

3.10 Nutrition and Mealtimes

Policy

We believe that mealtimes should be happy, social occasions for children and staff alike. We promote shared, enjoyable positive interactions at these times. We are committed to offering children healthy, nutritious and balanced meals and snacks, which meet individual needs and requirements, following the Department for Education nutrition guidance.

Link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-nutrition>

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Allergies and allergic reactions policy.

Our provision regards snack and mealtimes 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 using resources and materials from the 'safer food better business' environmental health standards. At snack and mealtimes, we aim to provide nutritious food, which meets the children's individual dietary needs.

Procedures

Our approach to food and healthy eating

- A balanced and healthy breakfast, midday meal, afternoon meal both served with deserts or snacks are provided for children attending a full day at the nursery.
- Menus are planned in advance and in line with example menu and guidance produced by the Department for Education (*copies can be provided on request*). These are rotated regularly, reflect cultural diversity and variation and are displayed for children and parents to view; parents and children are involved in menu planning.
- Menus include at least two servings of fresh fruit and vegetables per day
- We provide nutritious food at all snack and mealtimes, avoiding large quantities of fat, sugar, salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings
- Quantities offered take account of the ages of the children being catered for, in line with recommended portion sizes for babies and young children.

Sustainability

- To provide cost-effective foods, we purchase staple long-life ingredients in bulk, use frozen or tinned fruit and vegetables if appropriate, prepare home-made sauces using raw ingredients, and use left-over foods where possible.
- We plan menus to ensure that fruits and vegetables are seasonal and at their cheapest, we use a variety of meat, fish and vegetable alternatives.
- We may grow and use our own herbs.

Food & Drink in our settings

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

- Before a child starts to attend the setting, we find out from parents/ carers 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 their registration record and parents sign the record to signify that it is correct.
- Parents/ carers are required to update their child's record on NIAB 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.
- 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/ carers' wishes.
- We plan menus in advance, involving children and parents in the planning.
- We display the menus of meals/snacks for the information of parents/ carers.
- We provide nutritious food for all meals and snacks, avoiding large quantities of saturated fat, sugar and salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings.
- We include a variety of foods from the four main food groups:
 - meat, fish and protein alternatives.
 - dairy foods.
 - grains, cereals and starch vegetables.
 - fruit and vegetables.
- We include foods from the diet of each 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. 'Nut Free Zone' signs are displayed at the settings to promote this.
- Through discussion with parents/ carers, and research by staff, we obtain information about the dietary rules of the religious groups to which children and their parents belong, and of vegetarians and vegans, and about food allergies. We take account of this information in the provision of food and drinks.
- We provide a vegetarian alternative on days 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 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 their diet or allergy.
- We organise meal and snack times so that they are social occasions in which children and staff participate.



- No child is ever left alone when eating or drinking to minimise the risk of choking, and a qualified paediatric first aider is always present during meal and snack times.
- Staff set a good example, eat with the children, and demonstrate good table manners. Meal and snack times are organised so that they are social occasions in which children and staff participate in small groups. During meal and snack times children are encouraged to use appropriate table manners and staff promote conversation to support social development.
- Staff use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drinks, and feeding themselves.
- Any child who shows signs of distress at being faced with a meal they do not like will have their food removed without any fuss. If a child does not finish their first course, they will still be given a helping of any second dish.
- Children not on special diets are encouraged to eat a small piece of everything.
- Children who refuse to eat at the mealtime are offered food later in the day.
- Children are given time to eat at their own pace and are not rushed.
- 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.
- In accordance with parents' wishes, we offer children arriving early in the morning - and/or staying late - an appropriate meal or snack at the settings designated times on NIAB.
- We inform parents/ carers who provide food for their children about the storage facilities available in the setting.
- Parents/ carers who choose to provide food for their children, are only allowed to bring in food which is sealed with the date, ingredients and instructions clearly labelled. We do not accept precooked food.
- We reserve the right to stop a parent bringing food to the setting if we have a concern over health and safety standards and the recommendations set by environmental health.
- In order to protect children with food allergies, we discourage children from sharing and swapping their food with one another.
- We provide parents/ carers with daily written information about feeding routines, intake and preferences through child diaries on NIAB.
- We encourage children to take part in healthy eating activities led by the professional cooks or practitioners.

Baby feeding and weaning

- We follow babies' individual feeding patterns following conversations with parents. We regularly review these to ensure they continue to meet the baby's needs
- We feed babies responsively according to their needs and support mothers with breastfeeding, through providing suitable places to breastfeed in the setting and making provision for expressed breastmilk
- We prepare infant formula milk if required, following NHS guidelines
- Weaning is introduced in collaboration with parents, including discussions about the stage their baby is at, the types of foods and textures their baby is eating at home and how these are presented to the baby; no assumptions are made based on the age of the baby
- The setting provides parents with daily written records of feeding routines for children.

Commercial baby food and drink

- We provide fresh food for babies and do not use pre-made commercial baby food or drinks.
- We do permit parents to provide commercial baby food or drinks. However, we may invoke the right to not serve this if we believe there may be a risk to the child. In this case we would communicate with the parent(s).

Milk

- Parent(s)/ carer(s) are asked to provide bottles, whilst children are on formula or breast milk. It is the parent(s)/ carer(s) responsibility to ensure that formula milk is measured correctly and provided in a clearly labelled container with the child's name and amount provided.
- We must follow the guidance on 'milk' and 'mixing milk' provided for by Environmental Health (*Safer Food Better Business*) www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/caterers/sfbb/
- If applicable we contact our local authority environmental health team for more support.
- Parent/ carer to provide the make/ name/ brand and full information/ instructions of formula used via NAIB.

Milk Guidance:

- Formula milk should be made up fresh for each feed. If there is any made-up formula milk left after a feed, throw it away.
- Wherever possible staff use a Tommie Timmie prep-machine to make formula bottles. Training will be provided.
- Boil fresh tap water and let it cool, but for no more than half an hour. Always put the boiled water in the bottle first, before the powder.
- Cool the formula quickly to feeding temperature by holding the bottle under cold running water (with the cap on).
- For children who drink milk, we provide whole pasteurised milk or an alternative.
- The setting supports and provides a quiet area for parents who wish to breast feed.
- Expressed breast milk should be stored in the fridge and used within 24 hours. If expressed milk is not kept cold, harmful bacteria may grow in it.



Food & Drink Stations

- We ensure each and every classroom has a designated station/ area for serving water and food.
- Our stations are kept clutter free, clean and clearly marked.
- We have fresh drinking water constantly available for the children throughout the day. We inform the children about how to obtain the water and that they can ask for water at any time during the day.
- We promote self-help skills where possible. Younger children are supported.
- To avoid cross-contamination all drinking cups are cleaned after use. All beakers are faced upwards in a designated storage container preventing any lids from touching. Children do not share cups or beakers.
- Water is provided at all breakfast, snack or mealtimes.
- All bottles, cups and beakers (including lids) are sterilised and cleaned on a hot wash to eliminate any bacteria.
- The setting provides drinking cups/ beakers for children to use. We do not encourage juices from home. We ask that these are not brought into the setting.
- Drinking cups and beakers can be stored in lunch boxes or the child's bag for designed eating times or outings.

Packed lunches

Where we cannot provide cooked meals and children are required to bring packed lunches, we:

- Ask parents/ carers to ensure perishable contents of packed lunches contain an ice pack to keep food cool; (*packed lunches cannot be refrigerated*).
- Inform parents/ carers of our policy on healthy eating.
- Encourage parents/ carers to provide sandwiches with a healthy filling, fruit, and milk based desserts, such as yoghurt or crème fraiche. We can only accept cold food from home. We discourage and don't allow sweet drinks and can provide children with water.
- Parents/ carers may provide sugar free squash to support an identified individual child's needs when supported by a dietitian. This is assessed on a case by case basis with the manager and details recorded on NAIB.
- Discourage packed lunch contents that consist largely of crisps, processed foods, sweet drinks and sweet products such as cakes or biscuits. We reserve the right to return this food to the parent/ carer as a last resort.
- Provide children bringing packed lunches with plates, cups and cutlery.
- Ensure that adults sit with children to eat their lunch so that the mealtime is a social occasion.
- Tips for keeping packed lunches cool:
 - Use an insulated bag with an icepack from the freezer to pack your child's lunch in on really hot days, or choose a lunchbox with a built-in freezer block.
 - Pop a bottle of water in the freezer overnight to act as an ice pack as it thaws.
 - Ensure lunchbox storage is out of the sun.
- We provide parents with guidelines for nutritious content and signpost to the NHS packed lunch guidance: <https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes/>

Celebrations and special occasions

- We will sometimes celebrate special occasions with treats such as cake, sweets or biscuits. These will be given at mealtimes to help prevent tooth decay and not spoil the child's appetite.
- We do allow parents to bring in cakes on special occasions, however this must be in a sealed container with the ingredients clearly labelled by the manufacturer.
- We consider celebrating with alternatives such as stickers and badges, bubbles, fruit platters, choosing a favourite story, becoming a special helper, playing a party game, dancing and/or singing their favourite song, and so on.
- We ensure that all food brought in from parents meet health and safety requirements and that ingredients are listed, following the Food Information for Consumers (FIR) 2014.

Lunchbox tips



Keep them fuller for longer

Base the main lunchbox item on foods like bread, rice, pasta and potatoes. Choose wholegrain where you can.



Freeze for variety

Keep a small selection of different types of bread in the freezer so you have a variety of options – like bagels, pitta and wraps, granary, wholemeal and multigrain.



DIY lunches

Wraps and pots of fillings can be more exciting for kids when they get to make them. Dipping foods are also fun and a nice change from a sandwich each day.



Cut back on fat

Pick lower-fat fillings – like lean meats (including chicken or turkey), fish (such as tuna or salmon), lower-fat spread, reduced-fat cream cheese and reduced-fat hard cheese. And try to avoid using mayonnaise in sandwiches.

[See more healthier swap ideas](#)



Mix your slices

If your child does not like wholegrain, try making a sandwich from 1 slice of white bread and 1 slice of brown bread.



Always add veg

Cherry tomatoes, or sticks of carrot, cucumber, celery and peppers all count towards their 5 A Day. Adding a small pot of reduced-fat hummus or other dips may help with getting kids to eat vegetables.



Ever green

Always add salad to sandwiches and wraps too – it all counts towards your child's 5 A Day!



Cheesy does it...

Cheese can be high in fat and salt, so choose stronger-tasting ones – and use less of it – or try reduced-fat varieties.



Cut down on crisps

If your child really likes their crisps try reducing the number of times you include them in their lunchbox, and swap for homemade plain popcorn or plain rice cakes instead.



Add bite-sized fruit

Try chopped apple, peeled satsuma segments, strawberries, blueberries, halved grapes or melon slices to make it easier for them to eat. Add a squeeze of lemon juice to stop it from going brown.



Tinned fruit counts too

A small pot of tinned fruit in juice – not syrup – is perfect for a lunchbox and easily stored in the cupboard.



Swap the fruit bars

Dried fruit like raisins, sultanas and dried apricots are not only cheaper than processed fruit bars and snacks but can be healthier too. Just remember to keep dried fruit to mealtimes as it can be bad for teeth.



Switch the sweets

Swap cakes, chocolate, cereal bars and biscuits for malt loaf, fruited teacakes, fruit breads or fruit (fresh, dried or tinned – in juice not syrup).



Yoghurts: go low-fat and lower-sugar

Pop in low-fat and lower-sugar yoghurts or fromage frais and add your own fruit.



Get them involved

Get your kids involved in preparing and choosing what goes in their lunchbox. They are more likely to eat it if they helped make it.



Variety is the spice of lunch!

Be adventurous and get creative to mix up what goes in their lunchbox. Keeping them guessing with healthier ideas will keep them interested and more open to trying things.



Plan to Eatwell

The guide shows how much of what we eat overall should come from each food group to achieve a healthy, balanced diet. It can be really useful when thinking about what goes into kids' lunchboxes.

[The Eatwell Guide](#)

Example packed lunch menu

Provide a variety of foods from each of the food groups listed on the front page across each week. A week's packed lunch menu might look like this:



Mon

Tuna and sweetcorn pasta salad with red pepper sticks
Apple slices and plain yoghurt
Water to drink



Tue

Chicken and potato with salad
Ginger biscuits with satsumas
Milk to drink



Wed

Cheese salad wrap
Banana and raisins
Water to drink



Thu

Egg salad sandwich
Seasonal fruit salad with fromage frais
Milk to drink



Fri

Chickpea vegetable couscous salad
Mixed berries
Milk to drink

Management of food allergies and dietary needs

- All allergens are displayed alongside the menus to show the ingredients of each meal.
- Individual dietary requirements are respected. Before a child joins the nursery, we gather information from parents regarding their children's dietary needs, including any special dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies that a child has, and any special health requirements. All information is shared with staff involved in preparing and handling food.
- We have ongoing discussions with parents and, where appropriate, health professionals to develop allergy plans for managing any known allergies and intolerances. We ask parents to inform staff of any allergies or intolerances discovered after registration
- We share all information with all staff involved in the preparing and handling of food, including at mealtimes and snack times and keep an allergy register in each classroom.
- We give careful consideration to seating to avoid cross contamination of food from child to child. Where appropriate, an adult will sit with children during meals to ensure safety and minimise risks.
- At each meal and/or snack time, we ensure a nominated practitioner is responsible for checking that the food being provided meets all the requirements for each child.
- Where appropriate, discussions will also take place with children about allergies and potential risks to make them aware of the dangers of sharing certain foods.
- Staff show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. They do not use a child's diet or allergy as a label for the child, or make a child feel singled out because of their diet or allergy.
- We use a colour code system to recognise when a child has a allergy or intolerance. This triggers the staff member to check who and what type of allergy the child has and put in place precautionary measure to avoid and minimise risk.
- All staff are made aware of the signs and symptoms of a possible allergic reaction in case of an unknown or first reaction in a child. These may include a rash or hives, nausea, stomach pain, diarrhoea, itchy skin, runny eyes, shortness of breath, chest pain, swelling of the mouth and/or tongue, swelling of the airways to the lungs, wheezing and anaphylaxis. Staff are trained in appropriate treatments for allergies and anaphylaxis, the differences between allergies and intolerances and that children can develop allergies at any time, especially during the introduction of solid foods.
- Where a child has a known allergy, the nursery manager will carry out a full allergy risk assessment with the parent prior to the child starting the nursery and/or following notification of a known allergy and this assessment is shared with all staff. This may involve displaying photos of the children along with their known allergies in the kitchen or nursery rooms, where applicable
- All food prepared for a child with a specific allergy is prepared in an area where there is no chance of contamination and served on equipment that has not been in contact with this specific food type, e.g. nuts, gluten.
- The manager, nursery cook, and parents work together to ensure a child with specific food allergies receives no food at nursery that may harm them. This may include designing an appropriate menu or substituting specific meals on the current nursery menu
- At each mealtime and snack time we ensure staff are clear who is responsible for checking that the food being provided meets all the requirements for each child
- Seating is monitored for children with allergies. Where deemed appropriate, staff will sit with children who have allergies and, where appropriate, staff will discuss food allergies with the children and the potential risks

The place mats we use:



The bowls & plates we use:



Safety

- Our staff with responsibility for food preparation understand the principles of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) as it applies to our setting. This is set out in Safer Food, Better Business (SFBB). The basis for this is risk assessment of the purchase, storage, preparation and serving of food to prevent growth of bacteria and food contamination.
- All our staff follow the guidelines of Safer Food, Better Business. This is part of the staff's induction when starting.
- For group provision: All our staff who are involved in the preparation and handling of food have received training in food hygiene.
- The person responsible for food preparation and serving carries out daily opening and closing checks on the kitchen, to ensure standards are met consistently. (See Safer Food, Better Business)
- We use reliable suppliers for the food we purchase.
- Food is stored at correct temperatures and is checked to ensure it is in-date and not subject to contamination by pests, rodents or mould.
- Packed lunches are stored in a cool place; un-refrigerated food is served to children within 4 hours of preparation at home.
- Food preparation areas are cleaned before and after use.
- There are separate facilities for handwashing and for washing-up.
- All surfaces are clean and non-porous.
- Only staff who are qualified and have the appropriate award, work within our kitchen environments. Unauthorised staff who do not hold the appropriate award should not enter, whilst food is being prepared or the kitchen is in use.
- Our kitchens are not used as communal areas for staff. All staff understand the importance of keeping our kitchen and prep area(s) facilities clear, clean and safe.
- All utensils, crockery etc. are clean and stored appropriately.
- Waste food is disposed of daily.
- Cleaning materials and other dangerous materials are stored out of children's reach.
- Children are not to have access or be in the kitchen.
- When children take part in cooking activities, they:
 - are supervised at all times.
 - understand the importance of hand-washing and simple hygiene rules.
 - are kept away from hot surfaces and hot water.
 - do not have unsupervised access to electrical equipment, such as blenders etc.

Reporting of food poisoning

Food poisoning can occur for a number of reasons; not all cases of sickness or diarrhoea are as a result of food poisoning and not all cases of sickness or diarrhoea are reportable.

- Where children and/or adults have been diagnosed by a GP or hospital doctor to be suffering from food poisoning and where it seems possible that the source of the outbreak is within our setting, the manager will contact the Environmental Health Department to report the outbreak and will comply with any investigation.
- In the very unlikely event of any food poisoning affecting two or more children on the premises, whether or not this may arise from food offered at the nursery, we will inform Ofsted as soon as reasonably practical and in all cases within 14 days. We will also inform the relevant health agencies and follow any advice given.

Basic kitchen opening / closing checks and risk assessment template

- The kitchen (Daily Risk Assessment) form needs to be completed daily and is a requirement. Settings providing full meals should also use Safer Food Better Business opening and closing checks. Copies of this document is found on the 'OneDrive'.
- Staff enter their initial if satisfactory. Enter 'X' and initials if not satisfactory and make a note below. Add action taken and if problem is resolved sign and date.
- Management is required to sign and spot-check the working environment.

