longer baton shapes)
* Whole melon balls (these should be quartered if sent into nursery)
* Any food that is overly sticky or difficult to chew
* Popcorn

**Waste and disposal.**

Nursery will, within reason, send any uneaten packed meal items back home. The rationale for this is that parents and carers can also monitor what their child has consumed during the day and then raise any concerns over their child’s food intake with the nursery.

**Packed meal containers.**

It is the responsibility of parents and carers to provide an appropriate packed meal container where food items can be stored securely and appropriately until the mealtime period. Parents and carers are advised to include an ice pack. Food products prepared and stored in ambient temperatures after a period of time can have increased levels of bacteria in them.

**Storage of packed meals.**

Nursery will provide a storage area for packed meal boxes and bags in the most convenient and appropriate place possible. However, we cannot provide cooled storage areas and, therefore, cannot take legal responsibility for foods prepared at home and then brought into nursery. We also cannot heat/reheat foods sent from home. Any food sent in from home must be in a ‘ready to eat’ state and cut/quartered/sliced into appropriate sizes so as to avoid choking.

**Dining facilities for children bring packed lunch from home.**

The nursery will provide an appropriate area where children can choose to bring packed meals can eat.

**Monitoring and evaluation.**

The nursery will carry out regular monitoring of packed meal provision. Where there may be concerns over a child’s food and nutritional intake and/ or the content of their packed meals, this will be dealt with timely and sensitively by contacting parents to offer advice.

Portioning and Safety.

All foods sent into nursery from home should be ready to eat. It should be cut into appropriate and safe bite-sized pieces for safe eating (e.g grapes should be cut into quarters).

**Nanny Plums Nursery Ltd** accepts no responsibility for accidents or incidents to children caused by foods sent by parents/carers in their packed meals from home. We will of course carry out our statutory duty with regards to administering immediate first aid in incidents where choking occurs.

We thank you for supporting this policy.