



Dolce Casa Montessori

Home-Provided Meals Policy

Policy Statement

At Dolce Casa Montessori, mealtimes are an important part of children's learning, wellbeing and social development. Our preferred method of meal provision is through freshly prepared nursery meals, enabling us to provide consistent nutrition, manage allergies safely, maintain high standards of food hygiene, reduce choking risks and create calm Montessori mealtime experiences.

From September 2026, nursery-prepared meals are the standard provision. Home-provided meals are accepted only where an alternative arrangement has been agreed with the Nursery Manager, including where families using funded childcare choose not to purchase the food consumables package, where a medical need exists, or in other exceptional circumstances.

Alternative Arrangements

- Alternative arrangements must be agreed in advance with the Nursery Manager.
- Parents remain responsible for providing all meals, snacks and drinks required during the child's attendance.

Parent Responsibilities

Dolce Casa Montessori is required under the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to provide healthy, balanced and nutritious meals and to promote healthy eating habits from an early age. As part of our statutory responsibilities, Ofsted assesses how effectively the nursery supports children's health, wellbeing and nutrition.

Where parents provide meals under an agreed alternative arrangement, those meals must reflect the same healthy eating standards expected of the nursery. This includes following the guidance set out in our Parent Handbook and *Eat Better, Start Better*. Parents are responsible for ensuring that meals are balanced, nutritious and suitable for their child's age and stage of development.

Where meals consistently do not meet the nursery's healthy eating expectations, the Nursery Manager will discuss the matter with parents and may review the alternative meal arrangement.

- Meals must be healthy, balanced and suitable for the child's age.
- Food must comply with the Parent Handbook and Eat Better, Start Better guidance.
- Food must arrive ready to eat and already cut into age-appropriate pieces.
- Meals must be clearly labelled with the child's full name and a list of ingredients.
- Meals requiring heating or preparation by staff will not be accepted.
- Meals should be transported in an insulated lunch bag with a suitable ice pack.

Food Safety

Dolce Casa Montessori prepares meals on site and operates in accordance with food hygiene legislation, Environmental Health requirements and our Food Safety Management System. To minimise the risk of cross-contamination and maintain high standards of food safety, nursery refrigerators are designated for the storage of food prepared and managed by the nursery. As part of our food safety procedures, we do not routinely store food containers brought from home in nursery refrigerators. Parents providing home-prepared meals are therefore responsible for ensuring that food is transported in a suitable insulated lunch bag with an appropriate ice pack to maintain safe temperatures until mealtimes.

- The nursery cannot verify how food has been stored before arrival.
- Nursery refrigerators are reserved for nursery food and are not routinely available for home-provided meals.
- Food showing signs of deterioration or unsafe storage may be refused.

Allergy Management

Preparing meals within the nursery kitchen enables Dolce Casa Montessori to manage allergies effectively, minimise the risk of cross-contamination, and ensure that all children receive meals that meet their individual dietary requirements. Where parents provide home-prepared meals under an agreed alternative arrangement, they may be required to adapt the foods provided in line with the nursery's allergy risk assessments and food safety procedures. This may include the temporary or

permanent restriction of specific foods where they present an unacceptable risk to children attending the setting.

- The nursery reserves the right to restrict specific foods where identified through an individual or environmental allergy risk assessment.
- Additional supervision, seating arrangements and cleaning procedures may be introduced to reduce cross-contamination.

Staff Responsibilities

Parents are responsible for ensuring home-provided meals are prepared and cut safely before arrival. Staff will supervise children while eating but will not routinely prepare food brought from home.

- Staff supervise children during meals but do not routinely cut, peel or prepare home-provided meals.
- Food presenting a choking, allergy or food safety risk will not be served.

Related Policies

- Nursery Consumables Policy
- Managing Children's Dietary Requirements Policy
- Safer Eating and Nutrition Policy
- Avoiding Choking Hazards Policy
- Weaning Policy