ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Food and Nutrition Policy

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Approved by governors on:	
Review Cycle	Annually
Date of next review:	July 2027

Introduction

At St Mary's, we are committed to supporting children's health, development, and well-being through the provision of nutritious, balanced, and age-appropriate food. We follow the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the updated 2025 Nutrition Guidance for Early Years Providers to ensure the food and drink we provide meets the highest standards.

Providing healthy, balanced and nutritious food 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 at home. This can help prevent children from becoming overweight or obese.

• Develop positive eating habits early on. Children's early experiences with food can shape future eating habits. This can impact children's long-term health including maintaining a healthy weight, and good oral health.

The early years are a crucial time to reduce health inequalities and set the foundations for a lifetime of good health.

Aims:

- Promote lifelong healthy eating habits from an early age.

- Provide meals and snacks that meet children's nutritional, cultural, and dietary needs.

- Comply with statutory guidance on food and drink for children under five.

- Partner with families to support and respect children's individual food requirements.

- Encourage a positive, inclusive, and sociable dining experience.

Our meal providers and school ensure that children are provided with:

- Healthy, balanced meals and snacks based on the four food groups: fruit and vegetables, starchy foods, proteins, and dairy.

- Age-appropriate portion sizes.

- Water freely available throughout the day, and milk at designated snack times for those who have signed up to the government provision. (Support is provided to apply if needed)

- Menus that rotate every 3–4 weeks and are reviewed termly.

We avoid:

- Foods high in sugar, salt, or saturated fats.

- Artificial sweeteners and sugary drinks.

Cutting food safely if an activity requires

We will make sure to cut food to a size that's right for a child's size and age.

Choking can happen with any food, but we will do everything we can to minimise the risks.

When preparing food, we note that it is important to avoid round shapes as these are a choking hazard.

We will cut small fruits lengthways and then halve again (quarters). We will advise parents to do the same if they are providing their own snack.

Larger fruit is given to the child whole so they can take bite sized amounts.

Smaller fruits include:

• grapes

• raspberries

• strawberries

• cherry tomatoes.

Foods to avoid giving to children as they should not eat:

• much salt, as it is not good for their kidneys.

• any sugar. Avoiding sugary snacks and drinks including fruit juice can help prevent tooth decay

• foods that are high in saturated fat, salt and sugar like cakes, puddings, sweet and savoury pastries, biscuits, crisps, chocolate and other confectionery

• popcorn, raw jelly cubes, or whole nuts, which are all choking hazards

• slush ice drinks, sometimes known as slushies, as they may contain too much glycerol

• raw or lightly cooked shellfish, such as mussels, clams and oysters, which can risk food poisoning.

Paediatric first aid

A qualified paediatric first aider will be present at all times in the room during all snack and meal times.

Supervision when eating

An adult will always supervise children closely when they are eating. Staff will sit facing children while they eat to monitor for choking hazards, prevent food sharing and quickly identify any allergic reactions where possible. In the lunch hall, a trained staff member will be allocated to only monitor EYFS children.

Special Dietary Needs and Allergies

- We maintain a current list of children's allergies, intolerances, and cultural dietary needs.

- Allergen information is displayed and followed in food preparation areas.

- All staff receive training in allergy management and emergency response.

- We work closely with parents and healthcare professionals to develop individual care plans as needed.

Learning and Mealtime Environment

- Mealtimes are a key learning opportunity and are used to teach children about healthy food, hygiene, and manners.

- Children are encouraged to try new foods and take part in preparing simple snacks or meals as part of the curriculum.

- We support children to serve themselves where appropriate, promoting independence.

- Positive role modelling and discussions about food and health are encouraged.

- Mealtimes are social, inclusive, and calm.

- Children sit together with staff who model positive eating behaviours.

- Independence is promoted by encouraging children to serve themselves where age-appropriate.

Guidance for children aged 1 to 5 years

A healthy plate

We encourage children to eat a balanced diet containing a wide variety of foods. We plan meals and snacks that include a variety of food and drinks from the 4 main food groups every day. The more children try new foods, the wider the range of nutrients they will get from their meals. Children eat together in our setting, and they are allowed to choose what they would like each day. They are always given additional vegetables and or salad and homemade bread. The kitchen staff get to know the children and will often offer a small pot of something new for them to try in the early weeks of school. This encourages them to try foods that they might not try at home. For example, children who won't touch broccoli at home might happily try some if they see their peers eating it. Children who eat pack lunch sit amongst those with school dinners to ensure that children don't opt for packed lunches just to sit with friends. This has been really impactful.

Partnership with Parents and Carers

- Menus are shared regularly with families.

- We provide information on healthy lunchbox choices (for children bringing food from home).

- Families are consulted about dietary needs, food preferences, and cultural or religious requirements.

- We signpost parents to external guidance and support where appropriate.

Sustainability

- We aim to reduce food waste and promote recycling in food-related activities.
- We have designated food bins that the children learn to use and they are gradually given the responsibility for putting it in the central food waste bin.
- Our menus favour seasonal, locally sourced, and sustainably produced ingredients where possible.

Cooking with Children

- Cooking and food preparation activities are part of our curriculum.
- These activities promote fine motor skills, maths, science, and cultural learning.
- Health and safety guidelines are followed at all times.

Celebrations and Special Occasions

- We celebrate in healthy and inclusive ways.
- Families are encouraged to share culturally significant foods that meet our nutrition and allergy guidelines.

Cultural and Dietary Preferences

- We respect and accommodate dietary needs related to religion, culture, and ethical beliefs.
- Parents are consulted to ensure inclusive meal planning.