Beechoak Farm Montessori Pre-school

Promoting health, safety and hygiene

3.10 Food and Sensory Play

Policy statement

We are committed to ensuring that all the children in our care have quality play opportunities which are safe. Our aim is to ensure that 'food and sensory items for messy play' activities are age appropriate and are linked to the Early Years Foundation Stage which actively promotes children's creative and sensory development. The tactile experiences gained during these activities help children experience a variety of textures.

Using 'food for messy play', children can learn to explore and experiment using all their senses. We always check for allergies and dietary requirements before engaging in the activities using food. All activities are supervised to ensure the children's health and welfare is our top priority at all times. Utensils and other equipment used during these activities are regularly cleaned.

Procedure

- Room Leaders will liaise with each other when carrying out weekly planning using 'food for messy play' in order to share the activity where possible to cut down on food wastage.

Storage

- Only food supplied by the Beechoak Farm can be used for 'messy food' activities. This is because the 'food' supplied has been risk assessed and is age related. The food is stored in the staff room or snack room only.
- Dried food that is used for play should be kept away from food used for cooking.
- Foods that are cooked and used for play, such as dough, have a limited shelf life.
- Play food must never be left out overnight in the nursery.
- Dried food should be inspected for possible reuse. Dried food that can be reused should be stored in a container labelled with the original expiry date on the packet, the date the food was stored and the contents. This should then be returned to the 'play food' cupboard for future use.
- Cornflower and cooked pasta are discarded after an activity; high risk of bacteria forming.

Use

- 'Messy' food and sensory activities are planned after taking into account children with food allergies. The allergies are recorded on the dietary requirements list and on the Health Care Plan board in the staff room.
- Food for play may include dough, corn flour, pasta, rice, food colourings/flavourings.
- Jelly cubes are not used for play, as they pose a choking hazard.
- Foods containing gelatine are not used for play when children are in attendance that avoid the consumption of gelatine for preference or religious reasons.
- Staff are constantly alert to the potential hazards of food play, in particular choking hazards and signs of previously undetected allergies.
- Pulses are not recommended as they can be poisonous when raw or may cause a choking hazard.
- Cornflour is always mixed with water before given for play.
- Utensils used for play food are washed thoroughly after use.
- Small group activities using food have more effect and must be supervised.
- Keep the food with the activity and not around the room.
- Food should only be used in 'messy play' when something significant is planned for specific areas and to support children's learning and development.
- Children should be discouraged from eating 'play food' along with putting any equipment used into their mouths.
- Ice - Care must be taken with the size so as not to be a choking hazard.
- Any small items used will be checked by staff members to ensure there is no choking hazard.
- When playing with flour or cornflour children are supervised and discouraged from putting the dough, their hands and any utensils into their mouths. Children wash their hand once after accessing it and all areas are cleaned thoroughly.

Children's cooking activities

- Before undertaking any cooking activity with children, members of staff should check for allergies and intolerances by checking children's records and the dietary requirements list.
- Children are 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 to be used for cooking is cleaned thoroughly.
- Utensils provided are for children to use only when cooking, including chopping/rolling boards, bowls, wooden spoons, jugs, and are stored in the kitchen.
- Members of staff encourage children to handle food in a hygienic manner.

- Food ready for cooking or cooling is not left uncovered.
- Cooked food to go home is put in a food bag and refrigerated until home time.
- Food play/ cooking activities are suspended during outbreaks of illness.

This policy was adopted by staff at Beechoak Farm Montessori preschool.

Held on 2nd December 2025

Date to be reviewed December 2026

Signed on behalf of Beechoak Farm Montessori by

Charlotte Muggleton & Hayley Majeika

Proprietor Manager