



Nursery Mealtime Supervision Policy

At The Little Magpies Nursery, we recognise that mealtimes are not only vital for children's physical wellbeing but also key moments for social development, emotional support, and independence-building. Our approach to mealtime supervision is rooted in our core values of care, safeguarding, and inclusion.

Purpose

This policy outlines how we ensure the safety, wellbeing, and enjoyment of every child during all meal and snack times. It clarifies staff responsibilities, and the procedures followed to maintain a consistent, calm, and engaging environment.

Mealtime Supervision Procedures

- Children are supervised at all times during breakfast, lunch, snacks, and tea by designated, qualified staff.
- Staff are positioned strategically around the room or at tables to maintain visual and physical oversight of all children, preventing any blind spots.
- Positive behaviour is promoted through role modelling: staff will sit with children where possible, use calm and encouraging language, and promote table manners and turn-taking.
- Healthy eating is supported by explaining food choices, encouraging children to try new things, and praising efforts.
- Children are supported to be independent, with age-appropriate utensils and encouragement to serve themselves when appropriate.
- Meal supervision will always meet or exceed statutory ratio requirements, and staff must be aware of each child's dietary needs and allergies.
- Food and drink will be served in a safe, age-appropriate manner, with risk assessments regularly reviewed and updated.

Supernumerary Staff Cover

- A designated supernumerary (non-ratio) staff member will be available and on standby during all meals and snacks.
- This person will be briefed in advance on the layout of mealtime groups and the specific needs of children (e.g., allergies, additional needs).

- The supernumerary will step in immediately if any practitioner needs to leave their post for toileting, emergencies, or other duties—ensuring no lapse in supervision.
- They will only join a group when absolutely necessary and will return to a floating role as soon as possible to maintain flexibility.

Safeguarding and Inclusion

- All staff are trained to recognise signs of choking, allergic reactions, and emotional distress, and will act swiftly and appropriately in any such situation.
- Children with food allergies, dietary restrictions, or additional support needs will have their meals clearly labelled and will be supervised by a familiar key person wherever possible.
- Visual allergy charts and dietary needs lists are displayed in all food prep and dining areas.
- Staff will encourage social interaction, inclusion, and respect during mealtimes—ensuring all children feel involved and valued.
- Opportunities for language development, conversation, and emotional connection are embedded into every meal experience in line with the EYFS framework.

Policy Monitoring and Review

- This policy will be reviewed annually, or earlier in response to updates in statutory guidance, inspection recommendations, or significant changes to nursery routines.
- Staff feedback will be collected through regular team meetings and reflective supervision.
- Parents and carers are invited to provide input on mealtime experiences through ongoing feedback channels.
- All updates and reviews will be documented and communicated clearly to the team.