Meal Times and Reheating Policy

Purpose

This policy outlines our procedures for meal times, food storage and reheating in order to safeguard children and staff.

In line with Department for Education (DfE) guidance on health and safety and food hygiene requirements, we follow manufacturer instructions for storing, handling and reheating food to reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

Meal Times

Meal times will be supervised by staff at all times.
- Children will be supported to eat safely in a calm and hygienic environment.
- All staff and children must wash hands before eating.
- Tables and eating areas will be cleaned and sanitised before and after use.
- Food will not be shared between children due to allergy and contamination risks.

Food Provided from Home

To minimise food safety risks:

- Parents/carers must provide food that does not require reheating unless it is commercially prepared (shop-bought) and clearly labelled with storage and reheating instructions.
- All lunchboxes should include an ice pack where perishable items are included.
- We are unable to refrigerate or store large quantities of food brought from home unless specifically agreed.
- Staff cannot accept responsibility for the safety of food once it has left home and been transported to the setting.

Reheating Food

In accordance with Department for Education guidance and food hygiene regulations:

- Staff will only reheat commercially prepared, shop-bought food that is clearly labelled and includes manufacturer's storage and reheating instructions.
- All reheating will strictly follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Food will only be reheated once.
- Food must be heated thoroughly until piping hot throughout before being served, and allowed to cool to a safe temperature before being given to a child.
- Homemade food brought from home will not be reheated under any circumstances.

This is because the setting cannot verify how homemade food has been prepared, stored or transported, and reheating such food may increase the risk of bacterial growth and food poisoning.

Storage of Food

Perishable items must be stored according to manufacturer guidance.
- Refrigerators (where used) will be maintained at 5°C or below.
- Food that does not meet storage or safety requirements will not be served.
- Any food that appears spoiled, incorrectly stored, or past its use-by date will be disposed of immediately.

Allergies and Dietary Requirements

Parents/carers must inform the setting of any allergies or dietary needs.
- Allergen information on packaged food will be checked before reheating or serving.
- Staff will follow individual healthcare plans where applicable.

Responsibilities

The setting manager is responsible for:

- Ensuring this policy is implemented consistently.
- Ensuring staff receive appropriate food hygiene training.
- Reviewing this policy annually or in line with updated DfE guidance.

We are responsible for:

- Following safe food handling practices.
- Adhering strictly to manufacturer instructions when reheating food.
- Reporting any concerns regarding food safety immediately.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if guidance changes.

Policy Review Date: 12/02/2026

Next Review Due: 10/02/2027

Signed (Manager): V. Barrett