

Mealtime Management Policy

Aim

Mealtimes at Nursery are a social time, whereby children will be grouped together in small social gatherings along with adults, to enjoy the nutritious food put before them. Positive interactions will be shared at these times and enjoyed by all.

We are committed to offering children healthy, nutritious, and balanced meals and snacks which meet individual needs and requirements.

Mealtimes

Mealtimes are a learning experience, from the fine motor development of using knives and forks, to awareness of good manners and politeness. Nursery mealtimes are a great opportunity for Key Persons to bond with their key child. It is a fundamental right that children should be provided with regular drinks and food, in adequate quantities to meet their needs, following the portion control documents.

Mealtimes are an important part of the child's day at the Nursery as there are numerous learning opportunities that can take place. Older children must be involved in the setting up and clearance procedures as it can help to promote social skills, a feeling of achievement and boost confidence. It is equally important for the staff to start conversations for children to recognise the different foods, to enable them to make healthy choices and allow them to explore new tastes and textures.

Our Nursery menus:

- are varied and nutritionally balanced.
- offer a balanced and healthy breakfast, midday meal, tea and two daily snacks for children attending a full day at the Nursery
- are planned in advance, rotated regularly and reflect cultural diversity and variation. They are displayed for children and parents/carers to view on the Chef's boards.
- provide nutritious food at all snack and mealtimes, avoiding large quantities of fat, sugar, salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings.
- include at least five servings of seasonal fresh fruit and vegetables per day, either as a snack or within the recipe.

Dietary requirements including allergies and Intolerances

A dietary requirement can be anything from an allergy, intolerance, or preference. Nursery Managers must ensure that all staff are informed of any children who have any food allergies or Intolerances and the **Dietary requirement Policy** is followed at all times.

Food poisoning

Nursery Managers must follow the **Serious/Major Incident Reporting Procedure (Appendix 33)** for any food poisoning affecting any child cared for on the premises. The notification to inform the Public Health and regulatory body, Ofsted must be actioned as soon as reasonably practical, but in any event, within 14 days of the incident.

Mealtime Procedure

- All tables to be used at mealtimes must be cleaned with hot soapy water and sanitised before children are seated. Children over three years must be encouraged to take part in the preparation for mealtimes, e.g. laying the table. It is important the correct sized tables and chairs should be used for each age group.
- All tables used for eating must have a tablecloth (which are clean and in good condition) on them. This should not be the same as the one used for arts and crafts.
- Ceramic crockery must be used with children over three years at all mealtimes, including snacks. Children under this age will use melamine crockery for all mealtimes.
- All crockery or melamine must be replaced when in a poor condition. All staff are responsible for checking and removing any inappropriate items.
- Staff must be respectful to the fact that the use of cutlery when eating may differ from culture to culture. For example, some children will be used to eating with their hands or with chopsticks at home, and may need sensitive encouragement to use a knife, fork and spoon.
- At Nursery, cutlery for the children should consist of:
 - Babies – fork and spoon. Dessert – a spoon
 - Toddlers – knife and fork. Dessert – a spoon (none to be plastic)
 - Pre-School, Pre-Prep – knife and fork. Dessert – a spoon (none to be plastic)

Under NO circumstance should any children be issued with only a fork.

- ALL children and staff MUST wash their hands before and after mealtimes and snack time. Children should understand the reasons for good hygiene practice at mealtimes, as this is a valuable learning opportunity. Use the dry wipes to clean babies' hands, these must be wet before use.
- Children over three years will participate in rolling snack which should be offered twice – once mid-morning and secondly during the middle of the afternoon. It will be available for a limited period of time in order for the food to remain fresh. Children will be reminded to visit the snack table. Snacks will be served alongside the planned or child-led play.
- Older children should not be stopped during play to participate in snack time but be encouraged over to the table.
- Pre-School/Pre-Prep children may be offered the opportunity to prepare their own food items during the rolling snack process. This should be carried out using

age appropriate utensils and the portion sizes discussed and encouraged with the children.

- Children must sit down when eating or drinking, preferably at a table, to avoid the risk of choking. If a picnic-style situation is used as an activity outside instead of the normal mealtime situation, then plates are still required, and only cold finger foods should be offered. The ceramic plates must not be used outside but instead be replaced with melamine crockery.
- It is not acceptable for children to be seated at tables more than five minutes before their meal is served. Appropriate activities such as singing, or story time should always be undertaken whilst children are waiting for their meal to be served. Key Persons must provide the appropriate activities to occupy the children whilst they are waiting.
- Children should be encouraged to make their own choices from the meal on offer to try new tastes and textures. Staff should be mindful that children can be put off a whole meal if there is something on the plate which they do not like or recognise. Likewise, some children do not like different foods on the plate to touch each other. Key Persons are responsible for encouraging children to explore different foods and creating a relaxed and social atmosphere at mealtimes.

Serving Food

- The food must be decanted from saucepans and some oven dishes used in the cooking process into smaller attractive serving dishes or bowls.
- Meals such as pies or lasagne, for example, may need to remain in the dish used during the cooking process because to decant it would spoil the appearance of the dish. These must be kept on a separate table or trolley away from the children.
- Never pour hot liquids such as soup or gravy at the table as this could splash on to a child's skin.
- At every mealtime, including snack, all food must be placed on plates or bowls and never directly on to the tables or tablecloths.
- ALL food should be cut into suitable sized pieces for the age or stage of development of the child – this includes fruit and vegetables. For children up to 24 months of age these items should be peeled then chopped to ensure a choking hazard is avoided. Children under 12 months should have blanched and peeled fruit only.
- Staff must offer support to children with special education needs and disabilities may need assistance with eating and drinking.
- Children must always be offered drinks with food and Pre-School or Pre-Prep children should be encouraged to pour water for themselves into their own cup from a jug on the table.
- Staff must sit with the children and interact and, staff may be served a small portion of the same meal as the children to encourage and assist children to enjoy and eat their meal. This does not apply to the baby rooms where staff should not eat while feeding the babies as the time must be dedicated to the babies' needs.
- Staff who are supervising any children with an allergy or intolerance must not eat any food during mealtimes.

- Under no circumstances should staff take this opportunity to eat their own food, brought from home, with the children.
- Staff must not walk around whilst eating. All staff must be sat down with the children whilst one member of staff is the floater.
- Food must never be forced on a child and children must not be reprimanded for not eating food.
- Food must not be withheld as a punishment.
- If a child refuses their whole meal, a suitable alternative can be offered. In the case of a child continually refusing food, staff must alert the Nursery Manager so that communication with parents/carers can be arranged.
- All children must always be supervised throughout mealtimes and snacks. Any children with red plate allergies or Intolerance must be supervised in line with the **Dietary Requirement Policy**.
- If required, nurseries can use the **Meal Intake Form (Appendix 34)** to record the child's eating patterns and needs.
- Parents/carers must always be informed in the unlikely event that their child eats any restricted foods. The child's welfare must be treated with their **Critical Care Plan (HS66)** firstly and the Nursery Manager must follow the **Serious/Major Incident Reporting Procedure (Appendix 33)**.
- Any food that is left over must be thrown away when the mealtime is complete.
- It is extremely important that all food debris is cleaned away thoroughly after meal/snack times to avoid any child with an allergy or intolerance coming into contact with restricted foods. Encourage children to move to a different part of the room whilst cleaning takes place.

Checking the Temperature of Children's Food

- The Chef and staff must allow time for the food to cool sufficiently in the kitchen so that it is safe for the children to eat.
- The temperature of the food should always be tested before feeding to children.
- To test the temperature of the food, a staff member should use a small teaspoon of the food taken from the centre of either an individual portion or the centre of the serving dish and place the back of their finger into the small amount of food on the teaspoon. The spoon should not then be used for serving the children. Staff must be mindful that what appears warm to an adult may still be hot to a child, so if in doubt, allow it to cool further.
- Staff must not blow on children's' food or place it under a fan. Food must not be left by an open window to cool either.

Food from home

Under no circumstances must parents be permitted to bring food from home. We need to be able to trace all food to point of source and be fully aware of all the ingredients in our foods to support and protect children with food allergies.

Drinking Water

It is a requirement of the EYFS 2017, that fresh drinking water must be available and accessible at all times. Fresh drinking water, which is separate from water facilities within toilets, must always be available to all children and offered at regular intervals

or on request. The children in the baby room, under 12 months, must only be given cooled, boiled water.

- All children must always have access to fresh drinking water.
- A designated area should be provided for a drinking station with pictorial references at the children's height.
- Where water dispensers or jugs (with lids) are used, these must be changed regularly, cleaned and maintained. Water jugs must not be filled up to the top as young children will be unable to lift them by themselves and we MUST encourage independence as far as practically possible.

Staff Drinks

Staff must only drink water while in the children's rooms. The staff drinks bottle must be stored within the fresh drinking water designated area and be clearly labelled with the staff's name.

Birthdays and Celebrations

Parents are not permitted to bring food from home. We need to be able to trace all food to point of source and be fully aware of all the ingredients in our foods. The only exceptions are birthday / celebration cakes.

Birthday / celebration cakes must be shop bought, in date and be labelled to clearly show any allergens. Once the children have had their celebration with their friends, the cake is then to be left in the vicinity of the office (or other suitable designated place) kitchen and parents are signposted to the kitchen to take a piece of cake for their children if they would like it. Napkins or food wrap must be made available by the Nursery for the hygienic transportation of the cake to home.