Norbury Hill Cubs

Policy: Safer Eating & Weaning

Category: Safeguarding & Child Protection

Review Date: 8th September 2027

Important Update, EYFS Safer Eating & Weaning: The Department for Education (DfE) has strengthened the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework with clearer requirements on safer eating, weaning and allergy management (EYFS 3.63-3.70). While the wider September 2026 EYFS update formally takes effect from 1st September 2026, providers are expected to already be compliant. This policy has been written accordingly.

Overview

Norbury Hill Cubs (NHC) is committed to ensuring that all children are fed and weaned safely, in a way that supports their individual development, health and wellbeing. This policy sets out how NHC introduces solid foods, manages mealtimes, and reduces the risk of choking and allergic reactions, in line with EYFS safer eating requirements and DfE Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance. Further information is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-nutrition.

Weaning

- Introducing solid foods is undertaken in consultation with parents and carers, taking into account the individual developmental stage of the child rather than assumptions based on age alone.
- Parents inform Sara of their child's weaning stage, textures introduced, and any foods to avoid at the start of the placement; this information is reviewed and updated regularly through ongoing conversation with parents.
- Food is prepared to reflect the textures a child has already safely eaten at home before new textures are introduced at NHC, working in partnership with parents.
- Weaning progress and any concerns are shared with parents as part of everyday handover and through learning journeys.

Safer Eating Practice

- A paediatric first aid (PFA) trained member of staff is present at all times when children are eating.
- Highchairs, or appropriately sized low chairs, are used to seat children and babies safely while eating.
- Mealtime environments are kept calm and free from unnecessary distractions to support safer eating.
- Children are closely observed and listened to while eating and drinking. Supervising staff face the children throughout mealtimes so they can react quickly to choking or an allergic reaction, and to notice if children swap food.
- Food is prepared appropriately to reduce the risk of choking, following DfE food preparation safety guidance (e.g. removing hard, round or whole foods that pose a choking risk, and cutting food into manageable pieces).
- Babies and toddlers are never left to self-feed unsupervised and are never put down to sleep with a bottle.
- Any choking incident is recorded immediately, parents are informed the same day, and near misses are reviewed regularly to identify patterns or issues that need addressing.

Allergies & Dietary Requirements

- Before a child starts at NHC, information is gathered from parents about special dietary requirements, preferences, food allergies, intolerances and other health requirements relevant to feeding.
- All staff have access to this information, and each child has a nominated staff member responsible for checking that any food or drink offered is safe for them.

- Allergy action plans are created in partnership with parents and, where relevant, healthcare professionals, and are reviewed and updated regularly, particularly as allergies and intolerances can develop at any time, including during the introduction of solid foods.
- All staff are trained to recognise the symptoms of allergic reactions and anaphylaxis and know how to respond.
- Dietary and allergy information is displayed clearly in the kitchen and cross-referenced against menus before food is prepared and served.

Food Hygiene & Preparation

- All food is prepared and served in line with NHC's Food Safety Management System.
- All staff involved in food preparation and serving are appropriately trained and supervised.
- Food is stored and prepared at safe temperatures, and equipment and surfaces are cleaned in line with food hygiene standards.

Staff Ratios & Supervision

- Staff rotas ensure a paediatric first aid trained member of staff is always available at mealtimes, alongside adequate child-to-staff ratios.
- Staff are briefed on each child's individual dietary needs before mealtimes begin, particularly when covering an unfamiliar room.

Communication with Parents

NHC maintains ongoing, two-way communication with parents about their child's eating and weaning journey, including textures introduced, new foods tried, any reactions, and any concerns raised by either party. Where a parent's request conflicts with safer eating practice, the policy is explained sensitively and any agreed exceptions are recorded in writing.

All parents are made aware of this policy at the point of registration and it is available to view at any time.

Staff Responsibilities

- All staff working with babies and young children must read and sign this policy and confirm their understanding.
- All staff must hold current paediatric first aid training and be familiar with choking response procedures.
- Staff receive training in safer eating, weaning and allergy awareness, with training needs identified and addressed by the manager.
- Room leaders are responsible for ensuring their rooms comply with this policy at all times.
- Any concerns about eating safety, whether relating to equipment, practice, or a parental request, must be raised immediately with Sara or a Deputy Manager.

Further Guidance

EYFS Statutory Framework: www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework

Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance: www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-nutrition

Food preparation safety: help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/food-safety