

Safer Weaning Policy - EYFS & Ofsted-Aligned, 2026

This policy incorporates the new safer eating and weaning requirements, including individualised weaning plans, choking-prevention procedures, supervision rules, paediatric first aid, and partnership with parents.

1. Purpose

To ensure babies are introduced to solid foods safely, in line with EYFS statutory requirements, government nutrition guidance, safer eating updates (2025–26), and Ofsted expectations. The policy aims to reduce choking risks, support healthy development, and ensure consistent practice between home and nursery.

2. Legal & Regulatory Framework

- **EYFS Safeguarding & Welfare Requirements** – healthy, balanced, nutritious food; safe eating; supervision; paediatric first aid.
- **DfE Nutrition Guidance (2025)** – settings must “have regard” to this guidance from Sept 2025.
- **EYFS Safer Eating & Weaning Requirements (2025–26 updates)** – mandatory safe eating procedures, choking-prevention, individualised weaning plans, and first-aid presence.
- **Kent Safer Eating Guidance (2024)** – evidence-based choking-prevention practice.

3. Principles of Safe Weaning

- Weaning is **individualised**, based on developmental readiness—not age alone.
- Babies are introduced to textures gradually: purée → mashed → soft lumps → finger foods.
- Food must be prepared to minimise choking risk.
- Babies must be **seated safely, supervised closely**, and **within sight and hearing** at all times.
- A paediatric first-aider must be present in the room during all feeding.

4. Roles & Responsibilities

Key Person

- Discusses weaning stage, textures, and feeding routines with parents before the child starts.
- Maintains the child's **Individual Weaning Plan**.
- Monitors progress and communicates changes to parents.

Room Leader / Manager

- Ensures staff follow safe eating procedures.
- Ensures first-aid cover and correct ratios.
- Reviews choking-incident records and updates practice.

All Staff

- Follow food-preparation guidance.
- Supervise babies directly and face-to-face while eating.
- Know allergy and dietary requirements for every child.

5. Individual Weaning Plans

Created for every baby starting solids. Plans include:

- Developmental readiness indicators
- Current textures offered at home
- Foods already introduced
- Allergies/intolerances
- Cultural/religious dietary needs
- Parent preferences (e.g., spoon-feeding, baby-led weaning)
- Agreed progression of textures
- Review schedule (minimum monthly)

Regular discussions must be held between parents, staff, and health professionals to ensure consistency.

6. Safe Food Preparation & Choking Prevention

General Rules

- Follow DfE and **Kent Safer Eating Guidance (2024)**.
- Consider **size, shape, and texture** of food.
- Adapt food to the child's developmental stage.

High-Risk Foods

The following must be **avoided or adapted**:

- Whole grapes → cut lengthways into quarters
- Cherry tomatoes → quartered
- Sausages/hot dogs → cut lengthways then into strips
- Firm fruit/veg (apple, carrot) → grated, steamed, or softened
- Cheese → thin strips
- Bread → small, manageable pieces
- Whole nuts/nut butter → prohibited

Texture Progression

- **Stage 1:** Smooth purées
- **Stage 2:** Mashed with soft lumps
- **Stage 3:** Soft finger foods
- **Stage 4:** Small pieces of family foods (appropriately cut)

Visual texture guides may be used (**Kent Safer Eating Guidance 2024**).

7. Safe Feeding Environment

- Babies must be seated in a stable highchair or appropriate low chair.
- Staff must sit **facing the child**.
- No distractions (toys, screens).
- Babies must never be fed lying down or walking around.
- Staff must maintain **sight and hearing** at all times.

8. Supervision & First Aid

- A staff member with **Paediatric First Aid** must be present in the room during all eating.
- Staff must know choking-response procedures.
- Emergency equipment must be accessible.

9. Allergies, Intolerances & Special Diets

- Dietary information must be obtained **before the child's first day**.
- Information must be shared with all relevant staff.
- Allergy-safe meal preparation must follow strict cross-contamination controls.
- Individual Health Care Plans must be followed.

10. Partnership with Parents

- Parents receive a copy of the Safer Weaning Policy.
- Staff share daily feedback on textures, quantities, and new foods tried.
- Parents must inform the setting of any reactions or changes at home.

11. Recording & Reporting

- All choking incidents must be recorded with:
 - Date/time
 - Food involved
 - Staff present
 - First-aid actions
 - Outcome
 - Review of practice
- Parents must be informed the same day.
- Records are reviewed monthly by management.

12. Staff Training

Training must cover:

- EYFS safer eating requirements
- Choking-prevention techniques
- Texture progression
- Allergy management
- Paediatric first aid
- Safe seating and supervision

13. Monitoring & Review

- Policy reviewed annually or after any incident.
- Practice monitored through observations, audits, and supervision.
- Updates made in line with EYFS changes and Ofsted inspection feedback.

Persons responsible for implementing this policy:

Erica Dunwell/Heather Bishop/ Rosalind Moreno/Cara Bonner– Barton

- Erica Dunwell/ Heather Bishop/ Jonathan Reed – Sandown
- Erica Dunwell/Becky Kujabi/Sam Hicks – Wootton

Review: August 2027