

FOOD AND DRINK POLICY.

See also Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Allergy Policy

Guidance: Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance May 2025

Statement of Intent

Sharing snack/meal times together is an important part in the social life at our playgroup. The time spent at snack/meals times reinforces the children's awareness of healthy eating, it encourages them to try different foods if those around them are, it develops their fine motor skills, control and self-esteem by allowing them to spread and pour, it helps develop a sense of responsibility and pride by being asked to hand out plates, cups, fetch jugs of milk and water, it encourages good table manners, sharing, compromise and allows a relaxed flow of conversation.

Aim

To promote healthy eating by providing a choice of fresh, nutritious food, which meets the children's individual dietary needs. These foods include fresh fruit and vegetables along with bread sticks, cream crackers, cheese, and rice cakes.

To educate children of the effects that foods and drinks have on our bodies and support them in making healthy choices.

To encourage those parents whose children, stay to lunch club to pack a healthy nutritious lunch.

Procedures

Food is stored and prepared in the upstairs kitchen in a safe and hygienic environment.

Staff receive food hygiene training.

We have food management procedures in place to control any hazards that could arise when providing food & drink. Special care is taken with food that can cause choking such as

- stones and pips are removed from fruit before serving

- small round foods, like grapes, strawberries and cherry tomatoes, are cut lengthways and into quarters
- Cheese is cut into strips rather than chunks
- large fruits like melon, and hard fruit or vegetables like raw apple and carrot into slices instead of small chunks
- We do not give whole nuts and seeds to children under five years old
- We do not give popcorn as a snack
- We do not give marshmallows or jelly cubes from a packet either to eat or as part of messy play activities as they can get stuck in the throat
- We do not give children hard sweets.

These procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure they are effective.

Allergies, Intolerances and Dietary requirements (see also allergy policy)

Before a child is admitted to our setting we will obtain information about any special dietary requirements, preferences, food allergies and intolerances that the child has, and any special health requirements. This information will be shared with all staff involved in the preparing and handling of food. We record information about each child's dietary needs and produce a poster, which is displayed in the eating area and food hygiene diary showing details of the child and their specific dietary requirements so all staff, and volunteers are aware. For children with a specific dietary need, we maintain a log of food and drink consumed at snack time. The log is signed by two members of staff.

- Whilst children are eating there will always be a member of staff in the room with a valid paediatric first aid certificate.
- Children will remain seated whilst eating and an appropriately sized low chair may be used if needed. Distractions during meal times will be minimised.
- Children will always be within sight and hearing of a member of staff whilst eating to be alert to choking and food sharing. If a child experiences a choking incident that requires intervention, we will record details of where and how the child choked and parents and/or carers made aware. We will review the records periodically to identify if there

are trends or common features of incidents that could be addressed to reduce the risk of choking.

- We require staff to show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. Staff do not use a child's diet or allergy as a label for the child or make a child feel singled out because of her/his diet or allergy.
- Children wash their hands before eating or drinking.
- Snack times and lunch times are social occasions in which children and staff participate.
- At the meal times children are encouraged and supported to develop independence through making choices.
- Only milk and water are served at snack time and lunch time.
- We have fresh drinking water constantly available for the children .We inform the children about how to obtain the water and that they can ask for water at any time during the session.

Lunch

- Children who attend lunch club should be provided with a healthy packed lunch and guidelines are given to parents regarding this. Parents/carers must provide accurate information about ingredients/allergens.
- Staff must know which children have allergies
- Food must not be shared between children as this could cause an allergy risk
- Food contained within the packed lunch should be cold (we do not have the facilities to heat food).
- During warm weather we recommend that freezer packs are used to keep the packed lunch cool. If ice packs are unavailable, the '4-hour rule' can be applied. This rule allows food to be stored outside of chilled conditions for up to 4 hours.
- Foods such as grapes, cherry tomatoes & cocktail sausages **MUST** be cut in half lengthwise and quartered to avoid being a choking hazard.

- Sweets are a treat & should not be part of a child's lunch.
- Children are within sight and hearing of a member of staff whilst eating. There is always a member of staff with a current paediatric first aid certificate present.
- Staff will encourage children to try a range of nutritious foods but will never pressure or force a child to eat. Children will be supported to recognise and respond to their own feelings of hunger and fullness.
- All uneaten food & empty packages will be returned in the lunch box so parents/carers can monitor their child's food consumption.
- We communicate information about children's severe allergies in a sensitive manner and with regard to our confidentiality policy.

Oral Health

Water is available and accessible to children at all times. Water is the preferred drink between meals.

We have learning opportunities to talk to the children about looking after their teeth.

Celebrations

Cakes and sweets should not be routinely provided. Many families like to celebrate their child's birthday and other special events by bringing in a cake or sweets to the setting to share. This can mean that some children are eating these unhealthy foods several times a week. We would recommend that if families would like to celebrate a birthday that they bring in fruit platters to share or non-edible options to celebrate with such as bubbles or stickers. Any food shared in the setting must comply with our allergy and food safety policy. We will decline food if the ingredients or allergen information is unknown.

Meeting the needs of all children

We cater for the cultural and dietary needs of the children in our care which includes allergies, intolerances and special dietary requirements for religious reasons such as halal foods or fasting or for children with additional needs. We will engage in open communication with parents about their child's dietary needs.

If a child requires a special diet for a medical reason, written information from a qualified health professional will be required. This should provide details of the child's specific dietary and nutritional needs so that these can be safely and appropriately met within the setting.

Parents and/or carers, in consultation with a registered dietitian or other qualified health professional where appropriate, will provide details of the child's dietary requirements. This may include suitable food choices for meals and snacks, foods that must be excluded or specifically included, and any supplements that may be required.

For children with food allergies, we will work with parents and/or carers and, where appropriate, relevant health professionals to ensure that we have an appropriate allergy action plan in place. This will include information about the child's allergy, how to avoid exposure, signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction, and the action to be taken in an emergency.

All information relating to a child's allergies, intolerances, special dietary requirements and relevant health needs will be recorded, reviewed and updated regularly. Changes must be communicated promptly by parents and/or carers and will be clearly communicated to all staff involved in the preparation, handling and serving of food and drink.

Staff will ensure that each child receives food and drink that is appropriate for their individual dietary requirements and will follow the setting's procedures for preventing cross-contamination and accidental exposure to known allergens.

Cooking Activities

Cooking is a great experience for young children and helps to create a positive relationship with food. We will use cooking experiences to learn about healthy eating as well as learning cooking skills. Cooking activities will take into account any allergies or dietary requirements.

Food Poisoning

If two or more children that are looked after on the premises are affected by food poisoning we inform Ofsted within 14 days of the incident occurring.