WALTHAMSTOW MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Safer Eating Policy

FOOD SAFETY POLICY

Purpose

Walthamstow Montessori School (WMS) is committed to ensuring that all food and drink provided to children is safe, hygienically prepared, stored and served.

We recognise that young children are particularly vulnerable to food poisoning, choking, allergic reactions and other food-related risks. We therefore maintain high standards of food hygiene, food safety, allergy management and safe eating throughout the school.

This policy applies to all staff involved in purchasing, receiving, storing, preparing, serving or supervising food and drink at WMS.

Our procedures are designed to meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), current food safety legislation and relevant Food Standards Agency (FSA) guidance.

Our Commitment

WMS is committed to:

- Providing children with safe, healthy, balanced and nutritious food and drinks.
- Maintaining high standards of food hygiene and cleanliness.
- Preventing food contamination and cross-contamination.
- Managing food allergies, intolerances and dietary requirements safely.
- Following safe food storage and temperature-control procedures.
- Providing appropriate supervision while children are eating and drinking.
- Reducing the risk of choking through appropriate food preparation and serving.
- Ensuring staff understand their responsibilities regarding food safety.
- Working in partnership with parents and carers to manage individual dietary requirements.
- Reviewing our food safety arrangements regularly and making improvements where necessary.

From September 2025, early years providers are required to have regard to the Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance and should follow it unless there is good reason not to.

Food Handling, Preparation and Hygiene

All staff involved in handling or serving food must follow appropriate hygiene procedures.

Staff must:

- Wash their hands thoroughly with liquid soap and warm running water before handling food.
- Wash hands after using the toilet, changing nappies, wiping noses, handling waste, cleaning or carrying out any activity that could contaminate hands.
- Ensure hands are clean before serving food to children.
- Cover cuts, sores or wounds with a suitable waterproof dressing.

- Keep nails short, clean and free from nail polish or artificial nails when handling food.
- Avoid wearing jewellery that could present a hygiene or food-safety risk.
- Wear appropriate protective clothing when preparing or serving food.
- Tie back long hair and use hair protection where required.
- Never handle food when suffering from vomiting, diarrhoea or another illness that could contaminate food.
- Follow appropriate exclusion periods following gastrointestinal illness.
- Keep food preparation areas clean and hygienic.

Children are encouraged and supported to develop good handwashing habits before eating.

Food Preparation Areas and Equipment

Food preparation areas must be kept clean and hygienic.

Staff must ensure that:

- Food preparation surfaces are cleaned before and after use.
- Appropriate cleaning products and disposable cloths are used.
- Food preparation equipment is cleaned thoroughly after use.
- Utensils are stored hygienically.
- Equipment used for food preparation is kept in good condition.
- Raw and ready-to-eat foods are kept separate where applicable.
- Food is protected from contamination during preparation and serving.
- Waste is removed promptly and hygienically.
- Cleaning materials and chemicals are stored away from food and children.

Where colour-coded equipment is used, staff must follow the appropriate colour-coding system to reduce the risk of cross-contamination.

Food Storage

Food must be stored appropriately to prevent contamination and maintain food safety.

Refrigerated food

- Refrigerators are kept clean and hygienic.
- Fridge temperatures are checked and recorded daily.
- Refrigerators should operate at a safe temperature, normally **5°C or below**.
- Food is covered and stored appropriately.
- Raw food, where applicable, is kept separate from ready-to-eat food.
- Food is checked regularly for use-by dates.
- Out-of-date food is disposed of safely.
- Opened food is appropriately covered, labelled and dated where required.

Freezer storage

- Freezers should be maintained at approximately **-18°C or below**.
- Frozen food is checked regularly.
- Food is stored appropriately and protected from contamination.
- Defrosted food is not refrozen unless it has been safely cooked first.
- Freezers are cleaned and maintained regularly.

Dry food storage

- Dry food is stored in clean, dry and pest-free areas.
- Food is kept off the floor.
- Open food is kept in suitable sealed containers where appropriate.
- Food is checked regularly for damage, contamination and expiry dates.

Food Deliveries and Purchasing

WMS will take reasonable steps to ensure that food purchased or supplied to the school is safe and suitable.

When food is received, staff should check:

- Packaging is intact.
- Food is within its use-by date.
- Chilled and frozen food is appropriately cold.
- There are no obvious signs of contamination or damage.
- Food is stored promptly in the appropriate location.

Any food considered unsafe or unsuitable must not be served to children.

Allergies, Intolerances and Dietary Requirements

WMS takes food allergies and intolerances extremely seriously.

Information relating to a child's dietary requirements is collected as part of the registration process and must be kept up to date.

Parents and carers must inform the school of:

- Food allergies.
- Food intolerances.
- Medical dietary requirements.
- Religious or cultural dietary requirements.
- Ethical dietary requirements where relevant.

Where necessary, an individual allergy or dietary care plan will be put in place.

Staff must be aware of children's individual dietary requirements before food is served.

WMS Food Restrictions

Walthamstow Montessori School operates specific food restrictions, including:

- **Nut-free environment**
- **Grape-free environment**
- Appropriate dairy-free alternatives for children who require them.
- Milk is not provided to children; drinking water is available throughout the day.

These restrictions form part of our overall approach to reducing food-related risks and must be followed by staff, caterers and anyone providing food for children.

Allergy Management

For children with diagnosed food allergies:

- Allergy information must be clearly communicated to relevant staff.
- Staff must know which children have allergies and what foods must be avoided.
- Individual allergy care plans must be followed.
- Food labels must be checked carefully before food is given to a child.

- Staff must be aware of the 14 regulated allergens.
- Cross-contamination must be avoided.
- Suitable alternatives must be provided where required.
- Emergency medication must be readily accessible in accordance with the child's individual healthcare plan.
- Staff must know the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction and the appropriate emergency procedure.

No food should be given to a child where staff are uncertain whether it is suitable for that child.

Food Allergens and Labelling

Staff must check ingredient and allergen information when purchasing, receiving or preparing food.

The 14 regulated allergens are:

1. Cereals containing gluten
2. Crustaceans
3. Eggs
4. Fish
5. Peanuts
6. Soybeans
7. Milk
8. Nuts
9. Celery
10. Mustard
11. Sesame
12. Sulphur dioxide and sulphites
13. Lupin
14. Molluscs

Allergen information must be readily available to staff and, where appropriate, parents and carers.

Food must never be assumed to be allergen-free without checking the relevant ingredients and packaging.

Preventing Cross-Contamination

Particular care must be taken to prevent allergen cross-contamination.

Staff must:

- Wash hands before handling food.
- Clean food preparation surfaces thoroughly.
- Use clean utensils and equipment.
- Keep allergen-containing foods away from children with relevant allergies.
- Check packaging and ingredient information.
- Avoid using the same utensils for different foods where this could create a risk.
- Clean surfaces and equipment between preparation of different foods where necessary.

Healthy Eating and Nutrition

WMS recognises the importance of good nutrition in supporting children's growth, development, health and wellbeing.

Where food and drinks are provided, they should be:

- Healthy.
- Balanced.
- Nutritious.
- Suitable for the age and developmental stage of the child.
- Appropriate for individual dietary requirements.

We aim to provide children with opportunities to experience a variety of healthy foods, textures, flavours and cultures.

Children will be encouraged to develop positive attitudes towards food and healthy eating.

Fresh drinking water will be available to children throughout the day.

Mealtimes and snack times also provide opportunities for children to develop independence, social skills, manners and positive routines.

Cultural, Religious and Ethical Requirements

WMS respects children's cultural, religious and ethical dietary requirements.

Parents and carers should provide the school with clear information about any dietary restrictions.

Where a suitable alternative cannot safely be provided by the school, parents may be asked to provide an appropriate alternative in sealed and clearly labelled packaging.

All alternatives must be checked for allergens and suitability before being given to a child.

Safe Eating and Choking Prevention

WMS recognises that young children are at increased risk of choking.

Staff must ensure that food is prepared and served in a way that is appropriate for children's age and developmental stage.

Particular care must be taken with foods that may present a choking risk.

Examples include:

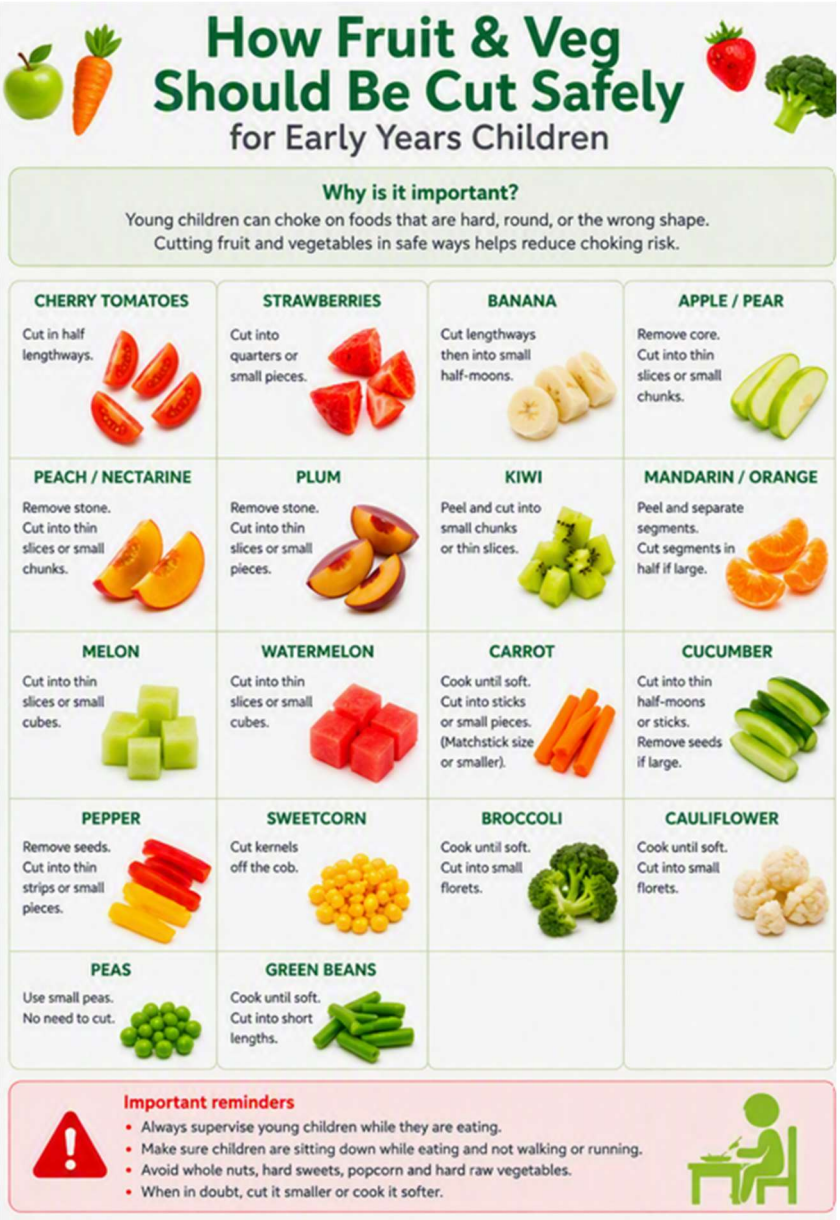
- Round foods.
- Hard or raw pieces of food.
- Large pieces of meat.
- Sticky foods.
- Foods that are difficult for young children to chew.

Food must be appropriately cut, prepared or otherwise modified to reduce choking risk.

Children must sit safely while eating and must not be allowed to run, play or lie down while eating.

Children must be appropriately supervised during mealtimes and snack times.

Staff responsible for supervising children while eating must understand how to prepare food safely and what to do in the event of choking.



Supervision During Mealtimes

Children must be appropriately supervised while eating and drinking.

Staff should:

- Remain attentive to the children.
- Encourage children to sit safely while eating.
- Monitor children for signs of choking or difficulty eating.
- Be aware of individual dietary and allergy requirements.
- Encourage children to eat at an appropriate pace.
- Avoid rushing children during meals.
- Encourage independence while maintaining appropriate supervision.

The EYFS includes specific safer-eating expectations around food preparation, choking prevention, allergy management and ensuring appropriate paediatric first aid arrangements when children are eating.

Food Provided From Home

At WMS, parents/carers are required to provide food for their child for lunch, WMS expects all food to comply with the school's food safety and allergy requirements.

Food must:

- Be suitable for the individual child.
- Be clearly labelled where necessary.
- Comply with WMS food restrictions.
- Not contain prohibited foods.
- Be stored appropriately.

The school may refuse food that is considered unsafe, unsuitable or does not comply with the school's dietary requirements.

Food Hygiene Training

Staff who have responsibility for food preparation or handling must receive appropriate food hygiene training.

Training should be refreshed as appropriate and when required by changes in legislation, guidance, role or responsibilities.

Staff must also receive information and guidance relating to:

- Food allergies.
- Allergen awareness.
- Cross-contamination.
- Safe food preparation.
- Choking prevention.
- Food storage.
- Hygiene procedures.
- Individual children's dietary requirements.

Illness and Food Handling

Staff who are suffering from vomiting or diarrhoea must not handle food.

Staff must follow the school's illness and exclusion procedures and must not return to food handling until it is considered safe to do so.

Any staff member who believes they may have contaminated food must report this immediately to management.

Cleaning and Maintenance

Food preparation and eating areas must be cleaned regularly.

Cleaning schedules should include:

- Food preparation surfaces.
- Tables and eating areas.
- Kitchen equipment.
- Refrigerators.
- Freezers.
- Food storage areas.
- Floors and surrounding areas.

- Waste bins.

Cleaning must be carried out using appropriate products and procedures.
Cleaning chemicals must be stored safely away from food and children.

Food Waste

Food waste must be disposed of safely and hygienically.
Waste bins must be:

- Suitable for food waste.
- Kept clean.
- Emptied regularly.
- Stored away from food preparation areas where appropriate.

Staff must take reasonable steps to prevent pests being attracted to food waste.

Monitoring and Record Keeping

WMS maintains appropriate records relating to food safety, including where applicable:

- Fridge and freezer temperature records.
- Cleaning schedules.
- Food hygiene training.
- Allergy and dietary information.
- Individual allergy care plans.
- Food safety checks.
- Relevant maintenance records.
- Incidents relating to food safety or allergies.

Records must be stored securely and be accessible to authorised staff.

Food Safety Incidents and Allergic Reactions

Any suspected food poisoning, allergic reaction, choking incident or other serious food-related incident must be dealt with immediately in accordance with the school's emergency procedures.
Following an incident:

- Appropriate first aid or emergency action must be taken.
- Emergency services must be contacted where required.
- Parents/carers must be informed in accordance with school procedures.
- The incident must be recorded.
- Management must be informed.
- The circumstances must be reviewed to identify whether further action is required.
- Risk assessments or procedures must be updated where appropriate.

Responsibilities

Management

Management is responsible for:

- Ensuring this policy is implemented.
- Ensuring staff understand their responsibilities.
- Providing appropriate training.

- Monitoring food safety procedures.
- Ensuring appropriate records are maintained.
- Reviewing food safety arrangements.
- Taking action where concerns are identified.

All Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- Following this policy.
- Maintaining good personal hygiene.
- Following food preparation and storage procedures.
- Being aware of children's dietary requirements.
- Preventing cross-contamination.
- Supervising children appropriately while eating.
- Reporting concerns immediately.
- Keeping food safety records accurately where required.

Working With Parents and Carers

WMS recognises that effective food safety relies on good communication with parents and carers.

Parents and carers are encouraged to keep the school informed of any changes to their child's:

- Allergies.
- Intolerances.
- Dietary requirements.
- Medical conditions affecting eating or drinking.
- Cultural or religious dietary requirements.

Parents will be provided with relevant information regarding the school's food safety and dietary arrangements.

Staff Training

Walthamstow Montessori School recognises the importance of ensuring that staff have the appropriate knowledge and skills to support children's health, safety and wellbeing in relation to food, eating and drinking.

Staff have received recognised training relevant to their roles, including:

- Paediatric First Aid.
- Choking prevention and response.
- CPR.
- Safer Eating.
- Fluids and Nutrition.
- Food Hygiene and safe food handling.
- Allergen Awareness.
- Anaphylaxis awareness and emergency response.

Staff are expected to apply the knowledge and procedures covered within their training when preparing, handling and serving food, supervising children during eating and drinking, managing dietary requirements and responding to food-related emergencies.

Training records are maintained by WMS and training is reviewed and refreshed as appropriate, including where required by changes in legislation, guidance, staff responsibilities or identified training needs.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed **annually**, or sooner if required following:

- Changes to legislation or EYFS requirements.
- Updates from the Department for Education.
- Updates from the Food Standards Agency.
- Changes to nutrition or safer-eating guidance.
- Environmental Health advice or inspection findings.
- A food safety incident.
- An allergic reaction or choking incident.
- Changes to the school's food provision.
- Feedback from staff, parents or other relevant professionals.

Staff are encouraged to raise any concerns or suggestions regarding food safety with management.

This Policy was adopted on/dated: 5th September 2026

Date Last Reviewed: -

Date to be Reviewed: 05th September 2027