

Food and Drink Policy

Statement of intent

This nursery 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 have regard for the Governments 'Eat Better, Start Better' guidelines.

Aim

At snack and mealtimes, we aim to provide nutritious food which meets the children's individual dietary needs. We aim to meet the full requirements of Ofsted's Standards on Food and Drink. Fresh water is available throughout the day. Our menus follow the Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance (April 2025).

Methods

- ★ Before a child starts nursery, their Key person will work with the parents to find out their child's dietary needs, including any allergies. Where there is a specific dietary need due to an allergy, a letter from a Doctor or Health Visitor may be requested.
- ★ We record information about each child's dietary needs in his/her registration record and parents sign the record to confirm that it is correct.
- ★ Health Care Plans will be written where needed, using advice from The British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology (BSACI) where staff think this may be helpful.
- ★ We regularly consult with parents to ensure that our records of their child's dietary needs, including any allergies, are up to date. Parents sign the updated record to confirm that it is correct.
- ★ We discreetly display pictorial information about individual children's dietary needs so that all staff and volunteers are fully informed about them.
- ★ The Key person is responsible for ensuring their key children are added to the pictorial information displayed in each room and in the kitchen.
- ★ The Key person will meet with the cook so that she/he is fully informed, and that all staff working in the nursery room are aware of the child's needs.
- ★ We implement systems to ensure that children only receive food and drink which is consistent with their dietary needs. We work with parents to support children with any dislikes or phases linked to food.

"Children may need 15-20 exposures before they are willing to try new and rejected foods."

Edwina Revel and Georgia Leech, Early Years Educator 2018

- ★ Menus are planned to ensure that we supply a range of foods from each food group over the course of a week. We include the following elements in meals which are offered:
 - protein for growth, and
 - essential minerals and vitamins in raw foods, salads and fruits.
- ★ Cakes and biscuits are home-made and only given in a small portion as a desert after lunch or tea. Where we use jam, jelly or milky dessert mixes, low sugar options are purchased. We do not use salt in our cooking.
- ★ We provide food in small portions across a nursery day so that the children are regularly refuelling, rather than eating large adult sized meals. The 'Eat Better, Start Better' guidance states:

'It is important that the food and drink provided for children is balanced across each day. The food and drink guidelines divide energy and nutritional requirements across meals and snacks provided during full day care in the following proportions:

- breakfast 20%
- mid-morning snack 10%
- lunch 30%
- mid-afternoon snack 10%

- tea 20%.

This leaves 10% for an additional drink or snack at home in evening.'

- ★ We display the menus of meals/snacks on our website and on Tapestry.
- ★ We talk to children about the importance of drinking water. We have fresh drinking water constantly available for our children. We let the children know how to obtain water and that they can ask for it at any time during the session/day. A choice of milk or water is offered at snack time. A choice of water or diluted fruit juice is offered at mealtimes only.
- ★ We aim to include foods from the diet of each of the children's cultural backgrounds, providing children with familiar foods and introducing them to new ones.
- ★ Through discussion with parents and research reading 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 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.
- ★ 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 which are appropriate for their ages and stages of development, and which take account of the eating practices in their cultures.
- ★ For parents who provide food for their children, we inform them about the storage facilities available in the nursery.
- ★ We give parents who provide food for their children information about suitable containers for food.
- ★ We have rules about children sharing and swapping their food with one another to protect children with food allergies.
- ★ For children who drink milk, we provide whole and semi-skimmed milk.
- ★ For each child under two, we provide parents with daily written information about feeding routines, intake and preferences.
- ★ For children under two years old who are weaning, we work closely with parents to ensure that food is prepared in a suitable consistency, bearing in mind that food is developed to the child's individual development needs, not just age and stage. Any information passed to the team will be recorded in the child's Passport for easy reference.
- ★ Children under two years old are always sat in a low chair for their main meals. Staff will minimise distractions at these times and always supervise children while they eat.
- ★ We offer advice on foods we prepare which may contain any of the 14 listed allergens as directed by the Foods Standards Agency.
- ★ We offer advice for parents who may choose to provide food for their children. This advice is based on the Government's 'Eat Better, Start Better' guidance.
- ★ We have a risk assessment around food play. It covers allergies and choking, suitability of resources and the supervision required for this kind of activity.
- ★ All **Once upon a time** staff are Paediatric First Aid trained, so at all mealtimes there is a first aider available.
- ★ Staff position themselves so they are facing the children while they eat.

Healthy smiles

At **Once upon a time** part of our promoting healthy eating with our families is to support tooth brushing and low sugar diets. Research shows too much sugar in children's diets, mixed with poor dental hygiene, will result in children's teeth needing dental treatment due to decay.

Our cooks actively look for options with low or no sugar. Cakes and biscuits are only offered as a pudding following a main meal and part of a healthy balanced diet. These will be served as home-made bakes in very small portions.

We also understand that this is about a healthy balanced diet. So, treats are allowed, periodically, for special occasions.

Some of these occasions are:

Birthdays

Some of our parents opt to bring in a Birthday cake on their child's birthday to share with their class. Our procedure would be, if the cake is home-made, to always ask for a list of ingredients, so that our teams can check its suitability for children with allergies. If it is a shop bought cake, then ingredients are usually displayed on the box. We would offer a piece of cake to children as part of a meal, either at lunch time or teatime replacing their usual pudding.

Last day at nursery

Some parents also bring in small bags of sweets for birthdays or when a child is leaving nursery for school, if this is the case, we always send the packet of sweets home with the children so that parents can choose when it is a suitable time for their child to eat their sweets.

Trips and outings

When we attend trips and outings where we provide food, healthy options are provided as picnics, however there may be times where we have a treat such as an ice cream.

Christmas parties or special events

At children's parties or special events such as street parties, we will choose to serve healthy options, but will also have some traditional party food available.

Fundraising and charity events

From time to time we hold fundraising events where there may be a cake or sweet stall. These times are seen as family inclusion days and an important part of social interactions.

All the things listed above are about balance. We want to teach the children that regular healthy options are best for their bodies and their teeth, but we can have a treat for special occasions if we brush our teeth well and take good care of them.

This policy was adopted by Once upon a time nursery school

Date: 24 September 2007

And updated: 1 September 2025

Signed on behalf of the nursery

To be reviewed: Annually or sooner if any matters arise