



Food and Nutrition and Mealtimes Policy

Statement of Intent

The Playden provide healthy, balanced and nutritious food and follow the Early Years Statutory Framework 2025 (EYFS).

Providing healthy, balanced and nutritious food which ensures that all children:

- Get the right amount of nutrients and energy they need while they are growing rapidly, which is especially important for children who might not have access to healthy food.
- Develop positive eating habits early on.

We are registered as a food provider with the local authority Environmental Health Department.

Aims

We aim to follow the [Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance 2025](#).

We will aim to follow guidelines set out in '[Eat Better Start Better](#)' and the [Eatwell Guide](#) to define Governments recommendations on eating healthily and achieving a balanced diet.

We aim to meet the needs of most children with specific dietary requirements. The dietary needs of all children are discussed before a child starts at setting and a 'Safe Food Agreement' completed where a particular need is identified, the details of which will be made known to all staff working at that setting prior to the child attending. Please refer to our Food Allergies and Intolerances Policy.

Procedures

Staff are required to follow the details stated on each child's Safe Food Agreement to support the individual needs of every child – any failures in complying with the requirements of a Safe Food Agreement will result in disciplinary action.

Occasionally it may not be possible to accommodate a specific dietary requirement in the setting. In this situation parents may be asked to provide food themselves as a reasonable adjustment for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), or the offer of a place may need to be reviewed.

Parents are responsible for ensuring safe preparation, storage, and transportation of food to the club when it has been agreed that food from home will be provided. The Playden is not responsible for food prepared at home in line with the Food Safety Requirements.

Snacks and lunches brought to setting by other parents/carers should be peanut and nut free. The Playden will ensure that parents/carers are regularly reminded and will monitor the contents of any lunches and snacks sent in from home.

All staff preparing food and snacks must adhere to hygiene procedures and must maintain an up-to-date Food Hygiene Certificate. Clean clothes/aprons must be worn, long hair tied back, nails clean and short; disposable gloves should be worn for handling food (and disposed of after use) and any cuts covered with waterproof plasters. Where gloves are not in use then staff will adhere to robust hand hygiene rules with regular handwashing after handling food stuffs. Jewellery such as rings and watches should be removed.

Consideration will be given to the ingredients of purchased food items to take into account salt, sugar and saturated fat content. Where possible, lower sugar/salt options will be purchased. Sugar will be kept to a minimum as an added ingredient; salt will not be added to any food in conjunction with the stated allowances in the [Eatwell Guide](#).



In accordance with regulations regarding specific labelling of food allergens effective from December 2014, allergen information will be available for all ingredients used.

When preparing food, it is important to avoid round shapes as these are a choking hazard. Cut small fruits lengthways and then halve again (quarters). These fruits include:

- grapes
- raspberries
- strawberries
- cherry tomatoes.

The Food Standards Agency has a poster about [choking hazards](#).

Guidance for children aged 1 to 5 years

A healthy plate

The Playden will encourage children to eat a balanced diet containing a wide variety of foods. Our snacks will be planned to include a variety of food and drinks from the 4 main food groups every day. We recognise that the more children try new foods, the wider the range of nutrients they will get from their meals.

The 4 food groups

We acknowledge children aged 1 to 5 years have different nutritional requirements to adults. We will refer to the [Eatwell Guide](#) advice to show what a healthy and balanced diet looks like. The advice in the Eatwell Guide applies to children from the age of 2 years.

A healthy, balanced diet is based on the [4 main food groups](#) (fruit and vegetables; potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates; dairy or dairy alternatives; and beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins). We understand that these provide essential nutrients to help children grow and develop.

We are aware of allergies, further guidance on how we manage and support children with allergies can be found in our Food Allergy and Intolerance Policy.

Our food is prepared appropriately to minimise any risk of choking.

Food and drink guidelines at a glance

To help provide children with healthy, balanced and nutritious food, the following categories have been taken from the food and drink guidelines below Early Years Nutrition Guidance:

- **Provide** - Where the guidelines advise that a food or drink should be provided, we will use these to plan meals, drinks and snacks.
- **Limit** - Where the guidelines advise that foods should be limited, these should be restricted as detailed in the specific guideline. This will help to decrease the amount of sugar, salt and saturated fat in children's diets and increase the variety of foods they are offered.
- **Avoid** - Where the guidelines advise that a food or drink should be avoided, these should not be provided as part of any meals, drinks or snacks.

Please note for older children we have due regard for the School Food Standards

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-food-standards-resources-for-schools/school-food-standards-practical-guide>



Food and drink guidelines Food

Fruit and vegetables

These include:

- fresh, frozen, tinned or dried fruit and vegetables
- pulses such as lentils and beans.

Starchy Carbohydrates

These include:

- bread
- potatoes, sweet potatoes, and other starchy root vegetables
- pasta and noodles
- rice and other grains
- breakfast cereals.

Guideline

- **Provide** at least 1 portion of vegetables and/or fruit as part at each main meal (breakfast, lunch, dinner) and as part of some snacks (not including dried fruit).
- **Provide** a variety of vegetables or fruit across the day and each week.
- **Limit** baked beans to once a week if this is being counted as a vegetable.
- **Avoid** dried fruit as a snack. It should only be provided as part of a meal.
- **Avoid** fruit tinned in syrup and choose fruit tinned in juice.
- **Avoid** added salt and sugar in tinned vegetables and pulses and choose no added salt and sugar options or those tinned in water.
- **Provide** a portion of starchy food as part of each main meal (breakfast, lunch and tea) each day.
- **Provide** plain starchy food such as plain savoury crackers, or unsalted unsweetened rice or corn cakes as part of at least 1 snack each day.
- **Provide** at least 3 different types of starchy food and a variety of wholegrain and white starchy foods across breakfasts, snacks, lunch and tea each week.
- **Provide** wholegrain starchy foods for at least 1 breakfast, lunch and tea each week. **Limit** sugar and salt content in breakfast cereals. Choose those with the lowest sugar and salt content which are labelled as 'low' (green).
- **Limit** the salt content in bread and bread products. Choose those with a lower salt content which are labelled as 'low' (green) or 'medium' (amber) in salt.
- **Limit** starchy foods which have been fried to a maximum of once a week (e.g. chips, fried rice and fried noodles).
- **Limit** tinned pasta in sauce (e.g. spaghetti hoops) and choose no added sugar options.
- **Avoid** cereals labelled as 'high' (red) in sugar such as sugar-coated or chocolate-flavoured cereals.
- **Avoid** flavoured dried rice, pasta and noodle products e.g. packets and pots of instant flavoured noodles, pasta and rice.

Dairy and plain, fortified plant-based alternatives

These include:

- milk
- cheese
- yoghurt and fromage frais.

Proteins

These include:

- beans, pulses and nuts
- meat and poultry
- fish and shellfish
- eggs
- meat alternatives.

- **Provide** 3 portions of milk and unsweetened dairy foods each day (which includes those provided at home).
- **Provide** non-dairy alternatives that are unsweetened and calcium fortified (e.g. oat milk or soya milk).
- **Provide** full fat dairy foods (such as cheese and unsweetened yoghurt and fromage frais) for children under the age of 2 and gradually introduce lower-fat dairy options after this age.
- **Avoid** sweetened yoghurts and fromage frais (including non-dairy alternatives) and choose plain unsweetened options.

- **Provide** a portion of protein as part of lunch and tea each day.
- **Provide** a variety of protein sources as part of lunch and tea across the week.
- **Provide** at least 1 lunch and 1 tea for children each week which uses beans, lentils, pulses or a meat alternative as the protein source.
- **Provide** vegetarian and vegan children with a variety of protein sources such as beans, pulses, and meat alternatives each week as part of lunch and tea.

• **Provide** oily fish (such as salmon, sardines or mackerel) at least once every 3 weeks; this can be provided as part of lunch or tea. When oily fish is not provided as a main meal in the week, you could try to provide oily fish as a snack.

- **Limit** oily fish to a maximum of twice per week.
- **Limit** the provision of processed meat products (e.g. sausages, breaded chicken, meatballs), processed fish products (e.g. fish fingers, fish cakes), and products made from meat alternatives (e.g. vegetarian sausages), to once a week for each of the 3 types as these products can be high in saturated fat and salt.

For all foods

- **Avoid** foods high in saturated fat, salt, and/or sugars like cakes, sweet and savoury pastries, biscuits, crisps, chocolate and other confectionary.
- **Avoid** artificial sweeteners as they may encourage children to prefer very sweet foods

Drinks

- **Provide** children with access to water throughout the day.
- **Provide** only fresh tap water and plain milk to drink.
- **Provide** whole milk, semi-skimmed cow's milk or unsweetened calcium fortified non-dairy alternatives for children from 1 year of age.
- **Avoid** skimmed and 1% cow's milk.
- **Avoid** sugary drinks (including fruit juices, squash and smoothies).

Portion size for children aged 1 to 5 years

We recognise a portion size for a child aged 1 to 5 is generally smaller than an adult portion. There are no official guidelines on exactly how much food children need. Portions should be appropriate for a child's body size and appetite.

Staff will monitor a child's appetite and adjust portion sizes to make sure they get enough energy and nutrients.

Staff will avoid:

- making children finish everything on their plate or eat more than they want to
- offering rewards to children for finishing everything on their plate (e.g. stickers or dessert).

We will refer to the DfE's help for early years providers website has a [guide to portion sizes](#).

When serving food to children, we always make sure to cut food to a size that's right for a child's size and age. This helps avoid choking.

Mealtimes

At The Playden mealtimes are sociable occasions. Children are seated at low level tables, alongside staff members who encourage appropriate conversation in order to make mealtimes a relaxed and enjoyable experience. Staff adhere to the EYFS 2025, (pages 36- 37).

We provide and/or serve food and drinks for children at the following times: morning and afternoon snack, and during holidays at lunch. Drinking water is always available to children.

We organise snack times so that they are social occasions in which children and staff participate. We use snack times to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink.

We provide children with utensils which are appropriate for their ages and stages of development and consider the eating practices of their culture and staff will support with this. This may include supporting children to place food on cutlery and/or cutting their food. Good manners are promoted throughout mealtimes and children will be encouraged to say please and thank you where appropriate.

In the older children are encouraged to self – serve food, this allows them to control their portion size, and this is fully supported by the staff team.

All information regarding mealtimes is shared with parents/carers.

Menus are created in conjunction with parents, staff, and the children where appropriate and all dietary, religious, and cultural needs are taken into consideration.

Where there is no dietary, religious or cultural requirements, all children are encouraged to try a variety of foods. Should a child display dislike for a particular food, they will be verbally encouraged to try it. No child will have food forced them in any way, including placing foods on their lips and/or open mouth to encourage them to taste food. Where a child continues to display dislike for the food on offer after verbal encouragement, it may be appropriate to offer the child a 'safe food' option. This would be offered in consultation with parents/carers. The practitioners know the children very well and can distinguish between a child not liking something and them trying to push boundaries when it comes to mealtimes.

Allergies, intolerances, and preferences:

It is important that we work in partnership with parents and ensure the wishes of the parents are met, along with any allergies, intolerances, parental preferences, and any other dietary requirements. All children at the club have a colour coded utensils which are used at snack/mealtimes to ensure diets are adhered to. There is an allergy file and allergy lists displaying the children who have dietary requirements for the purpose of if there is a change of staff and serves as a visual reminder for all. We consider seating to avoid cross contamination of food from child to child. In line with EYFS 2025 (page 37 3.69) an adult must sit with children during meals to ensure safety and minimise risks. Where appropriate, age/stage discussions will also take place with all 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 her/his diet or allergy. Please refer to our Food Allergy & Intolerance Policy.

We will sometimes celebrate special occasions such as birthdays with the occasional treat of foods such as cake, sweets, or biscuits. These will be given at mealtimes/home times to prevent tooth decay and not spoil the child's appetite. Where we have frequent birthdays and celebrations, we consider other alternatives such as celebrating through smiles and praise etc choosing a favourite story, becoming a special helper, playing a party game, dancing and/or singing their favourite song.

We do allow parents to bring in cakes on special occasions. We ensure that all food brought in from parents meets health and safety requirements and the full ingredients are listed in line with the Consumers Regulation 1169/2011.

Planning food activities

We acknowledge cooking is a great experience for children and helps to create a positive relationship with food. Some children have limited opportunities to cook or learn about food at home. We plan fun activities for

children in club and also suggest activities that can be done with parents and/or carers at home. We take in to account the DfE's help for early years providers website which has further information on [planning food activities with children](#).

Food hygiene procedures:

- Daily opening and closing checks on the kitchen to ensure standards are met consistently.
- There are separate facilities for handwashing and for washing up.
- All surfaces are clean and non-porous.
- All utensils, crockery etc. are clean and stored appropriately.
- Cleaning materials and other dangerous materials are stored out of children's reach. See COSHH file.
- Children do not have access to the kitchen.
- All equipment must be used according to manufacturer's instructions and checked regularly to ensure that it is functioning correctly. Pat testing of electrical appliances is carried out yearly.

Cleaning the Kitchen:

It is important that the kitchen is always kept clean and tidy.

- Put all food away before cleaning so it does not come into contact with cleaning agents.
- All equipment and working surfaces must be kept in a clean and hygienic condition.
- Cleaning chemicals should be used at the prescribed dilution rate.
- Sinks that you do washing up in must be kept clean.
- Hand washing sinks are for hand washing only.

To clean things properly you need to follow four different stages:

- Pre-clean – brush away any food debris.
- Main clean – use clean hot water and detergent making sure you get into difficult areas.
- Rinse – use clean hot water and a clean cloth.
- Drying – leave to dry naturally.

Personal hygiene:

All employees, paid or voluntary, who handle food, have a responsibility to:

- Maintain a high standard of personal hygiene.
- Adhere to the club's no smoking policy.
- Refrain from handling food when they are suffering from an infectious disease or have boils, ulcers, cuts or rashes, diarrhoea, eye, ear, or throat infection.
- Report shortcomings to the manager, e.g. faulty or damaged equipment.
- Wash hands before preparing food or drink.
- Adhere to the club's Health and Safety Policy.

Reporting of food poisoning:

Food poisoning can occur for several reasons; not all cases of sickness or diarrhoea are because of food poisoning and not all cases of sickness or diarrhoea are reportable. Where children and/or adults have been diagnosed by a GP or hospital doctor to be suffering from food poisoning and where it seems possible that the source of the outbreak is within the setting, the manager will contact the Environmental Health Department and the Health Protection Agency, to report the outbreak and will comply with any investigation. If the food poisoning is identified as a notifiable disease under the Public Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 1988 the club will report the matter to Ofsted.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of	The PlayDen
Held in:	December 2025
To be reviewed in:	December 2026
Signed on behalf of the setting:	
Name of Signatory:	
Role of Signatory:	Manager Deputy Manager