Nutrition, food, drink, and dietary requirements policy

Purpose

Under the Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011 SI 653) - NSW Legislation, all early childhood education and care services must have policies and procedures in place in relation to nutrition, food, drink and dietary requirements.

At Callington Kindergarten, food and eating are part of children's health, wellbeing, identity, culture, belonging and connection with others.

Our approach reflects the Callington Kindergarten Philosophy Statement. We recognise children as capable participants, families as partners with important knowledge, and food experiences as opportunities for relationship, community, learning and connection.

We provide safe, inclusive and positive food experiences that respect each child's health needs, development, cultural and religious practices, sensory preferences, family context and growing agency.

Policy principles

The principles we apply to our decisions and practices about nutrition, food, drink and dietary requirements include:

- We prioritise children's health, safety and wellbeing. This includes safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food and providing a safe and positive environment for food and drink brought from home or provided by Callington Kindergarten.
- We promote healthy eating and physical activity in ways that are appropriate and responsive to each child.
- We value and respect each family's culture, customs and religious traditions and support children's dietary requirements, food and drink restrictions and food preferences.
- We support children to develop autonomy and self-determination in relation to food and drink, including recognising hunger and fullness and making choices about what and how much they eat from the food available to them.
- Children are not pressured to eat, finish food, try a food or eat foods in a particular order.
- Food is not used as a reward, punishment or condition of participation.
- Educators use respectful language about food and avoid judgement, comparison or shame about children's food, lunchboxes or family food choices.
- We work with families when additional food, feeding support or adjustments are needed so children have sufficient food and drink to support wellbeing, energy, participation and learning.

- We create opportunities for children to explore relationships between food, family, community, Country, the natural environment and sustainable practices.

Nutrition, food and drink practices and strategies

Promote a positive eating and food learning environment

We will:

- Role model and promote positive eating practices, including foods consistent with the Australian Dietary Guidelines at mealtimes.
- Support individual children's health, development and growth, including taking into consideration the impacts of medical conditions and disability on children's nutrition, food, drink and dietary needs.
    - support children and families' cultural, spiritual and religious values and requirements
    - partner with families and community to create meaningful food learning experiences. Families may contribute recipes, cultural knowledge, garden produce, ingredients or food to share when this can be planned and managed safely
    - ensure children have access to safe drinking water at all times
    - support sufficient food availability to meet children's needs. Where a child regularly needs additional food or feeding support, educators will work respectfully with the family to identify appropriate support
    - provide opportunities for children to explore food through tasting, touching, smelling, cooking, growing, preparing, sharing and play-based learning when this is safe and meaningful
    - use mealtimes and food experiences to support children to recognise and communicate hunger, fullness, preferences and needs
    - incorporate children's choices and decision-making into food experiences and mealtimes
    - provide regular shared opportunities to eat while responding flexibly to individual children who are hungry at other times and can be safely supervised
    - create relaxed and unhurried eating environments where children have adequate time, appropriate supervision and opportunities for conversation and connection with others.

Celebrations and days of significance

- Callington Kindergarten recognises that children and families celebrate different events, traditions and days of significance, and that some families may choose not to celebrate particular occasions.
- We do not assume that every child celebrates birthdays or other events in the same way.
- Children and families are invited to contribute ideas about how significant moments may be acknowledged. Food may be part of a celebration, cultural experience or community gathering when allergy, dietary, preparation, storage and food safety requirements can be managed safely.
- Participation in celebrations and shared food experiences is voluntary.

- Where food cannot be safely shared, educators will work with the child or family to find another meaningful way to contribute or participate.

Communicate positive and culturally responsive food practices with families

We will:

- Consult with families about individual children's developmental needs, dietary requirements and dietary restrictions (including, health and medical needs, food and drink allergies, food and drink intolerances and developmental, cultural and religious food restrictions). This information will be included in the children's enrolment records.
- Support the development of inclusive health support planning to meet children's nutrition, food, drink and dietary requirements and eating environment through implementing the department's Health support planning for children and students in education and care settings
- Inform families of Callington Kindergarten's risk-minimisation strategies for anaphylaxis, food and drink allergies, intolerances and other dietary restrictions
- Base any request to families about particular foods on the current health and risk-management needs of enrolled children
- Support families to understand that children's voice and agency are part of our educational program, including during mealtimes, cooking and other food experiences
- Consult with families about cultural, spiritual and religious food practices to support individual children and broaden children's understanding of their community
- Welcome families to share knowledge, recipes, traditions and cultural food practices
- Provide access to communication or interpreting support where this assists families to participate fully
- Provide relevant, evidence-informed nutrition and food-safety information when useful, while respecting family knowledge, circumstances and choices.
- Provide hygienic and safe food practices

We will:

- Ensure children and staff implement safe hygiene and hand washing practices and safe practices for handling, preparing, storing and eating food.
- Actively supervise children at all times when they are eating and drinking, ensure they are seated and provide adequate time to eat and drink, to minimise risk of choking. Choking hazards (food types and sizes) will be considered when preparing, cooking or sharing foods with children, appropriate to age and ability.
- Ensure all staff comply with the department's Anaphylaxis and allergies procedure including promoting an allergy-aware environment and developing and implementing risk minimisation strategies.
- Ensure food is stored within food safe limits.

Shared and family-contributed food

Family-contributed food for a celebration, cultural experience, learning experience or community event is welcomed when it can be shared safely.

Before shared food is offered, educators will consider:

- ingredients and allergen information
- how the food has been prepared
- safe storage and transportation
- the ages and developmental needs of children
- choking risks
- current medical, allergy and dietary requirements
- cultural or religious requirements.

If a proposed food cannot be shared safely, educators will work with the family or child to find another way to contribute. This might include sharing a recipe, story, ingredients for a planned cooking experience, photographs, family knowledge or another cultural connection.

Children with allergies or dietary requirements will be included alongside their peers. Safe alternatives and participation arrangements will be planned without unnecessarily singling out or isolating the child.

Health, allergy and dietary safety

Callington Kindergarten is an allergy-aware service.

Children with allergies, anaphylaxis, medical conditions, oral eating and drinking needs, sensory needs and cultural or religious dietary requirements are supported through current health information and individual plans where required.

We will:

- follow current health support plans, medical management information and risk-minimisation strategies
- ensure relevant educators know the child's requirements and where medication and plans are located
- follow the Department for Education requirements for supporting children with anaphylaxis and severe allergies
- work with families and relevant health professionals where individual planning is required
- ensure children do not share food brought from home for their individual consumption unless it forms part of a planned shared-food experience that has been assessed as safe.

Callington Kindergarten does not rely on permanent blanket food bans as its primary allergy-management strategy. Any request concerning particular foods will respond to the current needs and risk-management arrangements of children attending the service.

Hygienic and safe food practices

We will:

- ensure children and staff use safe handwashing and hygiene practices
- use safe practices for handling, preparing, storing and serving food
- actively supervise children while eating and drinking
- ensure children are seated while eating and drinking to reduce choking risk

- provide sufficient time for children to eat without being rushed
- consider food type, size and texture in relation to each child's age, development and individual needs
- ensure staff follow current Department for Education anaphylaxis and allergy requirements
- store food within safe temperature limits
- encourage suitable lunchbox storage and ice packs, with refrigeration available when required
- support children to use their own food, drink bottles and utensils unless a planned shared-food experience has been assessed as safe
- follow the Callington Kindergarten Cooking with Children and Food Preparation Risk Assessment for cooking and food preparation experiences.

Inclusive and family-friendly practice

We will provide a supportive environment for families to feed babies and young children, including comfortable seating and access to appropriate facilities for heating bottles where required.

For children attending Occasional Care, educators will work with families to understand individual feeding routines, developmental needs and safe eating and drinking requirements.

Children with disability, developmental differences, sensory needs, medical conditions or dietary requirements are supported to participate alongside their peers through reasonable and safe adjustments.

Environmentally responsible practices

Food and eating experiences provide opportunities to strengthen children's relationship with the natural environment.

We will:

- support composting and recycling where appropriate
- reduce unnecessary packaging and single-use plastics where practical
- encourage reusable food and drink containers
- provide opportunities for children to explore where food comes from
- involve children in gardening, growing, cooking and preparing food when these experiences connect with their interests and learning
- encourage care for food, resources and the environment.

Food and drink provided by Callington Kindergarten

When Callington Kindergarten provides food or drink for children, it will be appropriate in quantity and nutritional value and take account of children's growth, development and relevant cultural, religious and health requirements.

Safe food-handling practices will be followed.

Where required, an accurate menu of food and drinks provided by the service will be available to families and updated when plans change.

If Callington Kindergarten begins providing food and drink regularly within its fee structure, the additional requirements applying under the National Regulations and Food Act will be reviewed and implemented.

Roles and responsibilities

Preschool director or principal

Lead the development and implementation of this policy in consultation with families and educators and ensure it reflects your preschool community and that it is accessible and communicated to all families and educators.

Ensure compliance with the department's related policies and procedures including:

- Supporting children and students with anaphylaxis and severe allergies
- First aid procedure
- Health support planning for children and students in education and care settings

Respond to instances of variations in practices to this policy on a case-by-case, ensuring each child's developmental and cultural needs are supported and families' decisions and food choices are respected.

Support educators to access professional development opportunities to broaden their understanding of children's nutrition, eating behaviours and creating positive and safe eating environments and learning.

Educators

Role model food safety practices, healthy eating and drinking practices and support families understanding of the preschool's approach to nutrition and healthy eating.

Work with other educators, families, and health professionals to implement action plans to support children with specific dietary, eating and drinking requirements, including children with developmental, health and medical conditions.

Raise any issues or concerns regarding implementation of this policy with the preschool director or principal.

- provide active supervision while children eat and drink
- maintain safe food-handling and hygiene practices
- raise concerns about implementation of this policy with the Site Leader / Nominated Supervisor.

Families

- provide current information about their child's dietary requirements, health support needs and cultural or religious food practices
- provide required documentation, equipment and medication where applicable
- work with educators to support safe and inclusive food practices
- discuss proposed shared food or cultural food experiences with educators in advance so current allergy, dietary and food-safety needs can be considered
- raise questions or concerns with educators or the Site Leader / Nominated Supervisor.

- Support implementation of the preschool's policy.
- Seek information and support from our educators about the preschool's nutrition and food practices and raise any concerns with educators or the preschool director or principal.

Governing council

Endorse this policy.

Supporting information

- Department for Education Nutrition and dietary requirements in preschool guidance Nutrition and dietary requirements in preschool EDi page
- Department for Education Supporting children and students with anaphylaxis and severe allergies
- Department for Education Health support planning for children and students in education and care settings
- Department for Education First aid procedure
- ACECQA Nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements policy guidelines
- Australian Dietary Guidelines
- Callington Kindergarten Philosophy Statement, reviewed April 2026
- Callington Kindergarten Nutrition, Food and Beverages, Dietary Requirements Procedure
- Callington Kindergarten Cooking with Children and Food Preparation Risk Assessment.

Policy created/approved: June 2026

Policy reviewed and updated: October 2026

Approved by Site Leader: Alison Hennessy

Governing Council approval: June 2027

Next review: June 2027, or earlier if Department for Education requirements, legislation, site practice or identified needs change.

October 2026 amendments: Reviewed against the Department for Education Nutrition, food, drink, and dietary requirements policy template and the Callington Kindergarten Philosophy Statement. Added required detail relating to family consultation, health support planning, choking and supervision, safe food storage, inclusive feeding support, environmentally responsible practice and roles and responsibilities. Callington's child-centred, inclusive and community-focused approach has been retained.

Policy created/approved: June 2026 **Policy review date:** June 2027