



Nutrition and Mealtimes Policy

At **West Green Playgroup** we believe that mealtimes should be happy, social occasions for children and staff alike. We promote shared, enjoyable positive interactions at these times.

West Green Playgroup does not prepare or provide meals. Parents and carers provide children's packed lunches. The Playgroup prepares and provides snacks and may prepare food with children during supervised baking and food activities. We aim to ensure that all food is safe, nutritious and appropriate for each child's individual needs and developmental stage. We ensure that:

- We provide nutritious food at all snack times, avoiding large quantities of fat, sugar, salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings
- Only milk and water are provided as drinks to promote oral health. Fresh drinking water is always available and accessible. It is frequently offered to children and babies and intake is monitored. In hot weather staff will encourage children to drink more water to keep them hydrated
- Individual dietary requirements are respected. We gather information from parents regarding their children's dietary needs, including any special dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies that a child has and any special health requirements, before a child joins the Playgroup. Where appropriate, we will carry out a risk assessment in the case of allergies and work alongside parents to put into place an individual dietary plan for their child
- We give careful consideration to seating to avoid cross contamination of food from child to child. Where appropriate, an adult will sit with children during meals to ensure safety and minimise risks. Where appropriate, discussions will also take place with children about allergies and potential risks to make them aware of the dangers of sharing certain foods
- Staff show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. They do not use a child's diet or allergy as a label for the child, or make a child feel singled out because of their diet or allergy
- Staff set a good example and eat with the children and show good table manners. Meal and snack times are organised so that they are social occasions in which children and staff participate in small groups. During meal and snack times children are encouraged to use their manners and conversation is encouraged
- Staff use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drinks and feeding themselves
- Staff support children to make healthy choices and understand the need for **healthy** eating

- Where possible, snacks and baking activities reflect children's cultural backgrounds, allowing children to experience familiar foods and introducing them to new foods.
- Cultural differences in eating habits are respected
- Children are given time to eat at their own pace and not rushed
- Snacks and any food prepared during baking activities are provided in portions appropriate to each child's age, individual needs and developmental stage.
- We promote positive attitudes to healthy eating through play opportunities and discussions
- Children will always remain within the sight and hearing of staff while eating. Staff will remain alert because choking can be silent and, where possible, will sit facing the children. A member of staff holding a valid full paediatric first-aid certificate will be in the room whenever children are eating.
- Parents and carers may bring food to share for birthdays or other celebrations, provided this is discussed with the Playgroup in advance.
- Every item must have a complete and clearly written ingredient list, including allergen information. This may be the original manufacturer's packaging or, for homemade food, a full written list supplied by the person who made it.
- Staff will check the information against children's known allergies, intolerances, dietary requirements and individual care plans before the food is served. The Playgroup may refuse or withhold anything where the ingredients or allergens are unclear or where the food may present an allergy, choking, hygiene or food-safety risk.
- All staff involved in preparing and handling snacks or food used during baking activities are competent to do so and receive appropriate food-hygiene training, which is refreshed in accordance with the Playgroup's training arrangements.
- If food poisoning affects two or more children cared for on the premises, the Playgroup will notify Ofsted as soon as reasonably practicable and always within 14 days. We will also contact the relevant health or local authority service and follow any advice given.

Packed lunches

Children attending over the lunchtime period bring a packed lunch from home. Parents and carers are provided with guidance about nutritious contents and safe preparation. (<https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes/>).

Parents and carers must provide packed lunches in clearly named, insulated lunch bags containing an ice pack because the Playgroup cannot refrigerate lunchboxes. Food cannot be reheated at the Playgroup. Warm food may be supplied in a secure, child-safe food flask.

Children's lunch boxes are checked prior to giving the contents to the children to ensure any risks from potential allergens or choking hazards are managed.

This policy was adopted on	Signed on behalf of the Playgroup	Date for review
<i>September 2026</i>		<i>September 2027</i>