

# Lunchbox Policy

## Background information:

Burren Sonas Kindergarten bases its food offerings on the Waldorf Steiner tradition of serving a different grain each day of the week, providing a range of nutrients and a sense of weekly rhythm to the children. Our polytunnel offers the chance for children to learn to grow fruits and vegetables.

Burren Sonas is a vegetarian kindergarten, following the principles of Rudolf Steiner, who believed a vegetarian diet is most digestible to young children and therefore helps learning. Our kindergarten follows these principles, as do many Steiner Waldorf childcare facilities around Ireland and across the world.

Eating involves far more than just putting food into our mouth. It invokes the pleasure of many senses—smell, touch, taste, sight, and even hearing. Gathering around the table also creates a sense of community. Children not only benefit from the food served at the table, but from the bonds that are created with their classmates and teachers. It's a chance for them to experience an in-breath: to “digest” the morning's events, to participate in conversations and listen to the contributions of others and to truly celebrate our day.

It's an opportunity to be nourished physically, emotionally and spiritually.

## Our hot meal menu:

Our daily hot meals follow the national guidelines by offering mainly servings of complex carbohydrates, as per the Children's Food Pyramid (see diagram), as well as servings of fruits and vegetables and dairy, all of high-quality: most ingredients are sourced from our local health store. The small servings of protein recommended daily is found in cheese, oats served on Wednesdays, brown rice, brown bread, and nutritional yeast, which we serve with all our meals.



On Monday we serve brown rice, a complex carbohydrate, served with cheese and nutritional yeast. On Tuesday, we serve wholegrain bread which is another complex carbohydrate and offers protein and B vitamins. On Wednesday, we offer oats which are rich in beta-glucans, support heart health and immunity.

The oats are served with cow's milk, another source of protein, or a dairy-free alternative, such as oat milk or almond milk. On Thursdays we prepare a vegetable soup and also offer this as an option for children who prefer it over pasta on Fridays. Both days, these options can be accompanied by cheese and nutritional yeast, as well as a serving of wholegrain bread on Thursdays.

### **Waldorf Steiner traditions around eating:**

Food preparation is an important aspect of our day in kindergarten. Singing happily while chopping fruit and sharing in the joys of cooking foods together sets a wonderful example for the children while creating an atmosphere of warmth, gratitude and reverence in the classroom. Children also benefit greatly by assisting in food preparation themselves. Activities such as chopping fruits and vegetables, kneading dough, stewing apples and so on nourishes the child's physical body by allowing them to develop healthy motor skills. This also gives children a sense of accomplishment and belonging and allows them to feel an important part of the class environment.

Meals are a communal event, prepared with the help of the children, and we follow a very ritualistic approach when serving our meals. We light a candle before our meals, then the teacher will read or sing a small seasonal verse. We then sing a blessings song, and children can eat their fruits and vegetables. After this, a different child each day will serve the hot part of the meal to their friends, and once we sing 'Happy Happy Eating' everyone can eat together. Children are encouraged to tidy their plates once their meal is finished, putting leftovers in our compost bin, and cleaning their bowls and plates at the washing up station at the end of the table. Once everyone has finished, we sing a 'thank you' song, and children can resume their play.

### **Guidelines:**

Our set menu is explained to parents before enrolling and is printed on our notice board, as well as being available on our website: [burrensonas.com](http://burrensonas.com)

Our Healthy Eating policy is linked to this policy, and asks parents with specific food requirements to talk to the teachers, so as to help implement their child's diet in a seamless manner, so that they can still benefit from our Steiner approach.

*We ask for children with a specific requirement to provide confirmation from a medical practitioner.*

### **Principle:**

In light of the information presented above, we feel strongly that lunchboxes should remain the exception, unless in very exceptional circumstances. Parents must always

talk to the teachers before packing a lunchbox for their child, and give a clear explanation, accompanied by a doctor's note. In agreement with the parents, efforts will be made to incorporate the child's meal into our routine ie: by transferring the contents into a school bowl and allowing it to be served by one of the children. Following the mealtime routine will allow children not to feel excluded from the social elements to meals.

## **Policy:**

**In special circumstances**, we allow children to pack a lunch which follows both our Kindergarten Ethos and the National Guidelines concerning allergens and choke hazards. This means that all lunches should be:

- meat free (but can include eggs and dairy)
- allergen free (no nuts or seafoods)\* \*\*
- follow the pyramid recommendations when possible (a serving of carbs, fruit and vegetables, and dairy)
- cannot include any of the following: chocolates, biscuits, sweets, crisps, sweet drinks

We also advice against bringing food that include plastic packaging due to environmental issues. If they are included, waste will be put in the child's bag to dispose of at home.

Content of the lunchbox should never be shared with other children.

Management reserves the right to call the parents if a child's lunchbox does not adhere to our ethos and guidelines. They will be given a choice to pick their child up, or for the child to partake in our hot meal (with a fee).

Continually bringing lunchbox content which are not in line with our policies will result in withdrawal of the child from the service.

\*Other allergens may be added to this list each year, depending on children's individual allergies highlighted in their enrolment form.

\*\*Shellfish and white melon added to this list for the year 2024/25

## **Exceptions**

Celebrations Treats that are sent into school to celebrate birthdays are allowed. Where possible these will be distributed at home time so parents are able to monitor this. The same rule applies to festivals.

## Related Policies, Procedures and Forms

- *Healthy Eating Policy*
- *Policy on Managing Behaviour*
- *Staff Training Policy*
- *Admissions Policy*
- *Interactions Policy*
- *Curriculum Policy*
- *Parent Involvement/Partnership with Parents Policy*

Person Responsible: Blandine Mahfouf

This policy was adopted by Burren Sonas Kindergarten on: 02 December 2024

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Signed by:  Chairperson on behalf of

Management Review date:

### Links:

This policy is in line with national guidance on healthy eating and nutrition. See Healthy Ireland for more information: [260031\\_f9394732-e700-447f-8f6f-1f101c6f9565.pdf](#)

Additional resources from HSE Ireland:  
[healthy-lunchbox-leaflet.pdf](#)

Resources for hot meals provided from Healthy Ireland:  
[128268\\_d07bed24-dd1d-4055-8ced-5e381621ca65.pdf](#)

Resources for hot meals provided by the Department of Health & Children:  
Food & Nutrition Guidelines for Pre-schools: [3865-HPU guide 5](#)