



Healthy Eating and Nutrition Policy

Statement of Intent

We are committed to promoting the health and well-being of all children. We recognise the importance of a nutritious diet in the early years and this policy outlines our approach to food, drink and mealtimes within our settings.

This policy has been written in line with the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework. The setting is committed to building a 'culture of safety' in which children are protected from abuse and harm in all areas of its service delivery. It provides a framework for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children who attend our setting.

Aims

The setting regards snack and mealtimes as an important opportunity to promote positive social interactions and healthy lifestyles and well-being to the children in our care and help them to develop appropriate social manners. Nutrition is about eating a healthy and balanced diet with food and drink providing the energy and nutrients you need to be healthy and we aim to meet the requirements of [Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance](#).

We aim to meet the requirements of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework in providing healthy, balanced, varied and nutritious food, which meets the children's individual dietary and religious needs and encourage children to make healthy choices. We request that parents supply healthy and nutritious food snacks, and we keep parents informed about healthy packed lunch requirement and work in partnership with parents and carers to support healthy eating.

We will use opportunities such as cultural celebrations, mealtimes, online record keeping, parent emails, parent's evenings and outings, to promote healthy nutrition as part of a whole setting approach to healthier eating.

Healthy Eating and Nutrition Procedure

Before a child starts attending the setting, we find out from parents their child's dietary needs and preferences, including allergies. In the case of food allergies, a separate Food Allergy Healthcare form should be completed and signed by the parent/carer detailing the child's needs and medication requirements.

Parents/carers record information about each child's dietary needs on her/his enrolment form and sign the form to signify that it is correct.

We regularly consult with parents to ensure that our records of their children's dietary needs, including any allergies are up to date and appropriate forms are signed.

We record information about individual children's needs for snack and mealtimes so that all staff and volunteers are fully informed about which foods or drinks children are unable to consume. This information is stored in the snack/lunch area, accessible only to staff and volunteers.

We have systems in place to ensure that children receive only food and drink that is consistent with their dietary needs and preferences as well as their parents' wishes.

We have a strict **NO NUTS** food policy and take care not to provide food containing nuts or nut products. We are especially vigilant where we have a child who has a known allergy to nuts.

We ask that no nuts are put in lunch boxes and no peanut butter used in sandwiches.

Through discussion with parents and research reading by staff, we obtain information about the dietary rules of 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 drink.

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 use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink and feeding themselves. We organise meal and snack times so that they are social occasions in which children and staff participate. Children are encouraged to try new foods and there is an agreed approach to managing fussy eating.

We provide children with utensils that are appropriate for their ages and stages of development.

We have fresh drinking water freely available for the children. They can independently serve themselves using the jug and cups available. The jug is refilled as necessary.

We inform parents who provide food for their children about the storage facilities available in the setting and we provide information about suitable containers for food storage and hygiene.

In order to protect children with food allergies, we do not allow children to share and swap their food with one another at lunchtime.

For children who drink milk, we provide whole pasteurised milk.

Parents /carers can provide alternative milk e.g., soya/goats, as required.

For each child under two, we provide parents with daily written information about feeding routines and food/milk intake.

Providing healthy, balanced, and nutritious food is essential to support children's rapid growth and development. During these formative years, children require the right mix of nutrients and

energy to thrive physically and cognitively. Early experiences with food play a crucial role in shaping lifelong eating habits, so it is important to create a positive environment that encourages healthy choices and fosters a love for nutritious foods.

Safer Eating Procedure

During snack and mealtimes, a member of staff will remain present with a valid paediatric first aid certificate.

We will discuss with parents/carers about special dietary requirements, preferences, food allergies and intolerances and maintain a dietary/allergy list which is checked before each session. This information will be shared with all staff involved in the preparation and handling of food. We will be clear about who is responsible for checking that the food being provided meets the requirement for each child.

We will continually liaise with parents/carers where appropriate health professionals to develop allergy action plans for managing any known allergies and intolerances. The information will be updated and shared with all staff.

We aim to meet the requirements of the British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology (BSACI) allergy action plan.

Staff will receive Paediatric First aid training and will be made aware of symptoms and treatments for allergies and anaphylaxis, the difference between allergies and intolerances and that children can develop allergies anytime. In accordance with NHS advice on food allergies – Food allergy – NHS (www.nhs.uk) and the treatment of anaphylaxis – Anaphylaxis – NHS (www.nhs.uk).

We will have ongoing discussions with parents/carers regarding the introduction of solid foods, assumptions will not be made based on age, but in accordance with each child's individual needs and working with parents/carers to help children move on the next stage. In accordance with Weaning – Start for Life NHS (www.nhs.uk).

- Age-appropriate food will be served (e.g., grapes sliced lengthwise, hard foods avoided).
- Children will be seated while eating—no running or playing during mealtime.
- Supervision will be provided at all times during eating.
- Staff will be trained on foods that pose a choking risk (e.g., whole grapes, popcorn, nuts, hard candy).

If a child experiences choking we will inform parents/carers immediately after any choking incident, complete an incident report, review and evaluate the incident to determine if changes in practice are needed.

We will follow guidance on food safety and preparation – Help for early years providers – GOV.UK, which includes advice on food and drink to avoid, how to reduce the risk of choking and links to other useful resources.

Commitment to the Nourishing Our Future Award

Our setting is committed to achieving and maintaining the standards set out in the *Essex Early Years Nourishing Our Future Award (NOF Award)*. This award recognises best practice in promoting healthy eating and nutrition in early years settings. We work to ensure our menus, mealtime environments, and food education activities meet the award's criteria, supporting children's health, growth, and lifelong positive relationships with food. By embedding the NOF Award principles into our daily practice, we aim to provide a consistent, nurturing, and inclusive approach to healthy eating for all children in our care.

Food Brought from Home

In line with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework and the Eat Better, Start Better guidance, we encourage all families to provide healthy, balanced, and nutritious meals and snacks for their children when food is brought from home. Foods should support children's growth, development, and overall wellbeing, and we ask that sugary drinks, confectionery, and foods high in fat, sugar, or salt are avoided. We promote a healthy eating environment and aim to work in partnership with parents and carers to support good nutrition habits from an early age. All food brought from home must be clearly labelled and in suitable containers, and we are unable to heat food for safety reasons. Due to allergies, we also request that no nuts or nut-based products are included in packed lunches.

Snack Time

As children will be hungry at different times, we offer a rolling snack café, the children have a choice of when they would like to eat and snack time becomes an integrated activity within the session, incorporating many of the transferable Montessori skills.

We organise snack times so that they are social occasions in which children and staff participate and by sharing, helping each other and taking turns, especially when new to the group, the children will learn and improve their social skills. We use snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink and feeding themselves. The social and independence skills the children have learnt will ease their transition to primary school.

We have a designated snack area with a daily opening and closing time to ensure that children are hungry at lunchtime and while it is important not to interrupt the children's play, some children may need a gentle reminder that the snack bar is about to close.

We always have a member of staff to help prepare snack with the children (with due care given to hygiene) and provide support for the children with self-service routine and tidying away.

We maintain a dietary/allergy list which is checked before each session and those foods removed from the snack area by staff. We cannot guarantee that snacks provided by parents will be given to their child or used that day due to other children's allergy/dietary requirements.

For snack time, we kindly ask parents to bring in an item of fruit, vegetables or carbohydrates, such as breadsticks, for children to share with their friends at snack time.

For children who drink milk, we provide whole pasteurised milk.

We have fresh drinking water freely available for the children. They can independently serve themselves using the jug and cups available. The jug is refilled as necessary.

Snack preparation

It is important to remember usual hygiene precautions:

- Separate cleaning cloths, utensils should be available
- The area of the kitchen where snack is to be prepared should be clean and tidy
- The snack table should be cleaned before and after use
- The children should wash their hands before handling food and eating snack
- After snack all cups etc. should be washed in hot soapy water and stored in a clean location.
- Each day all utensils, cutlery, glasses and plates should be washed thoroughly in hot soapy water or in a dishwasher.

School lunches

We provide daily hot lunches as well as hot or cold light teas through our onsite kitchen and cooks. Meals and snacks are planned using evidence-based age-appropriate national best practice food and drink guidelines and the menus for meals and snacks are planned for a week or more to include different tastes, colours and textures, are seasonal, sustainable and minimise impact on the environment and will be a combination of healthy savoury and sweet food.

Menus are shared (e.g., notice boards, website, face book) to ensure parents/carers know what is provided. The more children are encouraged to try new foods, the wider range of nutrients they will get from their meals.

Our daily meals and snacks are thoughtfully planned to include a balanced variety of foods from the four main food groups, supporting children's individual nutritional needs. While children's dietary requirements differ from those of adults, it is important to provide a healthy, balanced diet from the early stages of introducing solid foods. Mealtimes are a social occasion where children sit together in a relaxed and supportive environment. This not only encourages positive eating habits but also helps children develop confidence to try new foods, including those they may not usually experience at home.

We ensure that all food is prepared appropriately to minimise any risk of choking.

Menu guidance

We provide a well-balanced and nutritious menu that supports children's health and development, in line with the EYFS framework. Our meals include a variety of fruits and vegetables, starchy carbohydrates, dairy or plain, fortified plant-based alternatives, and sources of protein. We ensure that children are introduced to a range of different foods, textures, tastes, and colours to encourage positive eating habits. Nutritional value and age-appropriate portion sizes are carefully considered. Children are offered milk or water to drink, and we limit foods high in saturated fat, salt, and sugar to promote healthy choices and overall well-being.

We follow the Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance to support children’s healthy eating and focus on using locally sourced, seasonal ingredients wherever possible, with an emphasis on healthy eating and allergen awareness. We ensure a well-balanced and nutritious offering throughout the day that caters to diverse dietary needs while celebrating fresh, regional produce.

Food and drink guidelines

Food	Guideline
<p>Fruit and vegetables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh, frozen, tinned or dried fruit and vegetables • Pulses such as lentils and beans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each main meal, and some snacks, will include at least one portion of fruit or vegetables (excluding dried fruit). • A wide variety of fruits and vegetables will be offered throughout the day and across the week, with seasonal options provided wherever possible. • Foods such as baked beans will be limited to once per week. Dried fruit will not be served as a snack but may be included as part of a main meal. • We will avoid fruits in syrup and ensure that tinned vegetables and pulses are free from added salt and sugar, choosing low-salt, low-sugar alternatives or products tinned in water.
<p>Starchy carbohydrates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bread • Potatoes, sweet potatoes and other starchy root vegetables • Pasta and noodles • Rice and other grains • Breakfast cereals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A portion of starchy food will be included in each main meal (breakfast, lunch, and tea) every day. • Plain starchy foods, such as unsalted savoury crackers or unsweetened rice or corn cakes, will be provided as part of at least one snack each day. • At least three different types of starchy foods will be offered across breakfast, snacks, lunch, and tea each week. • Wholegrain starchy foods will be included in at least one breakfast, lunch, and tea each week. <p>Foods provided will be low in salt and sugar. Starchy fried foods will be limited to once per week, and flavoured dried rice, pasta, and noodles will not be used.</p>

Proteins <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beans, pulses and nuts • Meat and poultry • Fish and shellfish • Eggs • Meats alternatives 	<p>A portion of protein will be provided as part of lunch and tea each day, using a variety of protein sources.</p> <p>At least one meal each week will be provided which uses beans, lentils, pulses, or meat alternatives as the protein source.</p> <p>Children following a vegan or vegetarian diet will be provided with a variety of protein sources such as beans, pulses and meat alternatives.</p> <p>Fish is served weekly and processed meat products are limited to once a week due to high saturated fat and salt content.</p>
For all foods	<p>Foods high in saturated fat, salt, sugar, and artificial sweeteners will be avoided. A diet rich in locally sourced proteins, fruits, and vegetables will be encouraged, with seasonal produce used wherever possible.</p>
Drinks	<p>Children will have access to milk and water throughout the day.</p>

Lunch time menu examples: -

Roast chicken tikka masala with boiled rice and green beans
 Fresh fruit salad (apple, banana, pear)
 Water and milk

Spinach pesto pasta with peas
 Natural yogurt and fresh berries
 Water and milk

Butternut squash macaroni cheese with corn on the cob
 Sliced orange or melon
 Water and milk

Menus are carefully planned with consideration for children's ages and nutritional needs. We aim to incorporate a variety of foods while taking into account any children with special dietary requirements. Meals and snacks are balanced and include a range of fruits, vegetables, proteins, whole grains, and dairy, in line with Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) nutrition guidance. We limit foods high in sugar, salt, and saturated fat, and encourage children to try new foods and develop healthy eating habits.

Packed Lunches

Please see Packed Lunch Policy for guidance.

If parents opt to bring in a packed lunch for your child, please clearly label all lunch boxes, food containers, with the child's full name.

Food brought from home is appropriately labelled and stored. Parents are advised to pack children's packed lunches in insulated bags with freezer blocks. Healthy eating advice is given to parents on the types of food brought in from home.

We encourage parents to provide sandwiches with a healthy filling, a piece of fruit, and milk-based desserts such as yoghurt.

We ask you to NOT include sweet drinks, crisps, processed foods, snackable packet food, sweet products such as cakes or biscuits or fruit processed snacks. We will return food to parents if it is inappropriate and will offer the children an alternative.

We provide children who bring packed lunches with plates, cups and cutlery to use at mealtimes. During mealtimes children sit with a member of staff to encourage a positive eating experience and appropriate table manners. The setting will provide milk and water throughout the day

We follow Healthy Food guidelines. Please find outlined the “dos” and “don’ts” for packed lunches.

As this can be a complex issue, please do not hesitate to contact us with any queries. We will be happy to advise you, but information can be found in our **Packed Lunch Policy**.

Guidance from birth to 1 year

In the first year, babies follow their own individual feeding and sleeping patterns. We will work in close partnership with parents and/or carers to understand each baby’s current routines and will follow these as closely and consistently as possible.

Our setting will support parents and carers who wish to continue breastfeeding, and we encourage them to bring expressed breast milk for their baby while attending the setting.

When preparing formula, our staff will always practice strict hygiene. Staff will:

- Wash their hands thoroughly before preparation.
- Ensure all bottles, teats, and equipment are properly sterilised.
- Follow the manufacturer’s instructions carefully.

We are aware that powdered infant formula is not sterile. Therefore, formula will always be prepared with freshly boiled water that has been left to cool for no longer than 30 minutes. This ensures the water remains at a temperature of at least 70°C to kill harmful bacteria. Prepared formula will then be cooled to a safe feeding temperature before being offered to the baby.

For further guidance, staff and parents can refer to **NHS Start for Life**, which provides detailed advice on making up infant formula and sterilising feeding equipment.

<https://www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/baby/feeding-your-baby/bottle-feeding/how-to-make-up-a-feed/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/baby/feeding-your-baby/bottle-feeding/how-to-make-up-a-feed/how-to-sterilise-equipment/>

Weaning is a key stage in a baby’s development, typically beginning around 6 months of age, in line with NHS and EYFS nutrition guidance. We understand that babies develop at different rates and at our setting, we support this process by introducing a variety of healthy, age-appropriate solid foods alongside breastmilk or formula. We see weaning not only as a nutritional milestone but also as an important learning opportunity. Through exploring new tastes, textures, and feeding routines, babies develop sensory awareness, coordination, and independence. We encourage babies to self-feed where appropriate, helping to build fine motor skills and

confidence. Staff are trained to respond to each baby's individual cues and needs, creating a calm and supportive mealtime environment. We work closely with parents and carers to ensure consistency, respect cultural preferences, and accommodate any allergies or dietary requirements, providing a positive and inclusive weaning experience.

Introducing a baby to solid foods is sometimes called complementary feeding or weaning, this should start when a baby is around 6 months old. We will work together with parents to support their child through weaning.

All foods prepared are prepared from scratch, avoiding commercial baby foods. Babies first foods can simply be pureed vegetables or fruit, gradually increasing the amounts and the variety of different food groups, fruit and vegetables, grain foods, protein, milk and milk products.

We undertake the importance to gradually introduce different textures during weaning. Start up with purees slightly thicker over time, then move on to mashed vegetables or fruits. When your baby is ready, offer easy-to-grasp finger foods like thin sticks of cheese or bread, soft-cooked vegetables, or banana batons. We let babies explore food with their hands and play with different textures—it's a key part of learning to eat. We always ensure foods are cut to an appropriate size for your child's age and stage of development to help prevent choking.

We will work closely with parents/carers about common food allergens that have been introduced at home. These foods need to be introduced one at a time and in very small amounts to spot any reaction.

Following Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance, (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-nutrition>) it is recommended that babies from 6 months only drink breast milk, first infant formula and water. Water will always be available, babies will be offered sips of water during mealtimes.

Building healthy eating habits for children states when solid foods are introduced, introducing a balance of nutrients means children will have all they need for growth and development. Introducing a variety of tastes and textures helps to ensure good habits later in life.

Nutrition Guidance for Babies (EYFS Aligned):

In line with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) nutrition standards, we ensure that all food provided for babies is safe, age-appropriate, and supports healthy development. Our approach includes:

- No added salt: Babies require a low-salt diet to protect their kidneys. We do not add salt to any food we prepare.
- Avoid sugary snacks: To help prevent tooth decay and establish healthy eating habits, sugary snacks are not offered.
- Excluding foods high in saturated fat, salt, and sugar: These can negatively impact a baby's health and are avoided.
- Preventing choking risks: Foods that pose a choking hazard (e.g., whole grapes, hard foods, popcorn, etc.) are not served.
- Honey is avoided as it can contain bacteria (*Clostridium botulinum*) that may make babies unwell.

- We avoid unpasteurised cheese, cheese made from unpasteurised milk may contain listeria, which poses a risk to babies' health and is therefore not provided,
- Raw and lightly cooked egg, ice drinks, slush ice drinks and raw or lightly cooked shellfish which may cause food poisoning (e.g. mussels, clams and oysters)

Policy Review

We will include guidance for parents in our prospectus.

The policy is available on the setting website, in the setting handbook and on the Parenting Hub.

All staff are aware of this policy and will support its implementation.

The following procedures and documentation in relation to this policy

Food and Drink Policy

Packed Lunch Policy

Risk Assessment

Food and Allergy

Health and Safety

Baby Feeding

EYFS 2025 – New Safeguarding Reforms

Essex Early Years Nourishing Our Future Award (NOF Award) - <https://nourishingourfuture.co.uk/>

Department for Education – Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework, July 2025

Department for Education – Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance, May 2025
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6839b752210698b3364e86fc/Early_years_foundation_stage_nutrition_guidance.pdf