

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Health

Where children are provided with meals, snacks and drinks, they must be healthy, balanced and nutritious.

6.5 Food and drink

Policy statement

Here at Withycombe Preschool we passionately support this policy to ensure all our children have the best introduction to healthy eating and have a positive approach to trying new foods and staying healthy. We regard snack and meal times as an important social part of our day, for both children and adults. At snack and meal times, we aim to provide nutritious food, which meets the children's individual dietary needs. We have a whole preschool approach, including our parents and staff.

What does Preschool provide?

We have fresh drinking water available for children to help themselves to as they wish (or with adult support) throughout the day. (We have found that individual drinks bottles were 'shared' and were not the most hygienic way to ensure that every child has had a good drink at preschool)

Semi-skimmed milk is provided at morning snack time

Snack is served 'café style'; fruit or vegetables are prepared and offered in bowls. The chimes sound to indicate to the children that snack time has begun and they can help themselves to snack as they wish. An adult supervises this each morning to ensure all children have had a snack and drink. Children are encouraged to wash up afterwards.

Procedures

We follow these procedures to promote healthy eating in our setting:

Providing Foods for All

- Before a child starts to attend the setting, we ask their parents about their dietary needs and preferences, including any allergies. (See the Managing Children who are Sick, Infectious or with Allergies Policy.)
- We record information about each child's dietary needs in the Registration Form and parents 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. Parents sign the updated record to signify that it is correct.
- We display current information about individual children's dietary needs in the kitchen with a photograph of the child so that all our staff and volunteers are fully informed about them.
- We implement systems 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 take care not to provide food containing nuts or nut products and we are especially vigilant where we have a child who has a known allergy to nuts.
- Through discussion with parents and research reading, we obtain information about the dietary rules of the religious groups to which children and their parents belong, and of vegetarians and vegans, as well as about food allergies. We take account of this information in the provision of food and drinks.

- We show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. We 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.
- In order to protect children with food allergies, and in the interest of hygiene, we discourage children from sharing and swapping their food with one another

The Eating Environment and Social Aspect of meal times

- We organise meal and snack times so that they are social occasions in which children and adults participate
- Adults are aware that they are positive role models and should demonstrate good table manners and positive language around new foods, encouraging children to eat well
- We use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink and feeding themselves where appropriate, including washing up afterwards
- Lunch boxes are unpacked onto a plate, children are encouraged to eat their savoury before any yoghurt/cake or fruit, anything significant not eaten or disliked will be re-packed with a note home
- We provide children with utensils that are appropriate for their ages and stages of development and that take account of the eating practices in their cultures
- We encourage all children to drink from an open cup and will support parents/carers with advice to help towards this at home
- Food will never be withheld or used as a reward

Food Hygiene

Children are always reminded about the importance of hand washing before eating or handling food.

Whenever children work with food in the hall they are helped to follow basic hygiene routines including; using clean equipment, always washing hands before and after working with the food, using an individual spoon etc. when tasting food. See our Food Hygiene policy (6.6)

Encouraging Fussy Eaters to Eat Well

Fussy eating and fear of new foods are a part of development affecting 10-20% of young children and is thought to be part of natural behaviour. A child who appears to be fussy about their food but is growing well is probably eating a sufficient balance of foods and getting enough energy and nutrients. Preschool will encourage fussy eaters by sitting them next to good eaters at lunchtime, by using enthusiastic language and by positively praising trying new foods. Parents and Carers are encouraged to talk to us so that we can work together. Social eating with their friends and adults often distracts a child and will encourage them to eat what everyone else is. Being involved in the preparation of food is also a great way to encourage a child to taste something new.

Packed lunches/Food brought in from home

We currently do not provide a regular cooked lunch and so children are required to bring packed lunches, we:

- Advise parents to notify us if perishable contents of packed lunches need refrigeration or should contain an ice pack to keep food cool (lunch boxes are kept in a cool place and eaten within 4 hours);
- inform parents of this policy on healthy eating, and the expectations of a healthy packed lunch
- encourage parents to provide sandwiches with a healthy filling, fruit, and milk based deserts, such as yoghurt or crème fraiche. We discourage sweet drinks and fresh water is always available;
- discourage packed lunch contents that consist largely of crisps, processed foods, sweet drinks and sweet products such as cakes, sweets or biscuits. We reserve the right to return this food to the parent as a last resort
- provide children bringing packed lunches with plates, cups and cutlery; and
- ensure that adults sit with children to eat their lunch so that the mealtime is a social occasion.

Cooking with children

We regularly cook with the children, this forms part of our planning on a weekly basis. We have found that when a child has been involved in the preparation of food, they are much more likely to try it. We have regular 'cooking weeks' which are communicated to parents/carers. Children are never allowed into the kitchen area, any cooking or food preparation with the children takes place on a table in the main hall with appropriate tools and equipment.

Sustainability

At Preschool we teach children to recycle any plastic waste from their lunch box, and food waste is placed in our food bin for composting. Children are encouraged to eat everything in their lunch, and anything not eaten is sent home, or offered at afternoon snack. Wherever possible, Preschool supports local food producers, and try and use produce in season, often linked in with our learning. We invite local producers and shops in to visit the children (including Tesco Farm to Fork), and use our local gardening club to plant and grow herbs with the children

Celebrations and Special Occasions

Whilst many special occasions include foods with a high saturated fat and salt content and limited nutritional value, we also appreciate the pleasure that eg a Birthday cake will bring. If your child is celebrating a birthday you are welcome to bring in a cake or biscuits for us to share at snack time as a treat. We always try and link in our cooking with celebrations, for example Chinese new year, easter, the royal wedding street party etc.

Learning about and through food

Learning about food is an important part of children's development and is integrated into the seven areas of learning. The examples given below show how learning about and through food can be linked to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

Personal, social and emotional development

Meal times offer children experiences to taste different foods, overcome dislikes and learn how to share. Sitting around a table eating food together is a good way to teach social skills. Cooking activities offer opportunities for learning through working with others and increasing self-esteem.

Physical development

Fine and gross motor skills can be developed through activities such as using knives and forks, preparing food, and washing up, and through messy play such as threading pasta or using tweezers. Mealtimes can be used to help children to make healthy food choices.

Communication and language

Sitting around a table eating food together is a good way to teach conversation. Language can be developed and senses explored through discussing and describing the taste, texture, size, look and smell of food.

Literacy

Many stories involve food. They can teach children about ingredients, where food comes from and about food for special occasions and from different cultures.

Mathematics

Activities such as counting out spoons and pieces of fruit when setting the table or at snack time can be used to support numeracy skills. Sorting and matching foods into different types can help promote organisational skills and reasoning.

Understanding the world

Food tasting activities teach children about ingredients, the seasons and where food comes from including food from different cultures. Growing fruit and vegetables teaches children about where food comes from, about life cycles, about gardening and how to look after plants. Many vegetables and herbs can be grown on window sills and in pots or bags, which children can be involved in.

Expressive arts and design

Art activities can engage children with food and alert them to colours and shapes.

Dummies, Bottles and Cups

Dummies, Bottles and controlled flow cups are not encouraged at Preschool. We use open cups only and will happily help to support the use of an open cup at home. Research shows children who don't use bottles and dummies long term develop healthy mouth muscles needed for speech, have better appetites, are less likely to experience dental problems and are less likely to suffer ear and throat infections. Please read attached guidance.

We have produced a booklet for parent and carer information to collate all our good practice guides, including the Eatwell Plate (portion sizes), healthy lunchbox suggestions and Nutrition Matters for the Early Years (2018)

Legal framework/ Further guidance

- Regulation (EC) 852/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Hygiene of Foodstuffs.
- Safer Food, Better Business (Food Standards Agency 2015)
- Nutrition Matters for Early Years (2018)