

Food, Drink and Nutrition



Aim

It is our aim to encourage all children, parents and carers who attend the nursery to be healthy through healthy eating, suitable exercise and enjoyment of fresh air and their natural environment. Our overall aims link to the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), particularly the welfare requirements for food and drink.

We believe nutrition is a significant factor in the growth, development and overall functioning of a child. Good nutrition provides good levels of energy and increases concentration levels. With increased energy levels and the right nutrients, children are able to accomplish tasks, and can sustain and promote physical, emotional and cognitive development. Even mild hunger and undernutrition are barriers to learning.

This policy has evolved over time as the staff team has developed their skills and knowledge, with food and drink being a key area for review and reflection. Planning for activities consistently emphasises healthy eating, role modelling, and enhancing skills and knowledge among families. This is achieved through discussions, shared experiences, and information exchange between staff, adults, and children. We achieved our Healthy Tots award in 2025, which focuses on promoting healthy eating practices.

Food and Drinks including Menus

- Meals and snacks are planned to give a 3-week menu plan. Meals are designed to meet nutrition guidelines, provide healthy eating patterns, and help children establish good eating habits at an early age.
- When preparing our menus, we do not add salt or sugar to our recipes. The use of food products containing artificial sugars is kept to a minimum.
- Young children have high energy and nutrient needs but small stomachs, so they require frequent, small meals. Snacks and meals are scheduled to ensure they eat regularly. For instance, during the morning session, a mid-morning snack is offered between their breakfast and lunch, followed by a mid-afternoon snack which is offered between lunchtime and them going home.

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By: Abigail Maturi (Nursery Manager)

- Portion sizes are small to avoid children feeling overwhelmed, additional portions of food can then be added if the child would like more.
- Children are provided with drinks (water or milk) during snack time, and drinking water is accessible to both adults and children throughout the day. Drinks will be on a low level available to help children recognise their own needs from an early age and to encourage healthy habits related to staying hydrated. This supports their health, energy levels, mood, toileting, concentration, and overall learning. Squash and juice will be discouraged; if a parent wishes to bring this in, we will only refill with a parental request form.
- Milk is a good drink for 1-4 year olds, but it is also a 'food', and it is important that milk consumption is gradually reduced as food intake at meals and snacks increases. Whole cow's milk is suitable as a main drink for most children from 12 months of age. Semi-skimmed milk can be introduced gradually after the age of 2 years, provided that the child is a good eater and has a varied diet. Skimmed milk is not suitable as the main drink for children under 5 years of age.



Snack Provision for Children Under 12 Months

In line with NHS and Early Years nutrition guidance, snacks are generally not advised for children under 12 months, as younger babies typically receive the nutrition they need through milk feeds and main meals.

At our setting, we provide snack times as part of our daily routine for all children. This is because snack times offer valuable opportunities for exposure to a variety of foods, as well as supporting social interaction, independence, and participation in shared mealtimes with peers.

We carefully consider the foods offered to ensure they are age-appropriate and safe for younger children. However, we understand that some families may prefer their child under 12 months not to be offered snacks.

If you would prefer your child not to take part in snack times until they are older, you are very welcome to opt out, and practitioners will ensure this preference is respected.

Practitioner Involvement

- Practitioners set a good example of good table manners.
- Cultural differences in eating habits are respected.
- Children are encouraged to say 'Please' and 'Thank you' and give thanks for their food through mealtimes.
- Conversations are encouraged. Practitioners sit with children at lunch and snack time, offering them a small plate of the same food, which encourages good table manners and socialisation.
- Practitioners will only have healthy snacks and drinks in the rooms, modelling healthy eating practices.
- During snack and meal times, in accordance with the EYFS Statutory Framework, there will always be a practitioner present who holds a current and relevant Paediatric First Aid certificate.

Individual Dietary Requirements

- A record of dietary requirements, allergies and cultural guidelines is kept in the kitchen folder at all times and updated when necessary.

(See Catering for individual dietary requirements and Allergies policy)



Weaning Infants

- A record of dietary requirements, allergies and cultural guidelines are kept in the kitchen folder at all times and updated when necessary.

(See Weaning Infants policy)

Fussy Eaters

It is quite normal for an infant or child to refuse a food occasionally, especially when tasting new foods. Fussy eating and fear of new foods are part of development, affecting 10-20% of young children. It can take between 15-20 exposures (or offerings) before a child is willing to

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put a new food in their mouth. Do not worry about what your child eats in a day or if they do not eat everything at mealtimes. It's more helpful to think about what they eat over a week.

- Offering small portions can be more effective, allowing for second helpings if appropriate. We will start off offering small portions, even separating food to help encourage eating.
- Practitioners will consider possible reasons for the food refusal, such as drinking continually throughout the day, or frequent large snacks between meals, as both of these can reduce the appetite for main meals.
- A child will never be forced to eat, only encouraged.

Preparation/Handling Food

All snacks, meals and refreshments are prepared in the fully equipped and inspected nursery kitchen and baby room.

- All staff that are preparing and handling food hold (at least) **Level 2 Food Hygiene Certificate** which is updated every 3years.
- Food for snacks and meals are properly stored at the correct temperature appropriate for the type.
- The temperature of the fridge is checked in the morning, mid-day and evening and is recorded on a checklist situated on the fridge.
- The fridge must always be between 4°C and 8°C. The ideal temperature being 8°C.
- There are separate facilities for washing hands and washing food.
- All surfaces are non-porous and cleaned before and after use.
- All utensils are cleaned and stored appropriately
- Disposable gloves can be used when handling food alongside effective hand washing.
- Waste food is disposed of daily and taken to be composted when appropriate
- Cleaning materials and other hazardous materials are stored out of reach from children. Either in the high cupboards or in the storeroom.
- When children take part in any cooking activities, they are supervised closely to ensure safety and also hygiene requirements are met.
- When children and or/ staff have been diagnosed with food poisoning and where it is possible that the source of the outbreak is within the nursery, the manager will contact the Environmental Health Officer and report the outbreak and all circumstances

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surrounding the outbreak at the earliest opportunity. Full co-operation will be given to any investigations.

- If two or more children are diagnosed with food poisoning the manager will contact OFSTED to report the incident within 14days.
- Sausages are avoided due to the skin being a choking hazard.
- Mini marshmallows and grapes are avoided due to the risk of choking.
- Any fruit and vegetables will be cut into quarters lengthways. Hard fruits/vegetables will be boiled for younger babies.
- No nuts are allowed in the nursery. Signs are located on the front door reminding parents of this.

Storage

- Food that is in the fridge is kept in appropriate sealed containers. Any Childs food or specialist food for dietary requirements is stored in sealable zip-sandwich bags with the child' name written clearly.
- Food that is stored in the fridge or in the cupboards is regulated and checked to ensure that it is within its sell by date and use by date.
- Food that has been opened must be labelled on the date of opening and used within the recommended time frame according to the packaging. Kitchen staff will be responsible for disposing of food past these dates.
- Fruits and vegetables without a use-by date will be assessed based on their appearance and will be discarded if they show signs of spoilage.

1. Best Before Date:

- Indicates when a product is at its peak quality, flavour, and texture.
- Foods are still safe to eat after the "best by" date but may not taste as fresh or have the same quality.
- Commonly found on non-perishable items like canned goods, snacks, and dried foods.

2. Use By Date:

- Refers to the last date the food is considered safe to consume.
- After the "use by" date, the product may pose a safety risk due to potential spoilage or bacterial growth.
- Commonly seen on perishable items like meat, dairy, and prepared foods.

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In summary, the "best before" date is about quality, while the "use by" date is about safety. We will always check the "use by" date for perishable foods to avoid health risks.

Sources

<https://www.earlystartgroup.com/nutrition/>

<https://www.firststepsnutrition.org/eating-well-early-years>

[https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/weaning-and-feeding/fussy-](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/weaning-and-feeding/fussy-eaters/)

[eaters/https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework-2](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework-2)