ST. MARY'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Early Years Safer Eating Policy

Investing in the uniqueness of each individual

"I am fearfully and wonderfully made"
Psalms 139 v 14

Date of Next Review: September 2027

DND Learning Trust

Early Years Safer Eating Policy

1. Policy Statement

We provide care and education for children aged 2 to 5 years and are committed to ensuring that all children eat and drink safely whilst in our care.
We recognise that young children remain vulnerable to choking incidents, allergic reactions, food-borne illness and unsafe eating practices. We aim to provide a safe, positive and inclusive eating environment that promotes children's health, wellbeing, independence and enjoyment of food.
This policy is based on current statutory and best practice guidance, including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework, Department for Education (DfE) safer eating guidance, NHS allergy advice, Food Standards Agency (FSA) allergen requirements and guidance from Anaphylaxis UK.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All children aged 2 to 5 years attending the school.
- All staff, volunteers, students and visitors involved in the preparation, serving or supervision of food and drink.
- All eating occasions including:
    - Snack times
    - Lunch and dinner times
    - Special events and celebrations
    - Cooking activities
    - Educational visits
    - Off-site activities

3. Responsibilities

Head of School

The Head of School will:

- Ensure safer eating procedures are implemented and reviewed regularly.
- Maintain accurate records of children's allergies, intolerances and dietary requirements.
- Ensure appropriate risk assessments are completed.
- Ensure staff receive training in:
    - Paediatric First Aid
    - Allergy awareness
    - Recognition of anaphylaxis
    - Choking prevention and response
    - Safe food hygiene practices

Staff
Staff will:

- Know and follow children's dietary requirements and healthcare plans.
- Actively supervise children during all eating occasions.
- Follow safer eating procedures at all times.
- Promote positive eating habits and good table manners.
- Report concerns, incidents and near misses immediately.

Parents and Carers
Parents and carers are responsible for:

- Informing the school of allergies, intolerances, medical conditions or dietary requirements.
- Providing prescribed medication where required.
- Updating the school immediately if a child's dietary or medical needs change.

4. Allergy Management
We adopt a whole-school allergy-aware approach to minimise risk and support children safely.

Before a child starts at the school:

- Information regarding allergies, intolerances and dietary requirements will be obtained from parents or carers.
- Individual Healthcare Plans or Allergy Action Plans will be implemented where required.
- Relevant staff will be informed of the child's needs before attendance begins.

Allergy Records
The school will:

- Maintain accurate and up-to-date allergy records.
- Ensure allergy information is available to staff responsible for serving food.
- Include allergy information within educational visit documentation where applicable.

Preventing Exposure to Allergens
The school will:

- Check ingredient labels whenever food is purchased or served.
- Keep allergen information available for all foods provided.
- Take steps to prevent cross-contamination.
- Use separate utensils, equipment or preparation areas where required.

- Provide suitable alternatives where necessary.

Responding to Allergic Reactions
All staff must be able to:

- Recognise symptoms of an allergic reaction.
- Recognise signs of anaphylaxis.
- Follow individual healthcare plans.
- Seek emergency medical assistance when required.
- Administer prescribed medication in accordance with training and healthcare plans.
- Inform parents or carers immediately following any incident.

5. Safe Eating Practices
To reduce the risk of choking and other eating-related incidents:

- Children will sit appropriately whilst eating and drinking.
- Children will remain seated during snack and meal times.
- Food and drink will only be provided when staff can actively supervise.
- Children will not walk, run, climb or play whilst eating.
- Staff will encourage children to take small bites, chew food thoroughly and eat at an appropriate pace.
- Children will never be left unattended whilst eating.
- Food sharing between children is not permitted.

Active Supervision
A child will only eat whilst seated and under the direct supervision of a member of staff. A current Paediatric First Aid qualified practitioner will be present during all snack and meal times. Children will remain within sight and hearing of staff during all eating occasions and active supervision will be maintained throughout snack and meal times.

6. Choking Prevention
Food will always be prepared according to children's age, stage of development and ability to chew and swallow safely.

Staff will be aware of foods that present a higher choking risk.

High-Risk Foods
Where served, the following foods will be modified appropriately:

- Grapes will be cut lengthways into quarters.
- Cherry tomatoes will be cut lengthways into quarters.
- Hard fruits and vegetables will be sliced appropriately.

- Sausages will be cut lengthways into thin strips.
- Meat and fish will be prepared without bones.
- Cheese will be served in strips or appropriately sized portions.

Foods Not Served
The school will not serve:

- Nuts
- Popcorn
- Hard sweets
- Marshmallows
- Jelly cubes
- Any food identified as unsafe for the developmental stage of children attending the school

7. Supporting Children's Development Whilst Eating
We recognise that children aged 2 to 5 years develop eating skills at different rates.

Staff will:

- Encourage independence during snack and meal times.
- Support children to use cutlery appropriately.
- Model positive eating behaviours.
- Ensure food textures and portion sizes are suitable for individual children.
- Support children who require additional assistance.
- Liaise with parents and external professionals if concerns arise regarding chewing, swallowing or feeding difficulties.

8. Snack Time Procedures
Snack time is an important opportunity to promote healthy eating, social interaction and independence.

The school will:

- Provide healthy snacks in accordance with recognised nutritional guidance.
- Ensure fresh drinking water is available at all times.
- Support children to wash hands before and after eating.
- Ensure children are seated whilst eating.
- Actively supervise children throughout snack time.
- Check allergy and dietary information before food is served.
- Provide suitable alternatives where required.
- Remove food promptly once snack time has ended.

Staff will encourage children to:

- Try new foods where appropriate.
- Develop independence.
- Follow good table manners.
- Talk positively about healthy food choices.

9. Lunch and Dinner Time Procedures
Lunch and dinner times should provide a calm, positive and sociable experience.

Staff will:

- Create a relaxed eating environment.
- Sit with and engage children in conversation where possible.
- Position themselves so all children can be observed.
- Verify children's dietary and allergy requirements before serving food.
- Ensure allergy-specific meals are clearly identified.
- Monitor children throughout the meal.
- Encourage good manners and safe eating behaviours.

Children will:

- Remain seated whilst eating.
- Be encouraged to eat independently.
- Be supported as needed according to age and developmental stage.
- Not share food, drinks or utensils.

Any concerns regarding a child's eating, chewing or swallowing abilities will be recorded and shared with parents or carers.

10. Educational Visits and Off-Site Activities
Safer eating requirements apply equally during educational visits and off-site activities.

Before the Visit

Staff will:

- Complete a risk assessment that includes food-related risks.
- Identify children with allergies, intolerances or medical dietary requirements.
- Ensure emergency medication accompanies the child where required.
- Take copies of relevant healthcare plans.
- Confirm food arrangements with venues where appropriate.
- Ensure trained staff members are present.

During the Visit
Staff will:

- Closely supervise all eating occasions.
- Ensure children are seated where practical and safe to do so.
- Support handwashing or hand sanitising before meals and snacks.
- Ensure children do not share food, drinks or utensils.
- Keep emergency medication accessible at all times.
- Follow healthcare plans in the event of a medical emergency.

Children with allergies or dietary requirements will not be excluded from educational visits solely because of their condition. Appropriate planning and risk management arrangements will be put in place to enable safe participation.

11. Food Hygiene
The school will:

- Comply with current food hygiene regulations.
- Ensure food is stored, prepared and served safely.
- Maintain appropriate cleaning schedules.
- Follow infection prevention procedures.
- Keep allergen information available for all foods provided.
- Dispose of food safely and appropriately.

12. Recording and Reporting
Staff will record and review:

- Allergic reactions.
- Administration of medication.
- Choking incidents.
- Food-related near misses.
- Concerns relating to eating, chewing or swallowing.

Parents or carers will be informed on the same day of any significant incident involving their child.

All incidents will be reviewed to identify lessons learned and any required changes to practice.

13. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed:

- Annually.

- Following any serious incident.
- Following changes to statutory guidance.
- Following updates to the EYFS framework or safer eating guidance.

St Mary's CE Primary School is committed to continually reviewing its procedures to ensure the highest standards of children's safety, wellbeing and inclusion during all eating occasions.