

Weaning Policy

2026 - 2027

Policy Date: May 2026

Approved by: Full Governing Body

Next review date: September 2027

At Acorn Nursery (Part of Holsworthy CofE Primary School) our vision is **working together, growing together, all to flourish**. Based on the bible verse from John 15:5, we believe that God is the vine; God is love. Our Christian vision and values help us foster positive relationships between pupils and between staff and pupils.

Overview

For the majority of children, weaning begins from the age of 6 months. Acorn Nursery follows the NHS published guidelines and therefore will not support any type of weaning for children under the recommended age, unless this is advised and supported by a competent health professional in the best interest of the child.

When supporting a baby through the weaning process, we will always work in close partnership with the child's parents (providing their wishes meet the published guidelines) to ensure the food being offered to the child is appropriate and safe.

When a child commences at nursery, and as part of the pre-entry meeting, parents will be asked to complete an 'all about me' form, this will request various types of information relating to their child's dietary needs, including specific information about weaning. It is the responsibility of the practitioner carrying out the meeting, to ask specific questions to enable us to follow safe eating practices. All information gathered will be added onto the 'weaning record' which must then be agreed and signed by both the parent and practitioner. A copy of the record will be shared with the nursery team, along with the agreed sessions the child will be attending. If the school kitchen is providing the food, the Kitchen Manager will also sign the form to say she is happy with the content and that all requirements meet legislation and NHS guidance. Any concerns relating to the form will be shared with the parent by the child's key person.

According to the NHS there are three types of weaning:

1. Baby-Led Weaning – This is where a parent supports their baby to feed themselves. This type of weaning enables the baby to explore their foods whilst trying a variety of textures
2. Traditional or spoon-feeding weaning – This is where a parent chooses to feed their baby, baby foods from a spoon. This type of weaning begins with smooth/blended foods, progressing to chunkier or lumpier foods before moving onto solid foods
3. Combination weaning – which comprises of baby-led and traditional weaning. This may include both pureed and other solid food

When to start weaning

The NHS recommends that you start weaning after 6 months of breastfeeding or formula feeding. If the baby was premature it is important that the parent discuss with a member of the Health Visiting team before starting to offer baby food.

A baby's digestive system will not be ready for solid foods until around 6 months old. By weaning after 6 months old parents can reduce the risk of their babies developing allergies, infections, illness, obesity and diabetes.

Food at Acorn Nursery

Snack and water are provided to children within the nursery. For children younger than 2 years of age, parents are asked to provide packed lunch and/or tea. All food is stored in separate bags within a temperature-controlled fridge. If food is heated, the temperature is logged in line with food hygiene and preparation requirements.

Foods to avoid when weaning

When weaning a baby onto solid foods, it's important to avoid certain foods:

- Honey - Do not give babies honey until they are a year old. It has the risk of giving them botulism.
- Salt - Do not add salt to your baby's food. Too much salt can damage their kidneys.
- Shellfish - There is a risk of food poisoning.
- Sugar - Do not add sugar to your baby's food. Too much sugar can increase their risk of tooth decay.
- Cholesterol lowering foods such as Benecol or Flora ProActive - Babies need cholesterol for their brain development

Lumpy and textured foods

When weaning a baby, remember that this is the baby's first experiences of food. New textures and tastes can be overwhelming and difficult to process.

Keep offering the baby lumpy and textured food alongside smooth foods. This is because a baby will steadily become used to the new textures. Giving a baby the foods over and over gives them time to get used to the tastes and textures. It can take a baby lots of tries before they decide if they like or dislike a food.

Signs that a baby is ready to start weaning

These signs are a typical part a baby's development. Reaching these developmental milestones before you start weaning a baby will help the weaning process. The following are signs of being ready:

- sitting upright and supporting the weight of their own head - a baby should be able to hold their head steady
- good hand eye-coordination - your baby should be able to look at food, pick it up and put it in their mouth by themselves

Babies who are not ready will push the food back out of their mouths. They will end up with more food around their face than in their mouth.

Some behaviours can be mistaken for a baby being ready for solid foods. The following are not signs of being ready:

- chewing on their fists
- first tooth is coming through
- seeming hungry and wanting more milk
- suddenly refusing to breastfeed (also known as a nursing strike)
- waking up in the night when they previously slept through the night
- watching you eat
- weight gain slowing down

Acceptable foods that can be provided to babies that are weaning

Vegetables

Cook to soften them, then mash with a fork or blend vegetables to a suitable texture for your baby or give them as finger foods.

Offer a variety including ones with bitter flavours:

- broccoli
- butternut squash
- cabbage
- carrots

- cauliflower
- courgette
- green beans
- kale
- parsnips
- peas
- peppers
- swede

Fruit

Mash with a fork or blend soft ripe fruits to a suitable texture for your baby, or give them as finger foods. Harder fruits will need to be cooked to soften them. Wash and remove any pips, stones and hard skin.

Fruit includes:

- apples
- bananas
- blueberries
- kiwi
- mango
- melon
- nectarines
- oranges
- peach
- pears
- pineapple
- plums
- raspberries
- strawberries

Starchy Foods

These can be cooked, where necessary, and mashed with a fork or blended to a suitable texture for your baby or offered as finger foods.

Cereals can be mixed with breast milk or first infant formula – or with pasteurised whole (full-fat) cows' milk (or goats' or sheep's milk) if your baby is over 6 months old.

Starchy foods include:

- baby rice
- bread
- oats
- pasta
- pitta bread
- porridge
- potato
- rice
- sweet potato
- toast

Protein Foods

This food group includes meat, fish, eggs, beans and pulses, and is suitable from around 6 months.

As well as giving baby protein, these foods contain other useful nutrients, such as iron and zinc, which are important for babies.

For eggs, make sure they are stamped with the British Lion stamp mark. There have been improved food safety controls in recent years, so infants, children and pregnant women can now safely eat raw or lightly cooked hen eggs (as long as they have the British Lion stamp), or foods containing them.

If you have a severely weakened immune system or are on a medically supervised diet prescribed by health professionals, you should cook all eggs thoroughly.

Protein foods include:

- beans
- beef
- chicken
- egg
- fish (no bones)
- lamb
- lentils
- pork
- pulses, such as chickpeas
- tofu
- turkey

Dairy

- Pasteurised dairy foods, like pasteurised full-fat yoghurt and cheese, are suitable foods for baby from around 6 months.
- Full-fat, unsweetened or plain yoghurts are a good choice because they do not contain added sugars.
- Whole pasteurised (full-fat) cows' milk, or goats' or sheep's milk, can be used in cooking or mixed with food from around 6 months old, but not as a drink until baby is 12 months.

Drinks

During mealtimes, we will offer baby sips of water from an open or free-flow cup. Using an open cup, or a free-flow cup without a valve, will help baby learn to sip and is better for their teeth. If baby is younger than 6 months, it's important to sterilise the water by boiling it first and then letting it cool right down.

Sweet drinks like squash, fizzy drinks, milkshakes and fruit juice can have lots of sugar, so avoid these to help prevent tooth decay – even baby and toddler drinks can be sugary.

Cows' milk is not a suitable drink until baby is 12 months old, but it can be used in cooking or mixed with food from 6 months of age.

To ensure babies are effectively supported and remain safe at all times through the weaning stages, staff at Acorn Nursery will:

- Carry out an in-depth conversation with parents, as part of the pre-entry visit, to ascertain the type of weaning style that has been adopted in the home environment. They will discuss all aspects of the child's weaning journey, including the types of foods being offered to baby, any food that the parent does not wish the child to eat, how food is presented, i.e. blended,

mashed, finger foods. The amount the parent wishes the child to have and how often during the day.

- Complete a weaning form to record all information. This will then be signed by the parent and practitioner.
- Never provide any foods that have not been agreed with the parents and will follow parents' wishes at all times (as long as it does not contradict NHS or medical advice)
- Always provide the baby with breast or formula milk in addition to the weaning foods being offered
- Always provide the milk feed first as guidance implies that babies should not be hungry when presented with the food as this can cause babies to eat quickly which increases the risk of choking
- Finger foods and/or lumpier food will not be given to a baby who is unable to support their own head when sitting
- Ensure all children are sat on appropriate furniture when eating that meets their level of development, i.e. children who are unable to walk or effectively maintain their balance will need to be securely fastened into the nursery highchair. Under no circumstances will children be allowed to walk around the nursery whilst eating/drinking
- Ensure all food offered to any child are of a safe temperature to prevent burn or scald injuries
- Not give any foods, other than milk feeds, to children under 6 months of age
- Never leave a baby unattended and will always sit with any baby that is going through the weaning stage
- Ensure food is prepared in line with food safety standards
- Inform existing staff and new staff in the room about the systems in place for supporting children who are weaning and any individual plans that are in place for individual children
- Challenge any practices that could put the child at risk and report this immediately to the Nursery Manager
- Always practice safe food practices, including the removal of skin, seeds, pips, stones from specific foods and ensuring finger foods are cut appropriately to prevent choking
- Have an up-to-date food hygiene, food allergy and paediatric first aid certificate
- Provide feedback to the child's parent at the end of the session

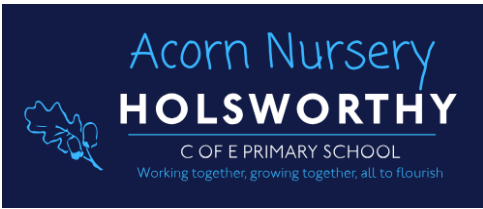
For further information on weaning and nutrition in the Early Years please visit

<https://www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/>

www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-nutrition

<https://www.nhs.uk/baby/weaning-and-feeding/babys-first-solid-foods/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/>



Weaning Record

Name of Child:	Date:
Name of Parent/Carer	Member of staff completing form:
Chosen weaning method and details:	
Current milk intake:	
When weaning started:	
Food Preferences: Foods/textures child likes:	Food/textures child dislikes:
ALLERGY information or concerns:	
Any other information:	

Signed Parent..... Date

Signed staff member Date

Signed Kitchen Manager (if appropriate) Date