03 Food safety and nutrition procedures

**03.2 Food for play and cooking activities**

Some parents and staff may have strong views about food being used for play. It is important to be sensitive to these issues. For example, children who are Muslim, Jewish, Rastafarian, or who are vegetarian, should not be given any food to play with that contains animal products (Gelatine). Parents’ views should be sought on this. In some cases, it is not appropriate to use food for play at all, particularly in times of austerity.

* Food for play may include dough, corn flour, pasta, rice, food colourings/flavourings.
* Jelly (including jelly cubes) is not used for play.
* Food for play is risk assessed against the 14 allergens referred and is included in the written risk assessment undertaken for children with specific allergies as well as choking hazards.
* Staff are constantly alert to the potential hazards of food play, in particular choking hazards and signs of previously undetected allergies.
* Dried food that is used for play should be kept away from food used for cooking.
* Foods that are cooked and used for play, such as dough, have a limited shelf life.
* Cornflour is always mixed with water before given for play.
* Cornflour and cooked pasta are discarded after an activity; high risk of bacteria forming.
* Utensils used for play food are washed thoroughly after use.
* If a child or member of staff is allergic to any of the ingredients they must be replaced, and a safe alternative used.
* If a younger child is likely to put the playdough/ cornflour in their mouth, a safe alternative is provided.
* If a child is likely to eat the playdough due to persistent sensory seeking behaviours the activity will be replaced with a safe alternative.
* Children are always supervised when playing with playdough or cornflour.
* Children and staff wash their hands before and after the activity.
* Uncooked flour should is not used for activities where children are exploring through touch or taste, or there is a likelihood they will put their fingers in their mouths.

**Children’s cooking activities**

* Before undertaking any cooking activity with children, members of staff check for allergies and intolerances by checking children’s records.
* Children are taught basic hygiene skills such as the need to wash hands thoroughly before handling food, and again after going to the toilet, blowing their nose or coughing.
* The area to be used for cooking is cleaned; a plastic tablecloth is advised.
* Utensils provided are for children to use only when cooking, including chopping/rolling boards, bowls, wooden spoons, jugs, and are stored in the kitchen.
* Members of staff encourage children to handle food in a hygienic manner.
* Food ready for cooking or cooling is not left uncovered.
* Cooked food to go home is put in a paper food bag and refrigerated until home time.
* Food play activities are suspended during outbreaks of illness.
* Baking activities where flour is used and then the food is cooked. We ensure that the activity is risk assessed, and children do not eat the uncooked flour or the mixture.