



# Harvard Park Policies and Procedures:

## **Home Packed Meals**

## 55. Home Packed Meals

### Policy Statement

At Harvard Park, we recognise the importance of developing healthy eating habits and a positive relationship with food from an early age. To support this, we provide our own thoughtfully planned menus at Day Nursery, ensuring that each child receives a well-balanced and nutritious meal during their time with us. At Pre-School, we use our own thoughtfully planned snack time to ensure that children receive a well-balanced, nutritious and exciting snack time.

We appreciate that there may be circumstances where parents or carers wish to provide their child with a home packed meal and/or snacks instead of the meals and/or snacks offered by Harvard Park. In these instances, we have established guidelines to ensure the health and safety of all children.

This policy aims to guarantee that any food and snacks brought from home are healthy and nutritious. It also seeks to reduce the risk of choking and to help prevent allergic reactions, particularly for children who may be susceptible to airborne food allergies.

### Procedure

When a child is bringing in their own food items provided from home, the following guidelines must be adhered to:

- Food provided from home will need to offer the child a healthy, nutritious and varied diet. All provided meals and/or snacks should be prepared in line with our guide to packed meals below. This will be for all meals including:
  - ✓ Breakfast – **day nursery only**.
  - ✓ Lunch (Two-Courses) – **both settings**
  - ✓ Tea (Two-Courses) – **day nursery only**
  - ✓ Snacks (Morning and Afternoon) – **both settings**
- Additional healthy snacks must be provided by Parents/Carers to enable early years educators to offer their child food should they become hungry between served mealtimes.
- Parents/Carers must provide enough food for their child to have second helpings if they wish and ensure that there is enough food available throughout each day or session of attendance.
- Healthy dessert options must be provided for each meal by the Parent/Carer so early years educators can offer the child a dessert after each main meal (lunch and tea). If a child refuses their main course, they will still be offered the healthy dessert option. Children will always be encouraged to eat all savoury foods before moving onto dessert or sweeter options such as fruit.
- Withholding food will not be used as a form of punishment or bribery in our settings

- If a child shows distress and does not want to eat, they will have their food removed without fuss. Parents/Carers will be called to inform them that their child has missed a meal and will be advised to provide an alternative option
- Cultural and religious dietary requirements will be respected, for children on special diets. Parents/Carers will provide as much information as possible and ensure that packed meals meet the child's requirements.
- All packed meals will need to be clearly labelled with the following information:
  - ✓ The child's full name and the date the meal was made
  - ✓ Allergen information – may contain
  - ✓ a full list of ingredients for each component
- Parents/Carers will need to provide a detailed breakdown inside the packed meals to show any allergens. This way we can ensure that we are protecting the other children in the setting from possible allergens, taking into consideration that some allergies are airborne. Food items that are in packets will have their own allergen information and no additional information will need to be provide.
- Parents/Carers of Harvard Park Day Nursery are required to provide a food thermometer to monitor food temperatures in line with Food Hygiene standards, a notebook for recording food temperatures, and suitable food storage containers to ensure food is maintained at a safe temperature and can be served without reheating.
- All cutlery, bowls, plates and cups will need to be provided to sustain the child throughout the day.
- Failure to provide the above information and items will result in a refusal. We are unable to take in any produce or food without knowing what is in the provided food.
- We will encourage Parents/Carers to supply regular new foods as well as familiar favourites for their child as we know children's food preferences can vary from day to day, reflecting the same practice as within the nursery
- Where possible, we will encourage Parent/Carers to provide their child/ren with meals that correspond with our menus. This is to help the child with a packed meal, feel included with their peers during the mealtime
- Our early years educators will provide Parents/Carers with feedback daily to confirm what the child has eaten from their packed meals and what hasn't been eaten. All uneaten food and packaging will be returned.
- Most young children can regulate their own appetite, so we encourage them to eat but we will not force a child to eat if they are not hungry.
- The established procedures for managing children's dietary requirements, mealtime routines, and nutrition policies will be adhered to when serving meals and snacks to children who bring a packed meal.

- Milk will be supplied and served by the settings during both morning and afternoon snack times.
- Fresh drinking water is available for children to access throughout the day and at mealtimes. For children under 1 year, cooled boiled water will be offered.

### **Packed Meal Storage and Contents**

When Parents/Carers are wanting to provide packed meals for their child/ren, the following processes will need to be followed:

- Packed meals and snacks will need to be provided to the setting in a cool box or bag with an icepack (where necessary), as we do not have enough refrigeration space available.
- The meals provided **MUST** not be food items that require heating or reheating. We are unable to heat any home packed meals.
- A wide variety of foods will need to be in the child's packed meal, with a balance from the four main food groups:

- ✓ Fruits and Vegetables
- ✓ Meats and Proteins including pulses or meat alternatives
- ✓ Dairy
- ✓ Grains

To protect our children from possible allergic reactions and/or choking incidents, all children's packed meals **MUST** adhere to our mealtime safety rules. The following items **MUST** not be provided:

- X Honey for children 12 months or under
- X Citrus fruits for children 12 months or under
- X Hard fruits for children 12 months or under
- X Carrot rounds/disks, carrot **MUST** be shredded finely or cut in thin strips / batons
- X Cucumber **MUST** not be cut into slices and will only be given in thin strips/batons
- X Fish that contain traces of bones (fillets only)
- X Sausages in all meat and meat-alternative forms
- X Nuts and nut derivatives (including Peanut butter, Nutella and nut oils)
- X Grapes, blueberries or other small fruit that could pose a risk of choking. If provided the must be cut lengthwise into quarters (four pieces)
- X Chocolate covered biscuits or snacks
- X Fruits in syrup or other sugary liquids
- X Small dries fruit such as raisins
- X Cakes or sugary sweet treats in any form
- X Bottles or cartons of juice
- X Fruit juice or smoothies unless they are homemade

- At both Day Nursery and Pre-School, items cannot also be stored or stockpiled onsite as we do not have the facilities for this.
- All items provided from home must be fresh and cannot be left onsite at any time.
- For Pre-School, the consumables charge is inclusive of snack times. Lunch is not included at any time and must be provide by Parent/Carers regardless of opting in or out. Where opting out, all snacks must be provided by Parent/Carers and cannot be stockpiled on site as we do not have the facilities for this.
- We have additional guidance to support parents/carers providing home packed meals or 'packed lunches' so that we ensure the children are being provided with healthy, nutritious and balanced meals.

This Policies and Procedures pack was adjusted by Harvard Park.

Date meeting was held on 30/04/2026

Signed on behalf of the Directors and Proprietors

**Nicki Saunders and Tracey Milstead**