



Nutrition & Food Safety Policy

Policy Statement:

Pennant Hills Before and After School Care Service is committed to providing safe, nutritious and culturally inclusive food practices that support the health, wellbeing and learning of all children. We follow recognised nutrition guidelines, prioritise safe food handling, and create mealtime environments that are relaxed, social and developmentally supportive. Children's autonomy, cultural identity and individual dietary needs are respected at all times, and families are valued partners in shaping our approach to food and nutrition. Through thoughtful menu planning, safe food preparation, and meaningful education around healthy habits, we aim to foster lifelong skills, positive relationships with food and a strong sense of belonging within our community.

Definitions:

Allergen: A substance that can cause an allergic reaction in some individuals. Common food allergens include nuts, dairy, eggs, soy, wheat, sesame and seafood.

Cultural Dietary Requirements: Food practices, restrictions or preferences based on a family's cultural, religious or traditional beliefs (e.g., halal, vegetarian, fasting periods).

Discretionary Foods: Foods and drinks that are not essential for health and are typically high in saturated fat, added sugar or salt (e.g., chips, lollies, pastries). These are limited in accordance with Eat Smart Play Smart guidelines.

Considerations:

- Education and Care Services National Regulations
 - Regulation 77: Safe food and drink handling practices.
 - Regulation 78: Provision of food and beverages that are nutritious and appropriate to each child's needs.
 - Regulation 79: Ensuring food and drinks are sufficient in quantity and appropriate for the time of day.
 - Regulation 80: Ensuring children always have access to safe drinking water.
 - Regulation 168(2)(i) & (j): Requirement for services to have policies on nutrition, food safety and safe drinking water.
 - Regulations 181-183: Requirements for record-keeping confidentiality and retention of documentation relevant to food safety and children's health.

- Education and Care Services National Law
 - Section 165 – Offence to inadequately supervise children
 - Section 167 – Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards
- Eat Smart, Play Smart Guidelines
- My Time, Our Place (MTOP) – Framework for School Age Care
- Australian Dietary Guidelines & Australian Guide to Healthy Eating
- National Quality Standard
 - Element 2.1.1 – Wellbeing and comfort
 - Element 2.1.2 – Health practices and procedures
 - Element 2.1.3 – Healthy lifestyle
 - Element 3.1.1 – Fit for purpose
 - Element 3.2.3 – Environmentally responsible
 - Element 5.1.2 – Dignity and rights of the child
 - Element 5.2.1 – Collaborative learning
 - Element 7.2.1 – Continuous improvement

Policy:

Hygiene Practices:

Handwashing:

Handwashing practices are maintained throughout all working hours in the centre, for both staff and children, to ensure cleanliness and stop the spread of disease. Staff and children are to wash hands after using the bathroom, after outdoor play, before and during food preparation and before eating. Children wash hands, under staff supervision, before every meal service and before all cooking activities. Visual aids in the bathrooms and kitchen prompt children and staff to remember to wash their hands properly and frequently. A separate hand-washing sink is installed in the kitchen for staff to use that is separate from the dishwashing sink, as per health and safety advice.

Food Storage:

The correct storage of food is to be always maintained by staff. Any chemicals/cleaning products are stored well away from food service areas and food storage, in separate rooms or locked cupboards. Refrigerated and frozen food is labelled with an opening date and kept on the appropriate shelf at the appropriate temperature. Daily temperature checks are carried out for the refrigerator and freezer to ensure safe storage. Signage around the kitchen aid staff in remembering the safety guidelines for temperature, times and location of food storage. All food storage is checked frequently, and food is disposed of if it has passed its best before date or looks/smells unfit for consumption.

Cleaning Procedures:

The kitchen is cleaned regularly and thoroughly as part of the daily cleaning procedures, as well as deep cleaned in sections throughout the month. Kitchen staff and the Responsible Person in Charge are responsible for ensuring adequate cleaning and packing away of all food items, food service

equipment and appliances for each session. All cookware and appliances are to be rinsed, put through the dishwasher or thoroughly washed and dried after every use, before being put away. All surfaces are sanitised with non-toxic cleaning supplies each session.

Food Service Temperatures:

Thermometers are used to ensure that hot food is served at an appropriate temperature and this is recorded in the menu evaluation after each food service. Staff are to follow safety guidelines for cooking and reheating all food before service.

Food Safety Practices:

Food Preparation:

All staff receive internal training on how to safely prepare, cook and clean in a food service role. It is mandatory for all staff to complete the NSW Food Authority Food Handler Basic Training.

At least one team member holds the Food Safety Supervisor Certificate.

Children may participate in food preparation, either as part of an activity or to assist staff in food service for the session. This must be done under close supervision and does not include the use of knives, dangerous appliances or hot items (e.g. the oven or the stove).

Staff are to:

- Tie back long hair
- Wash hands
- Wear gloves, if wearing any jewelry or nail polish
- Ensure any wounds are covered thoroughly and securely
- Avoid wearing watches, rings, bracelets during food preparation/service
- Use tongs or utensils to serve food as much as possible
- Keep nails short, clean and free of polish
- Stay clear of food preparation/service if unwell

Meal Service:

Food Service:

Breakfast is provided each morning session from 6:45am to 8:15am. We provide a selection of cereals, toast, spreads, and fruit.

Afternoon tea is provided from 3:15pm to 4:15pm. Children are provided with the main menu item of the day as well as a variety of sandwiches, fruits and vegetables. A small late snack is also provided between 5:00pm and 5:30pm.

Guidelines are available for reference in the kitchen for serving suggestions based on the developmental stage of the child. Children are to wash hands before eating and are supervised while serving themselves using tongs. Second servings are offered based on the needs of the children and the availability of food to reduce food waste.

Routines & Expectations:

We aim to make mealtimes at the centre a relaxed and social part of the program where staff and children can chat while children enjoy a nutritious meal. Our expectations for mealtimes include that all children are sitting down while they are eating and that they put their rubbish and dishes away in the appropriate spot. Staff are to model and encourage appropriate behaviour during mealtimes, either by supervising on their feet and making sure children are sitting down or by sitting with the children.

Emergency Meal Procedures:

In the rare event that a child has no food or food is lost/spoiled, the service will provide food. Similarly, if a planned meal cannot be made due to unforeseen circumstances, there is always a staff member available to purchase ingredients at the local shops for an emergency meal to be prepared.

Nutrition Guidelines & Menu Planning:

Nutrition Framework:

The service follows the Eat Smart Play Smart guidelines by providing a balanced approach to food and nutrition. Meals and snacks are planned to include a variety of food groups, with discretionary foods limited to ensure that everyday options remain nourishing and aligned with best-practice recommendations.

Water is available to children at all times, reinforcing healthy hydration habits and supporting active play. Educators model positive food choices and weave gentle nutrition education into daily routines, helping children build lifelong healthy habits through conversation. Cooking activities are intentionally selected to promote learning about nutrition, cultural diversity, and practical skills such as measuring, weighing and fine motor development, ensuring that food experiences are both educational and engaging.

Menu Planning & Documentation:

We plan our menu each term, ensuring it is accessible and transparent by displaying it on the noticeboard and sending it to families. Children are encouraged to contribute ideas and exercise autonomy in choosing what they eat and how much, within reasonable boundaries. Families are also invited to offer suggestions, creating a collaborative approach to menu development. Dietary requirements, whether cultural or medical, are carefully considered, and alternatives are always available.

A menu evaluation is completed for each session to support continuous improvement, with educators assessing how well the food offered met children's needs, preferences and overall engagement. This reflective process keeps the team responsive, ensures the menu evolves over time and helps minimise food wastage. Documentation underpins this cycle, with educators recording how much food was required, whether children enjoyed the meal and any adjustments needed for future planning. These insights guide ordering, reduce waste and strengthen the alignment between children's preferences, nutritional guidelines and the service's operational needs.

Allergen & Dietary Management:

Identifying Dietary Requirements:

It is the responsibility of the family to inform the centre of any allergies, intolerances, or cultural/religious requirements for their child/ren. This information is shared with staff so that alternatives can be prepared and allergens avoided or removed, as necessary. Each session the staff will:

- Check the roll to see which children with dietary requirements are in attendance
- Highlight those children on visual photo cards kept in the kitchen
- Read the names of those children out to the whole team before the session begins
- Prepare alternatives for those children (as close to the planned menu as possible)

For more information on allergen management, please see our Management of Medical Conditions Policy.

Food Exclusions & Food from Home:

The service is strictly nut-free at all times and will endeavour to remove other allergens as appropriate, though this cannot be guaranteed in every case.

During term, children are not permitted to eat or share food from home/school. Alternatively, during vacation care, children are required to bring their own morning tea and lunch. They are not permitted to share food, nor are they permitted nuts of any kind. Children are encouraged not to eat food from their bags outside of mealtimes as staff will be monitoring the consumption of food from home to ensure the safety of children with allergies and intolerances.

Version	Action	Date
V.1	Original endorsement	4 th November 2020
V.2.1	Updated to include more detailed food safety procedures, planning and documentation and allergen/food from home information.	3 rd February 2026
V.2.1	Approval by PMC	18 th February 2026