



Harvard Park's Home Packed Meals Guidance for families



In support of the NHS 'Better health, healthier families' website and foundation years eat better start better guidelines.

Document updated and relevant from 1st January 2026

At Harvard Park, we are dedicated to giving every child the best start. If you are choosing to send your child in with home packed meals, we require that you follow the guidelines provided.

It is paramount that children are being offered healthy and nutritious food, to reduce choking risks and to help prevent allergic reactions for children and early years educators who may have airborne food allergies.

Home packed meals provided by parents will need to include breakfast, lunch and tea, mid morning and mid afternoon snack as well as enough snacks to sustain them throughout the day.



Home packed meals guidance

Breakfast (2 courses)

To include a portion of white or whole meal starchy food such as:

- ✓ Toast, bread, crumpets or a bagel
- ✓ Low sugar breakfast cereals - be sure to look out for those labelled green or amber for sugar content.

You must include a portion of fruit or vegetables to help start their day. A portion of protein will also be a great and healthy addition. You will need to provide enough for a second helping of this meal.

You must avoid:

Cereals high in sugar - these are often labelled red and include chocolate flavoured or sugar coated cereals.

Flavoured yoghurts which are high in sugar - these are often labelled red.



Lunch (2 courses)

To include:

- ✓ A main meal and a simple dessert
- ✓ A portion of starchy food - pasta, rice, bread or potatoes
- ✓ A minimum of 1 portion of vegetables and/or fruit
- ✓ A source of protein - for example beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat or meat alternatives.

Ensure that starchy foods are varied throughout the week and consist of both white and whole meal varieties. Cheese can also be included as a main protein however this should be limited to once a week.

It is encouraged to include at least 1 lunch a week with plant-based proteins such as chickpeas or lentils.

You will need to provide enough for a second helping of this meal.

You must avoid:

Crisps (great alternatives include rice cakes, breadsticks or crackers)

Please note: if any items in the home packed meals fall outside of these guidelines, we will not be able to serve them as this would go against our policy for providing nutritious and well balanced food. We appreciate your co-operation, understanding and support in helping us maintain our commitment to healthy eating.

Home packed meals guidance

Tea (2 courses)

Similar to lunch, tea will need to include:

- ✓ A portion of starchy food (wholegrain and white options)
- ✓ A portion of vegetables and/or fruit
- ✓ A source of protein such as fish, meat, meat alternative, eggs or pulses

You should provide at least 1 plant-based or vegetarian option a week and try to include oily fish such as salmon or sardines, once every 3 weeks. You will need to provide enough for a second helping of this meal.

For pudding, keep it simple - fruit or dairy based products like yoghurts are ideal.

You must avoid:

Cakes, biscuits and other sweet treats
Flavoured yoghurts which are high in sugar - these are often labelled red.



Snacks

For snack time we recommend:

- ✓ Breadsticks, crackers or rice cakes
- ✓ A minimum of 1 portion of vegetables and/or fruit
- ✓ A source of protein - for example cheese

These can be varied throughout the week and do not need to be provided all at the same time. We often serve a starchy food and a fruit or vegetable accompaniment. We would love to see lots of colourful snack boxes with new things to try!

You will need to provide enough food for a mid-morning snack, a mid-afternoon snacks and for throughout the day, should they become hungry between served mealtimes.

You must avoid:

Dried fruits as a snack - they have a high sugar content and stick to teeth.
Sweet foods or treats such as biscuits, cakes and confectionery.
Flavoured drinks such as juice.

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Safety and Procedure

General Guidelines

- Please pack all food in a cool bag/box with an icepack when necessary, as we do not have the fridge space available to keep food refrigerated.
- Please be aware that we are not able to heat or reheat any food at any time.
- We follow a strict allergy and anti-choking policy to ensure every child's safety and well-being. Please follow these guidelines to support us in ensuring this policy is adhered to.
- We are a strictly nut-free setting so please do not include nuts or nut-based products in your child's home packed meals in any form, at any time.
- All provided meals must have a detailed breakdown of all ingredients to show any allergens. This is to protect other children and early years educators in the setting from possible allergens. Food items that are in their own packaging do not need any additional information unless it is not present on the packaging.
- All home packed meals must be labelled with the child's full name **and** any allergy information. If this information is not present, the food will not be accepted.

Portioning and Nutrition

- You must provide enough food for your child to have seconds if they wish and ensure that there is enough food available throughout each day or session.
- Healthy dessert/pudding options must be provided for lunch and tea. If a child refuses their main course, they will still be offered the healthy dessert/pudding option.

Dietary Requirements and Respect

- Cultural and religious dietary requirements will always be respected. For children on special diets, families will provide as much information as possible and ensure that the home packed meals meet the child's specific requirements.
- We will encourage families to provide their child with meals that co-inside with our menus where possible.

Safety and Procedure

Food Safety & Choking Hazards

- Please do not include the following items: sausages, grapes, any small round berries such as blueberries, carrot rounds/disks, cucumber rounds/disks. These all pose a choking risk.
- If you choose to provide raw or cooked carrots, these must be finely shredded or cut into thin strips.
- If you choose to provide cucumber, these must be cut into thin strips or batons.
- If you are including hard fruits, please ensure the skin is removed. For those under 12 months, only soft fruits will be accepted. Children aged between 1 to 2 years will be closely monitored and observed while eating hard fruits.
- If providing fish, please ensure it is filleted with all the bones removed.
- Honey and citrus fruits must not be given to children under 12 months.

Feeding Practices and Feedback

- Withholding food will not be used as a form of punishment or bribery at Harvard Park.
- If a child shows distress and does not want to eat, they will have their food removed without a fuss. Families will then be called to inform them that their child has refused a meal and will be advised to provide an alternative option next time.
- Our early years educators will provide daily feedback to confirm what their child has eaten from their home packed meal and all uneaten food/packaging will be returned.

Drinks

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



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If you need any extra advice or have any questions that we haven't addressed in this booklet, please feel free to contact us on:

info@harvardparkdaynursery.co.uk or 0208 890 3715

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We look forward to welcoming you into our setting.

