

1 MINUTE GUIDE

Safeguarding Committee *kitchen safety*



The kitchen at Witham Prospect is a central hub, providing nourishment and fostering a sense of community. However, it also presents potential hazards that must be carefully managed to ensure the safety and well-being of our young people and staff. This guide examines key aspects of **kitchen safety** at Witham Prospect, drawing on recent feedback from the school cook and focusing on proactive measures to mitigate risks.

THE IMPORTANCE OF KITCHEN SAFETY AT WITHAM PROSPECT

Our primary responsibility at Witham Prospect is to safeguard the well-being of our young people. This extends to every aspect of their care, including the kitchen environment. We must prevent accidents, injuries, allergic reactions, and foodborne illnesses, ensuring their safety and comfort. A safe kitchen also ensures the well-being of our staff, reducing the risk of work-related injuries and illnesses. Adhering to strict hygiene and safety standards demonstrates our commitment to providing the highest quality of care. We are legally and ethically obligated to comply with all relevant food safety and health and safety legislation. Furthermore, our young people may have specific dietary requirements, sensory sensitivities, and communication differences that require careful consideration in the kitchen.

KEY PRINCIPLES OF KITCHEN SAFETY

Kitchen safety at Witham Prospect is built upon several key principles. These include maintaining rigorous hygiene through thorough handwashing, regular cleaning, and proper waste disposal. Food safety is paramount, encompassing safe food handling, storage, preparation, and cooking. Proper use and maintenance of kitchen equipment are essential, as is the safe handling, storage, and use of knives. Chemical safety, specifically COSHH compliance, ensures the safe handling and storage of cleaning products and other chemicals. A deep understanding and proactive management of food allergies and intolerances are critical. Staff must be well-versed in emergency procedures, risk assessment, and clear communication.

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR WITHAM PROSPECT

Our young people often experience sensory sensitivities, communication differences, and have unique individual care plans. Therefore, we must tailor our kitchen safety practices to accommodate these needs. We must be mindful of strong smells, loud noises, and bright lights that may be distressing to some young people. Cleaning products with minimal fragrance should be used, and noise from equipment should be minimised whenever possible. Providing a calm and organized kitchen environment is crucial. Visual aids, symbols, and communication boards should be used to support understanding, and staff should use clear and concise language, allowing extra time for communication and following individual communication plans. Staff must be familiar with each young person's dietary requirements, allergies, and individual needs, following specific instructions in care plans regarding food preparation and serving.

DETAILED SAFETY PRACTICES

Thorough handwashing with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds is essential before and after handling food, after using the toilet, and after handling waste. Hand sanitiser should be used when soap and water are not available. Food should be stored at appropriate temperatures, following the "first in, first out" (FIFO) principle. Raw meat, poultry, and fish should be stored on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator, and all opened food items should be labelled and dated. Food should be cooked to the correct internal temperature, and separate chopping boards and utensils should be used for raw and cooked foods to prevent cross-contamination. Staff must adhere to dietary restrictions and allergies. Equipment should be used only for its intended purpose, and any faulty equipment should be reported immediately. Appropriate protective equipment should be used. Knives should be used correctly and stored safely, with a knife sign-in and out system in place. Chemicals should be stored in their original containers and used according to manufacturer instructions. Staff must consult allergy information sheets, take extra care to prevent cross-contamination, and clearly label all food items containing allergens. Spills should be cleaned up immediately using appropriate cleaning products and signage. Staff must familiarise themselves with fire evacuation routes and assembly points, know how to administer basic first aid, and report all accidents and incidents immediately.

RESPONSIBILITIES

All staff members are responsible for following these guidelines and reporting any concerns. Kitchen staff are responsible for maintaining a clean and hygienic kitchen, preparing and serving food safely, and ensuring equipment is in good working order. Managers are responsible for providing training, conducting risk assessments, and ensuring compliance with regulations.



TRAINING AND COMMUNICATION

Regular training sessions on kitchen safety should be attended by all staff. Open communication is essential, and any concerns or near misses should be reported to the line manager. Kitchen safety should be discussed at regular staff meetings, and visual aids and reminders should be utilised to support staff and young people.

ONGOING IMPROVEMENT

Safety procedures should be regularly reviewed and updated based on feedback and changing needs. Staff should provide feedback on safety practices, and continuous learning should be encouraged to stay up-to-date with best practices in kitchen safety. By following these guidelines, we can create a safe, healthy, and supportive kitchen environment for everyone at Witham Prospect.

Beyond the specific points raised, a comprehensive approach to kitchen safety at Witham Prospect must encompass:

- **Hygiene:** Maintaining high standards of personal hygiene, including thorough handwashing and appropriate attire.
- **Equipment Safety:** Ensuring all equipment is used correctly, regularly maintained, and PAT tested.
- **Safe Storage:** Proper storage of food and chemicals to prevent contamination and maintain quality.
- **Spill Management:** Prompt cleaning of spills to prevent slips, trips, and falls.
- **Emergency Procedures:** Staff training on emergency procedures, including fire evacuation and first aid.

REMEMBER: ALWAYS PRIORITISE SAFETY OVER SPEED, AND IF YOU ARE UNSURE ABOUT ANY ASPECT OF KITCHEN SAFETY, CONSULT WITH YOUR LINE MANAGER OR A DESIGNATED KITCHEN SAFETY OFFICER.