

## **Nutrition, Meal times and Healthy Eating Policy**

Little Oaks Nursery believes that mealtimes should be happy, social occasions for babies, children and staff alike. We are committed to offering children healthy, nutritious and balanced meals and snacks which meet individual dietary needs and requirements.

We aim to meet the full requirements of the Ofsted Care Standards on Food and Drinks (Standard 8), the EYFS Welfare Requirements and the Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance May 2025.

### **In order to meet our aim, we will:**

- Ensure that before a child attends the Nursery, we find out from parents about their child/ren's dietary needs, including any allergies. We record information about each child's dietary needs on a dietary and allergy form and share this information with the kitchen staff in line with our Dietary needs and Allergy Policy. We regularly consult with parents to ensure that our records of their child/ren's dietary needs - including any allergies - are up-to-date. Parents sign the updated record to signify that it is correct. We ensure children with allergies have a BSACI allergy action plan where appropriate and that we refer to guidance from the British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology.
- We display current information about individual children's dietary needs so that all staff and volunteers are fully informed about them. We implement systems to ensure that children receive only food and drink which is consistent with their dietary needs and their parents' wishes.
- Our cook is responsible for checking that food provided meets all requirements for individual children and labelling it accordingly. Room staff who serve the food will check allergies and allergens before handing food to children.
- A balanced and healthy breakfast, midday meal, tea and two daily snacks are provided for children attending a full day at the Nursery.
- We plan menus in advance, involving children in the planning. We display the menus of meals/snacks on our website. Menus are planned seasonally, rotated regularly and reflect cultural diversity and variation.
- Menus include at least 5 servings of fresh fruit and vegetables per day
- We provide nutritious food at all meals and snacks, avoiding large quantities of fat, sugar and salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings. We include protein and calcium for growth as well as essential minerals and vitamins in meals which are offered.
- We include some cultural foods, 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 will 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.
- We have rules about children sharing and swapping their food with one another in order to protect children with food allergies.

- We give careful consideration to seating to avoid cross contamination of food from child to child. Where appropriate, an adult will sit with children during meals to ensure safety and minimise risks, staff sit facing the children so they can recognise immediate signs of choking, including silent choking. Where appropriate, age/stage discussions will also take place with all children about allergies and potential risks to make them aware of the dangers of sharing certain foods.
- Should a choking incident occur, a record will be completed and parents/ carers will be made aware. Records will be reviewed regularly to identify common features of incidents, we will then address this to reduce the risks.
- Staff set a good example and have the opportunity to eat with the children and show good table manners. Meal and snack times are organised so that they are social occasions in which children and staff participate in small groups. During meals and snack times children are encouraged to use their manners and say 'please' and 'thank you' and conversation is encouraged
- Staff use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink, and feeding themselves
- No child is ever left alone when eating/drinking to minimise the risk of choking
- All staff who prepare and handle food are competent to do so and receive training in food hygiene which is updated every three years
- In the very unlikely event of any food poisoning affecting two or more children on the premises, whether or not this may arise from food offered at the nursery, we will inform Ofsted as soon as reasonably practical and in all cases within 14 days. We will also inform the relevant health agencies and follow any advice given.

### **Meals and Snacks**

- We source and purchase food from well known reputable companies. We ensure that food is delivered by appropriate means e.g. frozen goods remain frozen in transit.
- Snack times and meal times are part of the daily routine and we have set times for these. This ensures that all children sit down to eat together and promotes a relaxed social time where children can develop their PSED skills.
- Children are encouraged to help themselves to cold foods like sandwiches and fruit. However hot food is provided by the staff to ensure the safety of the children at all times.
- When children are reluctant to eat, practitioners will accept the child's wishes and provide only positive encouragement. Children will not be made to eat what they do not want and, depending on individual circumstances, an alternative may be offered. This information will be shared with parents to try to identify any underlying problems and develop solutions which may be incorporated into the child's next session.
- If a child misses a meal because he/she is asleep or arrives late then the meal will be stored in appropriate storage conditions until such a time that the child is ready to eat. If the food on offer is no longer safe to eat i.e. if it cannot be re-heated then an alternative meal will be offered.

### **Dietary needs**

- Children's dietary needs are displayed in each room to ensure that all staff, volunteers and students are aware of individual children's dietary needs.
- Copies of these lists are also kept in the kitchen to inform the cook of any changes which may be necessary to adhere to these requirements.
- The Nursery takes into account individual families' cultural and religious practices and we work with parents to ensure that the meals we offer are in accordance with their wishes.
- We encourage all children to eat together and share their own likes and dislikes with peers. However staff encourage all children to be sensitive to other children's individual dietary

needs and eating habits and demonstrate to children the appropriate behaviour and responses whilst at the table.

### **Drinks**

Access to drinking water throughout the day is dependent on the age and stage of the children in our care. For example:

- Our Poppy room has drinking water available and children can access this independently. They can also bring a water bottle to access independently, and staff will fill these with water throughout their session.
- The Daisy room have access to drinking water but must ask for assistance in pouring the water as they are too young to help themselves. They can also bring a water bottle to access independently, and staff will fill these with water throughout their session.
- Our Bluebell room operate a system where children are provided with drinking water at regular intervals throughout the day depending on their age and feeding requirements.
- For children who drink milk, we provide whole and pasteurised milk. We provide milk for children and offer alternatives for children with milk allergies. Allergy requirements are discussed with parents and carers and a suitable alternative is found and provided as necessary.
- We only offer water and milk to drink.

### **Formula and Breast Milk**

- We provide certain brands of formula milk for children to drink in nursery. Alternative milk can be supplied by the parent provided the milk is brought into Nursery in the original sealed container and is pasteurised. This will be mixed with cooled boiled water in accordance with the instructions on the package. Practitioners will then mix the water and formula together at the time the child requires feeding. Parents are asked to label all bottles and containers.
- Breastmilk can be brought into nursery and must be stored in line with the NHS guidelines which are:
- Storing breast milk
- You can store breast milk in a sterilised container or in special breast milk storage bags:
  - in the fridge for up to 8 days at 4C or lower (you can buy fridge thermometers online) – if you're not sure of the temperature of your fridge, or it is higher than 4C, use it within 3 days
  - for 2 weeks in the ice compartment of a fridge
  - for up to 6 months in a freezer, if it's -18C or lower
- Breast milk that's been cooled in the fridge can be carried in a cool bag with ice packs for up to 24 hours.
- Storing breast milk in small quantities will help avoid waste. If you're freezing it, make sure you label and date it first.
- Defrosting frozen breast milk

- It's best to defrost frozen breast milk slowly in the fridge before giving it to your baby. If you need to use it straight away, you can defrost it by putting it in a jug of warm water or holding it under running warm water.
- Once it's defrosted, give it a gentle shake if it has separated. Use it straight away. Do not re-freeze milk that's been defrosted.
- Once your baby has drunk from a bottle of breast milk it should be used within 1 hour and anything left over should be thrown away.
- Warming breast milk
- You can feed expressed milk straight from the fridge if your baby is happy to drink it cold. Or you can warm the milk to body temperature by putting the bottle in a jug of warm water or holding it under running warm water.
- Do not use a microwave to heat up or defrost breast milk. This can cause hot spots, which can burn your baby's mouth.

### **Weaning**

At Little Oaks Nursery, we realise that as a child reaches 6 months their nutritional needs are changing and milk alone does not satisfy their increased nutritional requirements. It is recommended that infants do not begin weaning until 6 months but some parents may choose to begin to wean earlier. We will work closely with the parents/carers to make sure the process runs as smoothly as possible and only when the child shows they are ready. We appreciate that some babies take more quickly to solid foods than others and that they will each have different food preferences.

Infants under 6 months will not be given: foods containing gluten (bread/pasta etc), nuts and seeds (peanuts, peanut butter, other nut spreads), eggs, raw or cooked shellfish, shark, swordfish and marlin, citrus fruits and citrus fruit juices (orange, lemon, grapefruit), foods containing plant sterols (some margarines and yoghurts – check the ingredients) or honey.

Salt will not be added to any foods for infants. Small amounts of cow's milk may be used to soften foods. Naturally sweet foods such as apples or bananas will be used instead of sugar or artificial sweeteners. A variety of flavours and textures will be offered to allow the infant to learn to chew and accept a wide variety of foods. A daily serving of iron-rich foods (soft-cooked meat, fish and pulses such as peas, beans and lentils) should be included. If eggs are given they will be cooked until completely solid.

If commercial weaning foods are used, the manufacturers' instructions will be followed carefully.

When serving food from a can or jar where the entire contents are unlikely to be eaten a portion will first be spooned into a separate dish before serving to the infant. The remainder will be stored according to manufacturers' instructions (if there are none, it will be thrown away).

With recent changes to weaning guidelines and conflicting advice from family or friends we understand that the process of weaning can be a difficult time for parents. We will provide as much support and information about weaning for parents as they need. We can provide leaflets to take away and our baby room staff are always willing to use their previous knowledge and experience of weaning to support parents.

We have on-going discussions with parents and carers at each stage of the weaning journey in regard to introducing solid food, including understanding textures that a child is familiar with. We will not make assumptions based on a child's age, recognizing individual developmental needs and working with parents/carers to help children move on to the next stage at a pace that is right for the child.

### **Meal time procedures**

- A child-centred, happy and relaxed atmosphere should extend throughout the day and accordingly at all meal times.
- Children are provided with food and drink at regular intervals in adequate quantities for their needs. Food and drink are properly prepared, nutritious and comply with dietary and religious requirements as necessary.
- Babies and young children will be seated in a low chair with a post and a tray where necessary.
- Distractions during meal times will be minimised.
- Practitioners should:
  - Make meal and snack times a positive experience for all children by not rushing meal times.
  - Encourage children to feed themselves to develop their independence and fine motor skills.
  - Encourage children's table manners.
  - Respect children's and adult's cultural differences that are different from their own.
  - Practitioners will sit and eat with the children making positive comments and having a positive approach to healthy eating.

### **Birthdays and Celebrations**

Children's birthdays are celebrated in accordance with individual children's cultures and beliefs. If parents wish to bring a birthday cake in to share with the children this is permitted but must be bought not homemade. However, children are only provided with a small piece of cake at snack time, along with the regular fruit they receive.

### **Parents and Carers**

- We provide information regarding daily meals, intake and preferences on our online system.
- We inform parents who provide food for their children about the storage facilities available in the Nursery and provide information about suitable containers for food. See lunch box policy for further information on storage guidance.

### **Staff meals and snacks**

- Staff are encouraged to sit and eat with the children at lunch times. Meals are offered to all staff for a nominal daily price.

- If staff choose to bring their own lunches they are asked to store and eat these in the staff room. Whilst we recognise every individual's right to choose their own foods we also work in an environment where it is of the utmost importance to promote healthy eating within the rooms. It is therefore inappropriate for staff to consume unhealthy food or drink near the children as this may not support our healthy eating ethos.
- Fresh drinking water is available for staff however in the interest of safety; hot drinks must not be taken into the areas where children are present. This includes public corridors and outdoor areas.



