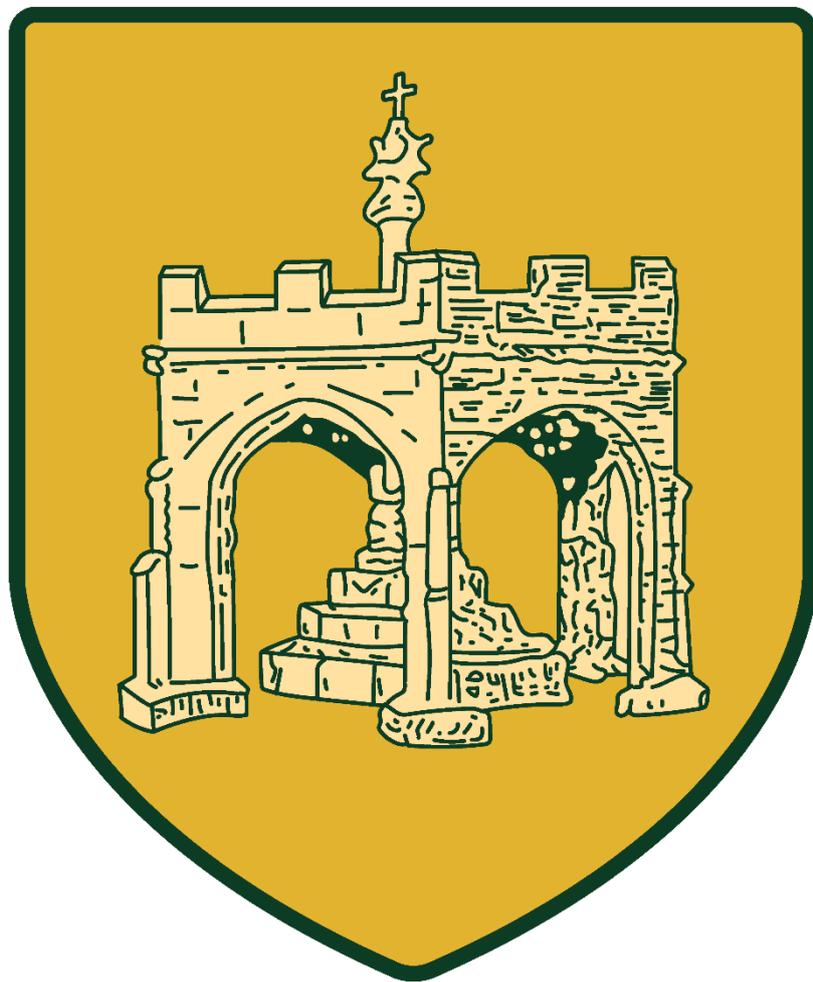




# Cheddar First Preschool

Where Every Child Is at the Heart

## Prime Times – Baby and Toddler Mealtimes



<b>Date Agreed</b>	30 <sup>th</sup> January 2026
<b>Review Date</b>	30 <sup>th</sup> January 2027

## **Policy statement**

Feeding and mealtimes are key times in the day for building close relationships, promoting emotional security, and supporting children's learning and development. We recognise the importance of a healthy, balanced diet and positive mealtime experiences for babies and toddlers.

Mealtimes are treated as calm, unrushed opportunities for interaction, communication, and exploration, in line with the EYFS principles of attachment, wellbeing and learning through relationships.

## **Bottle-fed babies**

- Babies' hands are washed or wiped before bottle feeding.
- Babies are fed by their key person, or their back-up key person if the key person is unavailable.
- Bottles are warmed and ready in advance so babies are not left hungry or distressed while feeds are prepared.
- The key person sits in a comfortable chair or on cushions and remains relaxed and calm while feeding.
- Babies are held close, enabling eye contact and interaction. Key persons respond sensitively to babies' cues, talking quietly, stroking, or holding their hands.
- Babies are winded after feeds, nappies are changed as required, and babies are settled for sleep or play.
- Other children may remain close to their key person during feeding times, which can help reduce anxiety or feelings of jealousy, particularly for toddlers.
- Feeding times are planned to allow one-to-one attention wherever possible. Where overlap cannot be avoided, feeds are organised so the key person can respond appropriately to both babies.
- Feeding is not treated as a task to be rushed. Except in exceptional circumstances, unfamiliar staff do not take over feeding simply to complete routines.
- Babies may begin to hold their own bottles, but bottles are never propped, and babies are never left to feed without adult support and supervision.

## **Toddler mealtimes**

- Older babies and toddlers who are self-feeding eat with their key group and key person in their familiar room.
- Staff eating with children role-model good hygiene, healthy eating and positive mealtime behaviour at all times.
- Food is brought to rooms in appropriate serving dishes on a trolley.
- Tables are prepared before children sit down to ensure there is no unnecessary waiting.
- Babies' and toddlers' hands are washed or wiped before meals.
- Key persons serve food to their children, responding to their preferences. Food is not placed on a child's plate if they clearly indicate they do not want it.

- Babies and toddlers are encouraged to explore food using their fingers as part of developing self-feeding skills. Messy play with food is recognised as a normal and valuable part of learning.
- Children are given time to eat at their own pace and are not hurried to fit adult routines or breaks.
- Mealtimes are relaxed social occasions that support communication, sensory exploration, and independence, as well as meeting children's physical needs.
- To protect children with food allergies or specific dietary needs, children are discouraged from sharing or swapping food.
- While toddlers usually eat in their own rooms, opportunities are provided for older children to join them, such as siblings or children transitioning between rooms, where this is appropriate and not distressing. Babies and toddlers may also join older children for shared mealtimes when this supports their wellbeing.

### **Information sharing with parents**

Information for parents is displayed on the parents' notice board, including:

- Guidance on healthy eating for toddlers (e.g., Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers)
- Daily menus with clear identification of foods containing allergens

This policy should be read alongside the Breastfeeding and Infant Policy, Feeding Policy and the Milk and Baby Food Preparation and Storage Policy.

This policy is reviewed annually and updated in line with current legislation, statutory guidance, and best practice.