



“Encouraging children to feel safe, secure and strive for their best.”

6.5 Food and drink

Policy statement

Our provision regards snack and meal times as an important part of our day. Eating represents a social time for children and adults and helps children to learn about healthy eating. We promote healthy eating. At snack we aim to provide nutritious food, which meets the children's individual dietary needs.

Procedures

We follow these procedures to promote healthy eating in our setting.

- Before a child starts to attend the setting, we find out from parents their children's dietary needs and preferences, including any allergies. (See the Managing Children who are Sick, Infectious or with Allergies policy.)
- We record information about each child's dietary needs in her/his registration record and add this to their details on Family.
- We regularly consult with parents to ensure that our records of their children's dietary needs - including any allergies - are up-to-date.
- We display current information about individual children's dietary needs so that all staff and volunteers are fully informed about them. This is recorded and displayed on the staff board in the room.
- We implement systems to ensure that children receive only food and drink that is consistent with their dietary needs and preferences as well as their parents' wishes.
- We provide nutritious food for all snacks, avoiding large quantities of saturated fat, sugar and salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings.
- We include foods from the diet of the children's cultural backgrounds, providing children with familiar foods and introducing them to new ones.
- We take care not to provide food containing nuts or nut products and are especially vigilant where we have a child who has a known allergy to nuts.
- We provide a vegetarian alternative if required (during cooking activities) when meat or fish are offered and make every effort to ensure Halal meat or Kosher food is available for children who require it.
- We require staff to show sensitivity in providing for children's dietary requirements. 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.
- We organise meal and snack times so that they are social occasions in which children and staff participate.

- We use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink and feeding themselves.
- We provide children with utensils that are appropriate for their ages and stages of development and that take account of the eating practices in their cultures.
- Children are able to access their water bottles at all times during a session and offer milk for them to pour themselves at snack time.
- In order to protect children with food allergies, we discourage children from sharing and swapping their food with one another.

Packed lunches

- When a child begins at playgroup parents are asked to agree to our policy as part of our code of conduct.
- When children begin staying for lunch or attend all day sessions, we provide parents with a copy of our food and drink policy so they are aware of our expectations around packed lunches.
- We provide children bringing packed lunches, cups and cutlery if required.
- We ensure staff sit with children whilst they eat their lunch to ensure safety and promote healthy eating. Staff promote mealtimes as a social occasion and encourage a conversation using 'lunch time prompts' such as flowers or photos in the middle of the table.
- We present the contents of a child's lunch box on a plate to keep the lunch box on the floor and more space on the table for the children to eat.
- **We are a nut free setting so ask parents not to provide any nut products, including peanut butter in lunch boxes.**
- **As a result of consulting with parents, we now:**
 - Provide information regarding sugar intake for young children as well as a variety of lunch box ideas and suggestions to try. This is given to parents when their child begins staying for lunch or attends an all day session.
 - Regularly share photos of lunch boxes on our Family news feed as a way of providing inspiration to other parents.
 - Encourage parents to bring in left over food or 'hot food' that may require heating up at playgroup (in accordance with health regulations). Parents are asked to label any food they would like staff to reheat.
 - Clarify for parents that any food with 'free sugars', such as biscuits, yogurts and sweet sandwich fillings are considered a 'sweet item' therefore to only provide one of these items in a lunch box. If more than one is provided the child will be given a choice of which they would like to eat.
 - Ask parents to label any foods in lunch boxes as 'sugar free' or highlight to staff any additional items in lunch boxes which may be to help with additional needs (such as for illnesses or underweight children needing a higher calorie meal).
 - Have a conversation with the parents if a child is regularly provided with more than one 'sweet item' to find out why and reiterate our policy on promoting healthy eating.
 - Ask parents to provide their child with water, however understand the importance of drinking fluids and that at times weak squash may be provided to motivate children to drink. Parents are encouraged to inform staff if squash has been given so we are aware of the reason for this.
 - Ensure all staff are aware of the food and drink policy and the expectations on lunch box requirements. We ensure the team is educated in sugar consumption and what is considered a 'sweet item' and also expect a level of consideration when viewing the lunch box as a whole.

- As we encourage independence through making choices at snack time we also allow children the opportunity to choose what order they eat the items from their plate with staff encouraging them and making suggestions. If they have been provided with a 'sweet item' this will be left in their lunchbox and staff will suggest they eat this after the rest of their meal, explaining why it is important to eat the other items first.
- Regularly provide a wide variety of items for children to try at snack times to expose them to alternatives, including more diverse fruits and vegetables.

Food Poisoning

- We notify Ofsted of any food poisoning affecting two or more children looked after on the premises as soon as is reasonably practicable, but in any event within 14 days of the incident.

This policy runs in conjunction with the following policies:

- Food Hygiene
- First Aid
- Parent partnership
- Parent code of conduct

Playleader

Committee Chair

Date implemented: 17.04.23

Review Date: 17.04.24