

## External Food Exclusion

Sallywags' Nursery restricts parents from bringing food into the setting for several reasons related to the health and safety of the children, practitioners and the environment. This comes under our safeguarding, health and safety, safe eating and allergy management policy. This policy reflects statutory requirements and best practices to support children's growth, development, and learning within a safe environment at Sallywags Nursery

### **The primary risks include:**

**Food Allergies, Medical and Dietary Needs:** Many children have allergies to certain foods. Restricted or unapproved foods could trigger allergic reactions, some of which can be severe or life-threatening.

**Cross-Contamination:** Bringing in outside food increases the risk of cross-contamination with allergens or bacteria, which can be dangerous, especially for children with sensitive health conditions, allergies and medical needs.

**Food Safety and Hygiene:** We follow strict hygiene protocols to prevent contamination and exposure to harmful food related bacteria. Outside food might not meet these standards, potentially introducing bacteria or spoilage into the nursery environment.

**Controlled Nutrition:** At Sallywags, we provide nutritious, balanced meals in line with national guidelines to support children's healthy growth and development. While we understand that some families may prefer to send packed lunches, we cannot guarantee that these will meet the same dietary standards or accommodate all health and safety considerations.

**Choking Hazards:** Certain foods can pose choking risks for young children, and their safety is our highest priority. By providing and controlling the food offered within the setting, we can ensure that all meals and snacks are age-appropriate, safely prepared, and served in a manner that reduces risk. For this reason, we restrict food being brought into the setting from home

**Vetting and Approval:** By managing the provision of food within the setting and not allowing food brought from home, we ensure that all meals served are appropriate, safe, and free from common allergens. Due to staffing and ratio requirements, we are unable to check all packed lunches thoroughly or remove unhealthy items, so controlling food provision helps us maintain consistent standards and protect all children's health and safety.

**Avoiding Miscommunication or Mistrust:** Allowing food to be brought into the setting can sometimes lead to miscommunication or mistrust between staff and families, particularly around ingredients, allergens, portion sizes, or cultural preferences. It can also create inconsistencies in the food children are exposed to, which may impact inclusion and health standards.

**Restricted storage:** We have restricted storage space to accommodate packed lunches especially on a day where the setting hits the maximum capacity. We are unable to individually check all packed lunches for dietary restrictions or prohibited items, such as food that may contain any allergens, the packed lunch is nutritious and suitable.

### **Documentation and Reporting**

At Sallywags, we rigorously document the temperatures at which all food is stored and served. We also complete daily food records to keep parents informed about what their children have eaten and what has been provided. However, we are unable to continue this level of accurate documentation and reporting if we do not know what is being packed in individual lunchboxes. Additionally, we cannot guarantee the storage or serving temperature of food brought from home, which compromises our ability to meet food safety standards.

**At Sallywags, we promote a positive approach to food and drink. Mealtimes are calm, social occasions where children are encouraged to make healthy choices, try new foods, and develop independence. Our practices support children's physical development and well-being, while also respecting individual preferences and dietary needs.**

**Positive Food Culture** – Mealtimes at Sallywags are a valued part of the daily routine, where children thrive in a supportive and social environment. Children at Sallywags are encouraged to try new foods and are offered a varied, balanced diet, often including items they may not typically eat at home. This supports the development of healthy eating habits and broadens their food experiences. Children are encouraged to try new foods, and the social aspect of mealtimes; eating the same food alongside their peers often supports them in being more adventurous with their choices.

### **Respect the Individual's Choice**

Children's individual choices are respected, and alternative options are offered where available. Encouragement is gentle and supportive, fostering a positive relationship with food without pressure. Children's needs are catered for on an individual bases when requested.

### Positive Communicate

A positive and ongoing partnership with parents regarding meals and food at Scallywags is central to our approach. This sustained collaboration supports consistency between home and nursery, helping to promote healthy eating habits and a positive attitude towards food.

### Cultural, Religious and ethical requirements:

At Scallywags, we respect and actively accommodate the cultural, religious, and ethical dietary needs of all children. We recognise the importance of food in family life and identity, and we work closely with parents and carers to ensure that each child's dietary requirements are met with sensitivity and care.

We provide suitable alternatives for children who follow specific diets, including but not limited to: Vegetarian or vegan diets, dairy-free or egg-free diets, gluten-free options and allergy-related restrictions

Our team takes care to avoid cross-contamination and ensures that all meals are prepared in line with individual needs. Parents are encouraged to share any updates to dietary preferences or requirements so we can continue to provide safe, inclusive, and appropriate meals for every child.

### Inclusion and Food Provision at Scallywags:

At Scallywags, we are committed to creating an inclusive environment where all children and their families feel welcomed, valued, and respected. Our decision not to allow packed lunches on site is based on ensuring consistency, safety, and the ability to meet all children's dietary, cultural, and medical needs appropriately.

This policy does not make us less inclusive; in fact, it supports inclusion by allowing us to provide balanced, allergy-safe, and culturally sensitive meals for all children. We work in close partnership with families to understand individual needs and ensure every child can participate fully and safely in mealtimes.

Parents and carers are encouraged to speak with management about any specific dietary requirements, cultural or religious practices, or concerns, so we can work together to meet each child's individual needs. Arrangements can be made to accommodate individual family circumstances wherever possible.

Internal use only

<b>This policy was adopted on</b>	September 2025
<b>Signed on behalf of the nursery</b>	S. Fenwick
<b>Date disseminated to staff</b>	September 2025
<b>Date for review</b>	September 2026