Meal times and Healthy Eating

A good balanced diet is vital for children to develop healthily along with fresh air and regular exercise.

**Nursery meals**

We are happy to provide all children in our care with healthy meals, snacks and drinks, or to cook/serve food provided by their parents.

Snack time - toast/bagels/crumpets or similar and fruit (we will offer alternatives if necessary)

Lunch – we work on a 5 week rolling bases with our menus. These have details of any allergens which may be present, if your child is allergic to any of the ingredients we will substitute where possible and keep the meal the same, in the rare case this isn’t possible an alternative meal may be offered. We do occasionally change meals e.g. if time is short a roast may have boiled rather than roasted potatoes however we do not change allergens on offer. On special occasions, we may offer alternatives e.g. party food at the end of term. We will check all allergens beforehand in line with our records to ensure we will not offer food to children who may be allergic. We will notify all parents of menu changes in advance.

**Food from Home**

If you want to supply food for your child for consumption on the premises, you must be aware of food hygiene when preparing packed lunches or snacks. This includes checking dates for consumption of both dried and perishable foods, and correct storage of food items when sent to the setting. As consumption of all food on our premises, inclusive of packed lunches provided by parents, is ultimately our responsibility, the following must be observed at all times. Please can you label your child’s lunch with any allergens which may be present, these will be listed on the packaging your food came from. Any perishable foods inclusive of dairy and meat products must be identified and labelled with your child's name. These will then be stored in the refrigerator until required.
Any food not consumed by your child will be discarded on the same day, subject to conditions below:
Any foods beyond their use-by date will not be given to your child, as they cannot be stored on the premises, they will be discarded and you will be informed.
Food brought to the setting to meet your child's specific dietary requirements can only be stored on a weekly basis and must be collected at the end of the week.
We encourage children to choose healthy options and to experiment by trying new foods from other cultures. Older children are encouraged to help in the preparation of food and meals. We are happy to cater for children with different food allergies and cultural/religious requirements. If your child has any particular dislikes or favourite dishes please let me know.
We are happy to support you if you are weaning your baby. We will supply a blender and are willing to make puréed dishes if required.
We do not permit children to have fizzy drinks. Children are offered water, milk (full-fat or semi-skimmed unless requested differently). Fruit juices or squash if they will not drink an alternative is offered especially in the summer months however to protect teeth we try to limit these drinks to meal times.
We do not encourage children to eat sweets or chocolate on a regular basis, however we do sometimes offer these for special occasions, e.g. children may have a small chocolate egg at Easter. Please let us know what, of any sweets you permit your child to eat. We will also take into account the home routine i.e. if you like to give your child sweets/chocolate on collection as a treat we won't offer it within the setting.
Please note no child in my setting will go without. Whilst we will try our best to work in partnership with you and your child and promote healthy eating habits if a child attends with no suitable food (e.g. out of date or forgotten) we will try to contact you but if we can't we will provide meals within any dietary limitations we are aware of. Also a child will not be asked to go without drink because they are limited to water. We have often heard the theory 'They will drink if they are thirsty/eat if they are hungry'. In our experience children are capable of being incredibly stubborn if they so choose and you cannot make them do anything as such we will offer them what they like plus healthy food/drink options and continue with heavy praise when they select healthily.

Children who arrive after meal times should be fed before they arrive. We prefer that children do not bring food, drinks, etc. from home unless requested or previously arranged as this can cause argument amongst children. Standard formula can be provided for infants (e.g. SMA and Cow + Gate.) Breast milk will need to be provided for breast fed infants, this can be stored in the fridge or freezer. It is our belief that babies should be fed on demand. If parents have another feeding schedule in mind, we will need to discuss your routine, so that the babies’ needs are adequately met. Any food containers brought into the house will be sprayed with antibac and wiped and stored in line with Government guidance.

Before a child is admitted I will obtain information about any special dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies, and any special health requirements. I will detail any allergens that are present in the food that I prepare for children in accordance with EU Information for Consumers Regulation 2014 and share this with parents/carers

I will list any allergens in ingredients that are present in any food that I produce, as well as being aware when I take children out to eat at other settings. All registered food businesses have to comply with the legislation so I will make sure I am aware of any allergens contained and make this part of my risk assessment.

I will collect, record and act on information from parents about a child’s dietary needs

If your child has allergies and requires a modified diet, we must be notified of this in writing. We will need to have written instructions describing any foods the child is required to avoid from a doctor (where possible). An appropriate substitution will be made, if possible, but if a child has so many allergies that (s)he cannot eat from our menu, we may require the parents to provide his/her lunch and snacks. Any food provided from home will be stored in the fridge and if it is to be served warm it will be heated until it is steaming hot throughout.

We never force a child to finish what is on his/her plate, but we do encourage each child to try one or two bites of everything. Sometimes they are surprised by what they like! If a child refuses to eat their meal, there will be no food served until the next designated meal/snack time, however we do our best to ensure children all have food they will eat even if substitutions have to made and children are offered bananas after lunch as they are filling. All eating patterns will be communicated to the parents.

**Brief meal guide and timetable**

9:30 am Morning snack (fruit, rice cakes, toast etc and milk or water)
1/1:30 pm Lunch (this will be a cooked meal, e.g. roast we will occasionally have sandwiches, salad and celebrate special days e.g. we had a cream tea for the queens birthday etc)

This is just a brief example of possible meal ideas and times. Children are provided with their own cups/beakers and these will be refilled throughout the day either if we notice they are empty or if a child requests, until the child is old enough to help themselves. At such a time as they can help themselves there is a water dispenser and beakers available. Please note if your child arrives after mealtimes we would ask for them to be fed as this can cause confusion with other children e.g. a child arriving at 1:30 would need to have already have lunch.

**Health and Hygiene**

I will also provide children with clean and age-appropriate crockery and eating utensils. I will ensure children’s plates, cutlery and cups are not shared and are cleaned and disinfected regularly. I ensure tables are disinfected before and after meals as well as the tablecloths being washed between sessions. We will ensure that no more than 4 children are sitting round a table at any one time to aid distancing.

I will respect the diversity of practice around mealtimes e.g. use of chopsticks or fingers for eating, while following appropriate hygiene practices.

I will provide children with healthy meals, snacks and drinks as appropriate and recommended by the Food Standards Agency literature. Children will be able to serve their own snacks. I will ensure fresh drinking water is available at all times, both in and outside my setting. I will also ensure children do not share drinking cups.

As a provider of meals and snacks I am aware of my responsibilities under food hygiene legislation. This includes, if necessary, registration with the relevant Local Authority Environmental Health Department. If this is the case then I am happy to have my premises inspected by a food safety officer. We currently hold a 5 star rating.

I will ensure suitable sterilisation equipment is used for babies’ food.

I will keep pets out of the food preparation area at all times or locked in an appropriate crate with no access to worktops. I will ensure that all work surfaces and cooking utensils have been thoroughly cleaned before any food preparation or food handling takes place.

Baby changing facilities are not be near food preparation areas and anyone who undertakes nappy changes will wear an apron before preparing food.

I will ensure that I, and everyone caring for children, as well as the children themselves, are aware of good hand washing procedures and how these are carried out.

If there is an outbreak of food poisoning affecting two or more children looked after on my premises I will notify Ofsted as soon as possible but definitely within 14 days of the incident occurring in order to comply with regulations.

Staff handling food prep are fully trained in safe hygiene practices and at least one member of staff holds a valid food safety certificate