
Leafy Legends Forest School – Eating Policy

Purpose

To ensure that all children are supported to eat safely, comfortably, and joyfully during Forest School sessions. This policy promotes healthy habits, emotional wellbeing, and inclusive practices around food, while maintaining hygiene and safeguarding standards.

Child-Centred Approach

- Eating is treated as a **nurturing, social experience**, not just a practical task
 - Children are encouraged to listen to their bodies and eat at their own pace
 - Staff model **gentle manners**, gratitude, and curiosity around food
 - Emotional comfort is prioritised — no pressure to eat, no shaming of preferences or portions
 - Food is often shared around the fire circle or picnic-style to foster connection
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Food Provided & Brought From Home

- **Snacks** may include fruit, oatcakes, warm soup, or seasonal foraged items (e.g. nettle tea, elderflower cordial)
 - **Packed lunches** from home are welcomed and stored safely if needed
 - **Allergies and dietary needs** are recorded and respected — alternatives are always available
 - Children are never excluded from food-based activities due to dietary restrictions
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Hygiene & Safety

- Handwashing is encouraged before and after eating using soap and water or biodegradable wipes
 - Eating areas are checked for cleanliness and hazards (e.g. animal droppings, sharp sticks)
 - Food is stored in clean, sealed containers and kept cool if needed
 - Utensils and surfaces are cleaned before use
 - Staff wear gloves when handling shared food or assisting children
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Fire Circle Eating

- Children are seated safely and calmly around the fire
- Hot food and drinks are passed carefully with adult supervision
- Burn risk is minimised by using long-handled tools and clear fire safety rules
- Water and burn kit are always nearby

Staff Roles & Safeguarding

| Role | Responsibility |
|--------------------------|---|
| Lead Practitioner | Oversees food safety, allergy awareness, and emotional tone of mealtimes |
| Support Staff | Assist with handwashing, supervision, and gentle encouragement |
| All Staff | Model respectful eating habits and respond to emotional needs sensitively |

- Staff never force children to eat or comment negatively on food choices
- Any concerns about eating habits are discussed privately with parents
- Physical assistance (e.g. opening containers) is offered respectfully and logged if needed

Emotional Support

- Children who feel anxious, shy, or overwhelmed are gently supported
- Quiet eating spaces are available for those who need calm
- Food-related emotions (e.g. grief, sensory aversion, cultural pride) are acknowledged with care
- Staff remain attuned to signs of discomfort or withdrawal

Communication with Families

- Parents are asked to share dietary needs, cultural preferences, and food-related concerns
- Staff respect family routines and offer gentle feedback if needed
- Food activities (e.g. foraging, cooking) are shared in newsletters or social media with joyful tone

Review & Reflection

- Eating practices are reviewed termly and after any food-related incident
- Staff feedback is welcomed to improve comfort and inclusion
- Policy updated in response to child needs, seasonal changes, or site developments