

Mealtime & Dietary Policy



Policy Statement

Mealtimes are an important part of the nursery day and provide valuable opportunities for children's social, emotional and physical development. Early Years Nursery Uxbridge is committed to promoting healthy eating and providing nutritionally balanced meals that meet each child's individual needs and dietary requirements.

Within this policy, the term "meals" includes all food, drinks, formula and bottles provided to children during their time at the nursery.

The nursery recognises the importance of nutrition in supporting children's growth, health and wellbeing. The nursery follows the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) nutrition guidance and takes this into account when planning and providing food.

We value opportunities for children to learn about food as part of their overall development. Mealtimes are used to encourage independence, positive eating habits and an understanding of healthy lifestyles. This supports areas of learning such as physical development, personal, social and emotional development and self-care skills.

The nursery ensures a consistent approach to food provision throughout the day, embedding good nutrition and positive mealtime experiences into daily practice.

Any concerns relating to a child's nutrition, eating habits, or wellbeing that may indicate a safeguarding concern will be managed in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Procedure

- For children under two years of age, individual feeding routines will be followed and recorded, including milk intake and weaning stages, to ensure consistency between home and the nursery.
- All staff and children must wash their hands before every mealtime to promote good hygiene and reduce the risk of infection.
- The nursery ensures that all meals, snacks, and drinks are healthy, balanced, and nutritious, in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) nutrition guidance and recommendations from the National Health Service. Meals are planned to support children's growth, development, and overall wellbeing.
- Staff must have a clear understanding of the meals being served, including ingredients and allergens, through effective communication with kitchen staff and the use of dietary management systems.
- Clear and accurate dietary information must be displayed prior to food being served to ensure that all children receive meals in line with their individual dietary requirements, allergies and care plans.
- Mealtimes are recognised as an important social experience and are used to promote positive interactions, communication and the development of healthy eating habits.
- Practitioners must be seated with children during mealtimes to supervise, support and model appropriate behaviour.
- Staff must be deployed effectively to ensure children are supervised at all times. Children must remain within sight and hearing of staff during mealtimes to minimise risks, including choking and allergic reactions.
- Children will be encouraged to develop independence through self-feeding and where appropriate, self-serving using suitable utensils.
- Children over the age of two will be provided with appropriate cutlery, including a fork, knife and spoon, to support independent eating. Younger children will be supported with utensils suitable for their stage of development.
- The nursery follows recognised guidance to reduce choking risks and ensures that all food is prepared, cut and served appropriately for each child's age and stage of development.
- All staff involved in preparing or handling food will be appropriately trained in food hygiene and always follow safe food handling practices.

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- All staff supporting mealtimes must be fully aware of children's dietary requirements, allergies and any relevant care plans. Robust systems are in place to always manage dietary needs safely.
- Meals prepared for specific dietary requirements will be clearly labelled with the child's name, dietary need and the alternative provided.
- Where a child refuses the main meal, a suitable healthy alternative such as fruit will be offered. If a child consistently refuses food or does not eat throughout the day, staff will liaise with parents or carers to agree an appropriate course of action.
- Children will be given sufficient time to eat at their own pace and will not be rushed.
- The nursery promotes healthy eating by limiting foods high in sugar, salt and processed ingredients and by encouraging a balanced and varied diet.
- Appropriate risk assessments will be in place to ensure safe practice during food preparation, serving and mealtimes.

Drinks

Fresh drinking water will always be available and accessible to children. In line with best practice, only water and milk will be offered as drinks during the nursery day, unless otherwise required for medical or dietary reasons.

Dietary Requirements

- The nursery is committed to ensuring that all individual dietary needs are identified, respected and always managed safely.
- The nursery operates as a **nut-free environment**. Nuts and any products containing nuts are not permitted on the premises at any time. This is to protect children with severe allergies and reduce the risk of life-threatening reactions.
- Prior to admission, detailed information will be obtained from parents or carers regarding each child's dietary requirements, including allergies, intolerances, medical needs, cultural or religious preferences and any other specific requirements. This information will be recorded within the child's registration records and signed by parents to confirm accuracy.
- Where a child has an allergy or medical dietary requirement, a risk assessment will be completed and an individual care plan will be developed in partnership with parents and, where appropriate, relevant health professionals. Care plans must be kept up to date and accessible to all staff at all times.
- The nursery will ensure that all staff are fully aware of children's dietary requirements. A clear and up-to-date record of dietary needs will be available within each room and in the kitchen to ensure consistency and safe practice.
- Daily checks must be carried out to confirm dietary requirements and ensure that all staff are aware of any changes before food is prepared or served.
- Meals prepared to meet individual dietary needs will be clearly labelled with the child's name, dietary requirement and the alternative provided to prevent errors.
- Children with dietary needs will be supported through clear identification systems, including individual place settings and visual prompts to ensure correct meals are provided and appropriate action is taken where required.
- The nursery operates a clear colour-coded system to support the safe management of dietary requirements:
 - Red – Children with food allergies. Allergies may result in severe or life-threatening reactions. All allergies must be confirmed by a medical professional and full details must be provided to the nursery. Strict procedures will be followed at all times, including adherence to care plans and emergency procedures.
 - Yellow – Children with dietary preferences, intolerances, including cultural, religious, vegetarian, or vegan requirements. The nursery will respect and support these needs,

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ensuring that meals are suitable and that children's beliefs and preferences are not compromised.

- Green – Children with no dietary restrictions.
- All staff must follow the agreed systems and procedures at all times to ensure children's safety. Robust systems are in place to prevent cross-contamination and ensure that all meals are prepared and served safely.

Red is allocated to children with allergies
Yellow- Specific diets or religious preferences (I.e. Vegan)
Green indicates no restrictions in a child's dietary needs

Responsibility for checking

A strict checking procedure is in place to ensure that all meals are safe and suitable for each child's dietary requirements.

Once food has been prepared, the chef must complete and sign the daily dietary check form to confirm that all meals meet the required dietary specifications.

A second check must then be carried out by the Nursery Manager, Deputy Manager, or a designated senior member of staff, who will verify the information.

A final check must be completed by a suitably trained member of staff within the room before the food is served to children. This three-stage checking process is in place to minimise risk and ensure accuracy at every stage.

Children with allergies or specific dietary requirements must be closely supervised throughout the mealtime by a suitably trained member of staff to ensure their safety at all times.

Dietary Errors and Allergic Reactions

If a child shows any signs of an allergic reaction or requires treatment, this must be acted upon immediately. Medication must only be administered by a trained first aider or a member of staff who has received specific training in administering the required medication.

In the event of a serious allergic reaction, an ambulance must be called immediately, followed by notifying parents or carers. The child's individual care plan must be followed at all times.

All incidents, including near misses and errors, must be recorded and reported in line with nursery procedures. A full review will be carried out to prevent reoccurrence.

Food from outside

The nursery does not permit food to be brought in from home unless there is a clear medical or dietary requirement, which must be agreed in advance and risk assessed by the Nursery Manager. Staff are not permitted to bring their own food into children's rooms, in order to minimise the risk of cross-contamination and exposure to allergens.

Any exceptions must be risk assessed and agreed by the Nursery Manager in advance.

Further guidance

<https://food.gov.uk/business-guidance/safer-food-better-business-sfbb>

[Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition - GOV.UK](#)