



# FOOD POLICY

## Food Policy Aims and Objectives

Our settings have developed this food policy to provide clear information and guidance for staff and families in relation to our food and drink provision. This includes:

- How we plan nutritious meals and snacks for children
- The foods we permit families to bring in, e.g. lunchboxes
- How we foster a positive eating environment and create awareness of individual dietary requirements
- Our approach to celebrations, special and cultural occasions
- How we manage special dietary requirements, such as food allergies and intolerances
- How we help children to learn about food and develop their cooking skills
- Our approach to food safety and hygiene
- How our settings are making efforts to be more sustainable.

The food policy will ensure that children have access to healthy, balanced and nutritious meals, snacks and drinks while in our care, which will support their health and encourage them to learn about food. It will provide clear guidance for practitioners, making it easier to plan nutritious meals and snacks for children.

The Food Policy is developed to reflect the following guidelines and frameworks:

- The [Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\) Nutrition Guidance \(opens in new tab\)](#)
- The [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers \(opens in new tab\)](#) and the [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework for Childminders \(opens in new tab\)](#)
- [The Department for Education, Food Safety – help for early years providers \(opens in new tab\)](#)
- [Food Standards Agency \(opens in new tab\)](#) – Safer Food Better Business

Our policy applies to all staff, parents/ carers, caterers and other professionals visiting our settings. It applies at all times, including during celebration events/ days, cooking activities and during trips/ excursions outside of the nursery.

## Policy Implementation

Here at Snug nursery schools, our area manager Lisa Palmer created our Food Policy with support from all of the existing staff team.

The policy is reviewed annually in August, before the start of the new nursery year.

The Food Policy is available to access at any time and can be found in the following places:

- Staff are given a copy at their induction
- Parents/carers are provided with an electronic copy at registrations as part of the 'welcome pack'
- An electronic copy is also available on our settings website under the 'policies' section.

We encourage and welcome staff and parents/carers to provide feedback and make suggestions about all of our policies. This can be done in person with the nursery manager via email.

## Policy

Food is important to us at Snug nursery schools and supporting children and parents to adopt a healthy balanced diet is part of this. Our daily menu consists of 3 main meals and 2 nutritious snacks where both lunch and tea include a main course and a second dish (either a starter, side or pudding). Our meal and snack routine is as follows :

- **Breakfast:** 8:00- 8:45am
- **Morning snack:** 10:00- 10:30am
- **Lunch:** 11:30-1pm
- **Tea:** 3-4.30pm

We only offer children water and milk to drink in our setting, ensuring that water is available throughout the day and offered with all meals and snacks whilst milk is offered at breakfast and to babies if specified by parents as part of their individual routine.

Our onsite chefs plan and update our menu twice a year to ensure children get to try a wide variety of seasonal foods, having a Spring/ Summer menu which runs from April-September and an Autumn/Winter menu which runs from October-March.

Our chefs will develop our menus to meet the EYFS Nutrition Guidance\* and we send each menu to our local early years nutrition team to be reviewed, updating based on feedback or recommendations we receive from them to ensure our menus continue to meet children's nutrient requirements.

\* We ensure our chefs follow the EYFS Nutrition Guidance.

We plan our menus to ensure that they:

- Include recipes that reflect celebrations days and events that take place, such as Christmas, Chinese New Year, Diwali, Eid, Easter, etc.
- Include recipes/ dishes from a range of cultures and we encourage parents to share traditional recipes with us (adapted if necessary to make them suitable for children)
- Reflect feedback that we receive from the staff team, families and the children themselves.

Our daily menu is available to review via our online journal (Blossom) and is also in our weekly newsletter. Should you have any questions regarding your child's food and drink intake or want to discuss changes to their requirements, please speak to your child's key worker or the nursery manager.

## **Supporting Children Under 1:**

We understand that babies and young children may have different requirements to an older child in terms of food and routines and therefore we discuss with parents the routine used at home and how we can support this at nursery.

Breastfeeding is an important part of a baby's development and we inform families on their nursery show-around, and again during registration, that they are always welcome to breastfeed in our setting. We will always support families who wish to provide expressed breastmilk and request that it's provided in a sterilised labelled container (named and dated). Expressed breastmilk is kept in the fridge in the kitchen in a labelled breastmilk box which is stored at the top of the fridge. In order to warm expressed breastmilk it is held under warm running water (avoiding the teat) or by sitting it in a jug of warm water and once warm, it's used within an hour, discarding any left-over milk.

To ensure bottles are sterilised properly and formula milk is made up safely we follow the Start for Life guidance and have these procedures clearly displayed in our milk preparation areas. Formula milk is always made up fresh as and when required (following guidance outlined on the formula container) and if there's any left after a feed it is thrown away.

Upon starting in our setting, all staff are trained by the nursery manager to correctly:

- sterilise bottles and bottle attachments
- store and warm expressed breastmilk
- safely prepare infant formula.

New starters are observed for the first few days to ensure they are following these procedures and feel confident in how to prepare formula safely. The nursery manager also performs spot checks to ensure staff continue to uphold best practice.

## **Introduction to foods:**

As the introduction of foods to babies is such an important stage in their development we work very closely with families to ensure we're supporting children who have begun eating solid foods (weaning process). Please also refer to our Weaning policy.

Our main menu can be adapted to provide suitable food but also we adapt the texture to meet the individual need and stage of development of each baby (e.g. smooth, lumpy, mashed, finger foods). Staff sit and eat with all children as this is a fantastic role modelling opportunity. Whilst we support children to eat, we also encourage self-feeding and allow them to explore food and get messy (this is a great learning opportunity for them).

Food is prepared safely to help reduce the risk of choking. For example:

- We avoid offering chunks of food, such as pieces of sausage, chunks of fruit & vegetables & cubes of cheese
- Foods are cut into narrow batons to make them safer & more manageable instead of chunks
- We cut round foods, such as cherry tomatoes, grapes, cherries, berries & strawberries lengthways and then into quarters
- We peel the skin from fruits & vegetables to make them easier to chew & swallow.

We do not promote or endorse any infant feeding companies.

## **Food safety and hygiene:**

### **Our settings meet food safety and hygiene regulations as well as the food hygiene requirements of the EYFS by following the below:**

We have clear policies and procedures in place to ensure the correct and safe storage, preparation and serving of our food in our settings. For example:

- Use-by dates are monitored daily
- The fridge temperature is checked and recorded each day to ensure the temperature remains at 4c or below
- Staff tie up their hair, remove their jewellery and wash their hands before touching foods. They also wear appropriate protective clothing
- Hot meals are temperature checked with a thermometer probe and recorded

All of our staff have Level 2 Food Hygiene training which is renewed every 2 years and our on-site chefs have Level 3 Food Hygiene training.

Children are supervised at mealtimes and staff will sit with them to support the independence of self serving and role modelling how to use their cutlery but also encouragement to eat. Infants are sat in a secure chair and toddlers are sat in low children's chairs whilst eating.

All staff have attended paediatric first aid training (which is renewed every 3 years) so they can assist children in the unlikely event that they get into difficulty when eating.

We use the EYFS Nutrition Guidance to plan menus which helps us to ensure that all of the foods we offer children are suitable for them.

All foods are prepared in accordance with children's age and ability and served in a way to reduce the risk of choking. For example, finger foods are served in a baton shape and not in chunks or pieces, round foods (such as cherry tomatoes) are cut into quarters lengthways and we don't offer hard or sticky foods, such as nuts and marshmallows. We support babies to gradually and safely progress from a range of textures based on their own developmental readiness (blended and/or mashed foods, chopped/minced, finger foods).

## **Allergies**

We have many children with allergies within our nurseries which is why it is important for us to understand each child's individual needs and requirements. Therefore before children start with us we ask families to provide us with information of their child's special dietary requirement, via our registration form. If families state their child has a food allergy or intolerance, we kindly ask that they provide us with medical confirmation from an appropriate health care professional. This information is used to create a care plan for children which outlines the foods they can't have, those that they can, symptoms to look out for and any prescribed medication they may need along with emergency contact details. We ask that families confirm in writing (every 6 months) the details in their child's care plan and request they provide us with updates as and when they occur.

Our manager and chef carefully plan our menu in advance to ensure that it caters for the dietary requirements of all children. Allergen information is clearly labelling on our menu and we carefully follow the [Food Standards Agency's allergy guidance for food businesses \(opens in new tab\)](#). The meals and snacks offered to children with special dietary requirements are as similar as possible to those offered across the main menu based on the information in their individual care plan. Special dietary requirements are also considered when planning any cooking and learning about food activities to ensure all children can take part and feel included.

For more detailed information about how we manage special dietary requirements in our setting, please see our Allergies and Intolerances policy.

### **Supporting Children at Mealtimes**

Our dining areas are clean, bright and have a number of small tables that seat around 6 children. This means that children can sit with their friends but also that 1-2 practitioners can sit with them to support them at mealtimes. Each table has individual placemats for each child detailing their food preferences, any special dietary requirements (please also refer to our allergies and intolerances policy). We use child sized plates, bowls and cups along with child-friendly cutlery.

Children in our settings are encouraged to participate in the setup, serving and tidying away at mealtimes. For example setting the tables, pouring their own water and scraping any leftovers into the bin. Staff support children with all aspects of mealtimes e.g. self service support as well as eating with the children to provide important role modelling and to discuss the foods they are eating etc. We support children to enjoy meals and snack times in a number of ways. For example, eating with them, using positive language when discussing food, positive reinforcement and supporting children to eat to their own appetite.

If children are fussy with food we use the same positive strategies mentioned above to help build their confidence over time. We never bribe, coax or force a child to eat more or to eat something they do not wish to try. If a child is fussy about the food they eat we book a meeting in with their parents to discuss these strategies so that the setting and family are all supporting the child in the same way to provide a consistent approach.

### **Food Brought in From Home**

Our nursery does not allow any food to be brought in from home due to the risk of other children being severely allergic as well as the importance of us being able to identify what is in the food and where it comes from.

#### **Medical Need:**

We acknowledge that instances may arise where a child must have certain types of food or food textures due to a medical need. In this instance we would ask the following:

- A letter from a certified nutritionist or doctor must be provided and a care plan drawn up with parents.
- Parents must provide a written update to the care plan at least every six months so that up-to-date information from the health professionals who are supporting the child is shared with the nursery.
- food from home must be clearly labelled with the food contents and the child's name.
- food from home can be stored in the fridge but not reheated.
- foods that are not permitted include crisps, chocolate, sweets, nuts, etc. Foods should promote healthy eating in line with the nursery menus.

### **Birthdays and Celebrations**

We love to celebrate children's birthdays and other special occasions and events throughout the year. Due to the risk of allergies and to meet our healthy eating ethos we kindly ask that families do not bring in food such as cakes and sweets to celebrate these occasions.

We celebrate in lots of ways and create our own recipes that are in-line with EYFS Nutrition Guidance as follows:

- When it's a child's birthday we celebrate with a "Birthday Walk"
- During special occasions/celebration days such as Christmas, Eid, Diwali and Chinese New Year, we plan lots of fun activities for children such as storytelling, arts and crafts and songs.
- We understand the importance of children learning about the foods and drinks of other religions and cultures so we always try to create at least one traditional recipe (adapted where necessary to make it suitable for children) to mark special occasions.
- We welcome recipe suggestions from families.

### **Cooking & Learning About Food**

We regularly do cooking activities with the children, ensuring that we vary the day each week to ensure that all children have the opportunity to take part. The recipe is chosen based on which skills we want children to learn and practice (taking into account their individual abilities) along with the ingredients we have available e.g. produce from our growing areas.

Children are supervised and supported by staff at all times and child friendly equipment is provided e.g. child- friendly knives, jugs and bowls. Children work in groups as this supports team work, their communication skills and self- esteem.

We also plan a number of 'learning about food' opportunities for children across each term which link to the EYFS prime areas of learning. For example, we grow some of our own produce; carrots, strawberries, green beans, etc. which teaches children about how to take care of plants, life cycles and supports their fine and gross motor skills. We also plan other activities which support children to learn about food such as reading books about food, singing songs, role play and messy play.

Please see our weekly newsletter to see what activities we've been doing and ideas for how you can recreate these at home.

### **Sustainability**

Here at Snug we are conscious about our environmental impact and we are actively making changes to reduce our carbon footprint. Here are some of the things we're doing:

- We carefully plan how much food we need to create each of the meals and snacks on our menu. We monitor our stock, along with use-by dates, and freeze foods where we are able to, in order to help reduce food waste.
- We have two menus, Spring-Summer and Autumn-Winter, meaning we can use seasonal foods across meals and snacks.
- We have small growing areas in our gardens and we grow seasonal foods that are used in our menu and during cooking activities with the children. For example, in the summer we grow strawberries, runner beans and courgettes.
- When shopping for foods, we always try to choose loose produce and products with minimal/ recyclable packaging. We recycle all the packaging that we can. If there is something that is non-recyclable, we will try to repurpose it in the nursery rooms.
- We welcome any suggestions/ ideas from parents around how we can be more environmentally friendly.