Lunchbox Policy

At Tithe Barn Preschool, we are committed to supporting the healthy development and growth of children through a balanced and nutritious diet. Early childhood is a crucial stage in establishing good eating habits, and we aim to work with families to promote healthy choices both now and in the future.

Good nutrition in the early years can help prevent health issues such as tooth decay, obesity, and diet-related illness. The Government have reported that many children today consume too much fat, sugar and salt, and not enough fibre, fruit and vegetables. Our role is to provide guidance and encourage parents to prepare lunchboxes that meet children's nutritional needs.

Healthy Eating in the Early Years

A healthy packed lunch should always include the **BIG 4**:

1. **Starchy Foods** (bread, pitta, breadsticks, pasta, rice, noodles, etc.)
2. **Fruit and vegetables** (apples, bananas, carrot sticks, peppers, etc.)
3. **Dairy** (milk, cheese, yoghurt, etc.)
4. **Protein** (meat, chicken, fish, eggs, humous, etc.)

- Portions should be appropriate for the size and age of your child. Children aged between 2-5 years should consume 1,000 to 1,400 calories per day.
- Children must not exceed 30%-40% of total calories of **fat** per day.
- Children must not exceed **14g of sugar per day**.
- **Natural sugars** in fruit and milk count towards this daily allowance, but do not need to be limited.
- **Free sugars** (in sweets, cakes, biscuits, chocolate and fizzy drinks) must be avoided.

Lunchbox Guidelines for Parents

To support families, we provide a simple guide on what to include in a healthy lunchbox.

- Please use **insulated lunch bags and ice packs**.
- Choose **easy-open containers** to encourage children's independence.
- Parents are responsible for reading ingredient labels and packing their child's lunch carefully.
- A lunchbox needs to contain the **BIG 4** and exclude **excessive sugary foods** (equivalent to a third of the daily allowance of 14g), Tithe Barn Preschool reserves the right to remove those food items and return them home.

Foods and drinks not permitted (as stated by the Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance May 2025)**:**

- Fizzy or sugary drinks (including cartons, fruit shoots, bottles and cans)
- Fruit juice or smoothies (*approx. 11g of sugar*)
- Sweets or confectionery
- Raisins (*approx. 8.4g of sugar per mini box*)
- Chocolate mousse (*approx. 11g of sugar*) or sugary yoghurts
- Split-pot yoghurts with added confectionery (*approx. 14.2g of sugar)*
- Chocolate spread sandwiches (*1 x tablespoon of spread = approx. 7.5g of sugar*)
- Jam sandwiches (*1 x tablespoon if jam = approx. 9g of sugar*)
- Savoury or sweet pasties (inc. sausage rolls, croissants, crepes, etc – *high in fat and sugar*)
- Any nut products

Lunchbox Storage

- Lunchboxes will be stored in a cool dry place at preschool.
- We recommend parents include an ice pack, especially on warmer days.

Allergy Awareness and Dietary Requirements

- We are a **peanut-free environment**.
- All staff are trained and regularly updated on children's individual dietary needs.
- Our **Allergen Expert** monitors compliance and ensures safety.
- Parents who 'opt out' of our Daily Charge must follow our **snack menu** so all children enjoy the same food experience.
- All lunchboxes are checked daily to prevent allergens and choking hazards.

Choking Hazards and Safe Eating Practices

- Parents must pack age-appropriate foods.
- Items such as grapes and cherry tomatoes must be cut in half lengthways.
- Staff follow Statutory Framework guidelines, always staying within sight and hearing of children during snacks and meals.

Creating a Positive Mealtime Experience

- Mealtimes are social occasions; staff always sit with children during lunch.
- Staff encourage polite table manners, healthy eating, and safe eating habits.
- Staff encourage the consumption of **starchy foods** and **proteins** firstly, followed by **dairy products** and **fruit and veg**.
- Staff support children with opening containers and understanding suitable portion sizes.
- At snack time, children are gently encouraged to try new foods without pressure.
- To **celebrate birthdays**, we would like to encourage fruit platters rather than cake to share with friends.

Drinks

- As part of the **Nursery Milk Scheme**, children under five receive one-third of a pint of milk each day free of charge.
- We will also refill children's water bottles with tap water throughout the day.

Staff Training

- All staff are **First Aid trained** and equipped to manage choking incidents. We also have a **Life Vac** device on site.
- Staff are fully trained to recognise allergic reactions and choking symptoms.
- Allergen charts are signed and updated by parents regularly.
- Multiple members of staff hold **Level 3 Food Safety & Hygiene**, with others trained to Level 2 and/or following our in-house Health & Safety standards.

Information for this policy was gathered from NHS guidance, British Nutrition Foundation 2025 and Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance May 2025.

Written September 2025. Reviewed annually

Signed: