



# The Early Years Centre Nursery Food Policy 2024 - 25

**Date last reviewed** | June 2024

**Review period** | Annually

**Lead Reviewer(s)** | Nursery Manager

## ***“Empowering today, for a limitless tomorrow.”***



**Limitless  
Learning**



**Limitless  
Solutions**



**Limitless  
Possibilities**

### **1. Introduction**

We believe that snack and lunch times are important times not just to give the body energy and nutrients but to socialise and learn about healthy eating habits. We recognise that healthy eating habits positively impact children’s learning and behaviour and avoid health related issues such as poor dental health and obesity. Adequate and appropriate nutrition is essential during early childhood. Children who do not receive sufficient calories, vitamins and minerals will not reach their expected growth and their cognitive development may be impaired.

### **2. Aims and Objectives**

These guidelines aim:

- To provide advice on nutritional needs of young children
- To ensure children receive regular and nutritious meals that provide a healthy diet and support learning
- To maintain emotionally and physically safe procedures for providing snacks and meals

### **3. Nutritional needs**

Toddlers need about 1,000–1,400 calories a day deriving from a healthy and balanced diet that provides children with nutrients, minerals and fibre. Children are growing rapidly at this young age; their activity level increases but their stomachs are still relatively small. Hence, the diet of young children will differ to the one of babies and older children. It is important to introduce a healthy diet early to establish healthy eating habits for life.

The below links provide further guidance on what young children need to eat:



*Children* (no date) *British Nutrition Foundation*. Available at: <https://www.nutrition.org.uk/life-stages/children/#healthydiet> (Accessed: November 14, 2022).

Ben-Joseph, E.P. (ed.) (2018) *Nutrition guide for toddlers (for parents) - Nemours Children's Health, KidsHealth*. The Nemours Foundation. Available at: <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/toddler-food.html> (Accessed: November 14, 2022).

*What to feed young children* (2019) *NHS choices*. NHS. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/weaning-and-feeding/what-to-feed-young-children/> (Accessed: November 14, 2022).

#### **4. What the Nursery expects of parents:**

- During the induction meeting, parents provide information about their child's dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies (e.g. peanut), intolerance (e.g. lactose), medical (e.g. diabetic) or cultural (e.g. religious) restrictions. These will be discussed to decide if the needs of the children can be met. Any needs will be recorded and shared with the Nursery team. If needed, an individual health care plan will be provided by the School's medical department.
- We expect that children eat breakfast at home. However, should a child come to Nursery still needing to eat/finish breakfast, a chair at a table with adult supervision will be provided until they finish their food.
- Meals and snacks need to be nutritious to meet the children's dietary needs. Sweets and sugary drinks are discouraged. Teachers will consult with parents by providing information about portion size and the nutritional needs of young children.
- The Academy is a nut and pork free zone. Foods containing nuts or pork will be taken to a safe storage place and handed over to parents during pick up. Should the child not have any other food available, the teacher will call the parents to discuss the provision of an alternative meal. Other foods, e.g. seafood, may be included in the non-food list, depending on allergies.
- Parents provide ready to eat meals that children can eat independently using their fingers or child appropriate cutlery. Food needs to be stored in leakproof containers. If parents want to provide warm meals, food needs to be packed in a thermos; the nursery cannot heat food. Equally, for food items that need to be kept cool, parents need to provide cooling packs in their child's snack/lunch bag.
- Children at the age of 2 do not require formula milk and baby bottles. The Education Team will consult with parents to encourage the change to water or non-formula milk in (sippy) cups.
- For birthdays, if treats are being sent in for the children, these will be a healthy snack. Cupcakes, doughnuts and biscuits are discouraged. Any treats must be individually wrapped



and these will be sent home for parents to decide if they want their child to eat them.

#### **5. What the Nursery expects of staff:**

- Teachers plan for snack and lunch time with a maximum of 3 hours between meals. Meals need to be at regular timings and sufficient time has to be allowed for young children to eat. Slower eaters will not be rushed. Children will wash their hands under the supervision of an Education Team member before and after meal times. Faces will be washed after eating if necessary.
- Meals will be taken at the designated area, children sit on chairs at a table and cannot enter play areas during meal times. For health and safety reasons, children are not allowed to share their food or eating utensils. If children want to use the same sitting place each day, this should be supported as much as possible.
- The Education Team will wash their hands before and after meal times. They will sit with the children at the tables to support children's independent eating skills but provide help where needed with opening fruits and containers. Food that could provide a choking hazard should be cut into small pieces by the parents. If not done, the Education Team will support by cutting e.g. grapes, cherry tomatoes, blueberries etc. into smaller pieces and communicate the need for parents to do this at home.
- Children must never be forced to eat anything they do not wish to eat. Teachers will record if children have not eaten and communicate to parents when a child has skipped any meals or not eaten enough food. Equally, children, including those with a constrained palate, will be encouraged to taste and try the food they have been provided.
- Children need to collect and pack away their food into their designated food tray before and after their meal. Support should be provided where necessary to close containers and discard left over food as appropriate.
- After meal times, children need to be clean and clothes changed if needed. Once children finish their meals, waiting time to enter play areas should be minimal. Children should not be kept at the tables for an extended period until all children are finished.
- The designated eating area needs to be clean and hygienic and will be cleaned after each meal by the school's cleaning team. There may be unscheduled times where Nursery staff support with the cleaning of tables and chairs to prevent health hazards. Cutlery used by the teachers to cut e.g. grapes, tomatoes and similar, is washed by the Education Team and stored safely.
- Children will take all food home at the end of the day, no food should be left behind or stored at the Nursery.



- In addition to meal times, teachers plan breaks for drinking water. Children's water bottles should be filled at home and checked each morning. Water bottles and refills must be available and accessible at all times. Parents are expected to clean water bottles at home also.
- Discussions about healthy eating habits are encouraged during meal times. Meal times are social in character and adults should use these opportunities to chat with children to strengthen their connections and bond.