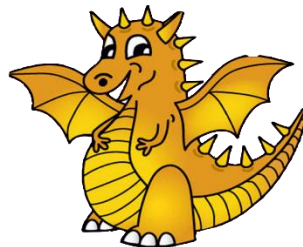




Wessex
Learning Trust
We Learn Together!

Early Years: Food for Play, Cooking Activities, Food Safety and Nutrition Policy



Date approved by Trust Board: September 2024
Review Date: September 2027

Station Road, Cheddar, Somerset BS27 3AQ Telephone: 01934 745363
Email: office@wessexlearningtrust.co.uk www.wessexlearningtrust.co.uk
Wessex Learning Trust. Registered in England. Company Number 7348580.

Wessex Learning Trust
Food for Play, Cooking Activities, Food Safety, and Nutrition Policy

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Trustees every three years.



Signature:

Name: Mr Gavin Ball

Position: Chief Executive

Date: 01/09/2024



Signature:

Name: Mr Paul Jacobs

Position: Chair of the Board

Date: 01/09/2024

Food for Play

1. Introduction

1.1 The Wessex Learning Trust acknowledges that food for play can provide positive learning experiences for children in pre-school settings; however notes that some parents/carers and staff may have strong views about food being used for play and that it is important to be sensitive to these issues. For example, children who are Muslim, Jewish, Rastafarian, or who are vegetarian, should not be given any food to play with that contains animal products (e.g. gelatine).

1.2 Where the setting is considering using food for play, parents and carers views should be sought.

1.3 In some cases, it is not appropriate to use food for play at all, particularly in times of austerity, and setting managers should use their discretion to decide if an activity is appropriate or not.

2. Key Points to Consider

2.1 Food for play may include dough, corn flour, pasta, rice, food colourings/flavourings.

2.2 Jelly (including jelly cubes) must not be used for play, and pulses are not recommended as they can be poisonous when raw or may cause choking.

2.3 When using food for play, it must be risk assessed against the top 14 allergens (celery, cereals, crustaceans, eggs, fish, lupin, milk, molluscs, mustard, nuts, peanuts, sesame seeds, soya, and sulphur dioxide), with an individual risk assessment undertaken for children with known specific allergies. Staff must always be alert to the potential hazards of food play, in particular choking hazards and signs of previously undetected allergies.

2.4 Dried food that is used for play must be kept away from food used for cooking, and utensils used for play food washed thoroughly after use and stored separately to utensils used for food production.

2.5 Foods that are cooked and used for play which have a limited shelf life (such as dough) should be replaced on a regular basis. Cornflour and cooked pasta must be discarded after use due to the high risk of bacteria developing.

2.6 Cornflour must always be mixed with water before being given for play.

Children's Cooking Activities

3. Cooking Safely with Children

3.1 Before undertaking any cooking activity with children, staff must check children's records to see if they have any allergies or intolerances to the food being prepared.

3.2 Children should be taught basic hygiene skills such as the need to wash hands thoroughly before handling food, and again after going to the toilet, blowing their nose or coughing. The area that will be used for cooking should also be cleaned before use. The use of a plastic tablecloth is advised.

- 3.3 Children should wear aprons and use utensils that are used just for cooking and are stored in the kitchen.
- 3.4 Members of staff should encourage children to handle food in a hygienic manner and set a good example.
- 3.5 Food ready for cooking or cooling must not be left uncovered and cooked food to go home must be put in a paper food bag and refrigerated (if applicable) until home time.
- 3.6 All food play activities and cooking must be suspended during outbreaks of illness.

Food Safety and Nutrition

4. Aim

4.1 The Wessex Learning Trust prides itself on providing settings that are a suitable, clean, and a safe place for children to be cared for, and places where they can grow and learn. We meet all statutory requirements for food safety and fulfil the criteria for meeting the relevant early years foundation stage safeguarding and welfare requirements.

5. Objectives

- 5.1 We recognise that we have a corporate responsibility and duty of care for those who work in and receive a service from our provision, but individual employees and service users also have responsibility for ensuring their own safety as well as that of others. Risk assessment is the key means through which this is achieved.
- 5.2 Care is taken to follow food preparation and storage procedures of the setting whilst handling food.
- 5.3 Where settings provide food, they provide nutritionally sound meals and snacks which promote health and reduce the risk of obesity and heart disease that may begin in childhood.
- 5.4 Where settings provide food, they follow the main advice on dietary guidelines and the legal requirements for identifying food allergens when planning menus based on the four food groups:
 - meat, fish, and protein alternatives
 - milk and dairy products
 - cereals and grains
 - fresh fruit and vegetables
- 5.5 Following dietary guidelines to promote health also means taking account of guidelines to reduce risk of disease caused by unhealthy eating.
- 5.6 Parents/carers should share information about their children's particular dietary needs with staff when they enrol their children and on an on-going basis with their key person. This information is shared with all staff who are involved in the care of their child.
- 5.7 Care is taken to ensure that children with food allergies do not have contact with food products they are allergic to.
- 5.8 Risk assessments are conducted for each individual child who has a food allergy or specific dietary requirement.