

NURSERY FOOD POLICY

1 Policy statement

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

- how we plan delicious meals and snacks for children
- the foods we permit families to bring in
- how we foster a positive eating environment and create awareness of individual dietary requirements
- our approach to celebrations and special or cultural occasions
- how we manage special dietary requirements, such as food allergies or intolerances
- how we help children to learn about food and develop cooking skills
- our approach to food safety and hygiene

Our policy ensures that children have access to healthy, balanced and nutritious meals, snacks and drinks whilst in our care, which supports their health and encourage them to learn about food. It provides clear guidance for practitioners, making it easier to plan nutritious meals for children.

2 Guidelines and frameworks

The policy reflects the following guidelines and frameworks:

- The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2024
- The Department for Education, Food Safety- help for Early Years providers
- Food Standards Agency- Safer Food Better Business
- The Eat Better Start Better voluntary food and drink guidelines for Early Years settings in England

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

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

- All staff are given a copy on induction
- A printed copy is available on the parents display board in the Nursery reception area
- A copy is available on our website under the “about” section - School policies

We encourage and welcome staff and parents/carers to provide feedback and make suggestions about all our settings policies. This can be done in person with the Nursery Manager, via email foodpolicyforum@newhallschool.co.uk or by filling in the suggestion cards, which can be found in the reception area, and placing them in the suggestion box. This is reviewed weekly by our Nursery Manager and suggestions will then be considered at our staff meetings.

3 Food and drink provision

Our daily menu consists of 3 main meals and 2 nutritious snacks. Lunch and tea include a main and a pudding. Our meal and snack routine is as follows:

- Breakfast: 7.30am-8.00am (pre-bookable only)
- Morning snack: 9.00am-9.30am (rolling snack)
- Lunch: 11.30am-12.00pm (Cedar and Sycamore) 11.45am-12.15pm (Hazel)
- Afternoon snack: 2.00pm-2.30pm (rolling snack)
- Tea: 4.30pm-5.00pm

We only offer water, milk, and milk alternatives, to drink. Water is available throughout the day and offered with all meals and snacks. Milk is offered with breakfast and snacks.

We update our menu cycle at least twice a year to ensure children get to try a variety of food and so we can provide seasonal food. We have a winter menu from October to February and a summer menu from March to September.

Our menus are developed to meet the 'Eat Better Start Better' guidelines and they are reviewed by our nutrition team working within our catering company. We update our menu based on feedback or recommendations we receive from them, to ensure our menus continue to meet children's nutritional requirements.

We also plan our menus to ensure they:

- include recipes that reflect celebration days and events that take place, such as pancake day, Eid, Easter, etc.
- include recipes/dishes from a range of cultures and we encourage parents to share traditional recipes with us.
- reflect feedback that we receive from staff, families and the children themselves.

Our weekly menu is available to view on the parent notice board in the Nursery reception area and on our website. 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 Person or the Nursery Manager.

3.1 Breast feeding

We welcome and support families who wish to breastfeed or who wish to provide expressed breastmilk. It is kept in the fridge and clearly labelled at the top of the fridge. We warm the milk by running it under warm water or sitting it in a jug of hot water. Once warmed, it is used within an hour and any leftover milk is discarded.

Formula is always made up fresh following the guidance on the formula container. If there is any feed left, it is discarded.

Staff are shown how to make up a feed and use sippy cups.

We work closely with all new families to ensure we are supporting children who are learning to eat solid food. We adapt our main menu to provide suitable foods and adapt the texture to meet the needs and developmental stage of the individual child.

We encourage self-feeding and allow children to explore food, making lots of mess (this is a great learning opportunity for them).

We aim for the youngest children in our Nursery to develop their feeding skills by encouraging them to learn to use at least a fork or spoon before they move to the next room. This is done with effective role modelling and gentle encouragement.

4 Food safety and food hygiene

Babies and young children's immune systems are not as strong, nor as well developed as adults, which means they are more vulnerable to infections which can lead to food poisoning. It is therefore of the utmost importance that food hygiene is rigorous.

All staff are trained in Food Hygiene and Food Safety practice.

It is important that all food offered is of a suitable size, shape and texture, to reduce the risk of choking.

We adhere to the following safety guidelines:

- Food Standards Agency choking hazard guidelines for Early Years
- Department for Education Food safety- Help for Early Years Providers

Our Catering Department have clear guidelines for safe food storage and preparation.

Staff supervise children at mealtimes and sit with them to support cutting food and feeding themselves. Infants are sat in a secure low chair.

All foods are prepared in accordance with children's ages and ability and served in a way to reduce the risk of choking. For example, finger foods are served in batons and not in chunks. Round foods such as cherry tomatoes, are cut into quarters lengthways. We avoid sticky foods such as marshmallows and we are a nut free school.

We support babies to gradually and safely progress from a range of textures based on their own developmental readiness (blended, mashed, chopped, minced or finger foods).

All staff have attended Paediatric First Aid training, and this is refreshed every three years.

5 Allergies and special requirements

A special diet means that children cannot choose their foods freely. Children may have special dietary needs for a number of reasons, including:

- an allergy
- an intolerance
- a medical need
- a religious or cultural diet

- vegetarian or vegan diet

The EYFS framework includes the following requirements relating to special diets:

- Before a child is admitted to a setting the provider must obtain information about any special dietary requirements, preferences, and food allergies that the child has, and any special health requirements.
- Providers must record and act on information from parents and carers about a child's dietary needs.
- Please note that only prescribed medication can be administered such as asthma pumps or epi-pens.

Before a child starts, we ask families to provide us with information of their child's special dietary requirement through our medical forms. We ask for medical confirmation of allergies.

Children with allergies or intolerances will have a Health Care Plan drawn up detailing the food or items to avoid with suitable alternatives. An emergency procedure to follow and details of medication left at Nursery. If needed, extra training will be provided for staff to administer the medication. This protocol is reviewed at least annually, and parents are required to update Nursery of any changes.

We meet with our Catering Department to discuss all menu alternatives and try to ensure that the alternatives are as close to the original menu as possible.

We use coloured wrist bands to identify allergens and special requirements: green for no allergen, yellow for special requirement and red for allergen. Children under 2 are given coloured pegs on the backs of their bibs/aprons. The kitchen staff also have photo lunch cards to identify the children, and these are placed on their lunch/snack tray. A list with photos of all children with allergens or special requirements is displayed in all rooms so that temporary or new staff can identify the children. A further check is done before the meal or snack is handed over by reading and signing off the allergens form.

6 Creating positive and encouraging mealtimes

Our children eat within their rooms which are bright and airy. The tables are set for lunch with jugs and cups and children can sit with their friends.

They are supported by practitioners throughout their mealtime.

We use child sized trays that are colour co-ordinated for allergens and child size cutlery.

We support children to eat in a number of ways; eating with them, using positive language when discussing food, positive reinforcement and supporting children to eat to appetite. If children are fussy with food, we use the same the positive strategies mentioned, and more (*please see Appendix A*).

We use the strategies above to encourage a child to try new foods and to help build their confidence over time. It is common for children to refuse new foods or previously accepted food; it can take 15-20 exposures (tries) for new food to be accepted.

If we are concerned about a child's eating, we will book a meeting with the parents/carers to discuss the strategies so that we are all supporting the child in the same way.

We encourage children to hold both a knife and a fork once their hands are able to. Using child size cutlery enables us to do this. We encourage children to hold their knives in their dominant hand and we teach them how to cut their food through role modelling and demonstrations, respecting the individual child's preference.

Our aim is to develop confident, self-assured children who enjoy their food and are happy to try new foods in a relaxed way.

We avoid using dessert as a reward and will provide dessert even if a child has not finished or eaten any of their lunch as our desserts are still a source of nutrition. If we are concerned regarding how much a child is eating, we will invite parents in to discuss further and introduce our fussy eating strategies. We use positive praise when good behaviour is displayed such as trying new foods or sitting nicely. We can introduce a sticker chart for trying new foods.

7 Celebrations and special occasions

We love to celebrate children's birthdays and other special occasions throughout the year. Due to the risk of allergies and because of our healthy eating Ethos, we respectfully ask that families do not bring in food, such as cakes or sweets, to celebrate. We celebrate in lots of ways and create our own recipes. Children can bring in a fruit snack for friends to share on their birthdays.

When it is a child's birthday, they get to wear a birthday hat and a birthday sash for the day, we sing 'Happy Birthday', and they get to choose the activities for the day.

During special occasions/celebration days, such as Diwali, Christmas, Easter, Eid, Valentine's Day and Holi, we plan lots of fun activities such as storytelling, arts and crafts and healthy cooking.

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 for children with allergies where necessary) to mark the occasions. We invite parents in to help with this and we welcome recipe suggestions.

8 Cooking and learning about food

We aim to do at least one cooking activity each half term as a minimum. The days these occur vary to ensure all children have the opportunity to take part. The recipe is chosen based on which skills we want the children to learn and practice (considering their individual abilities), along with the ingredients we have in stock or are available to buy or from the garden. Our fortnightly newsletter will outline what we have done and which recipes we have used.

Children are supported and supervised by staff at all times and child friendly equipment is used. Children work in small groups to promote their language skills and their social self-esteem as well as develop their physical skills.

We plan a number of learning opportunities throughout the year such as growing our own carrots, tomatoes, potatoes, and indoor cress, which teaches the children the life cycle of plants and how to take care of them. It also supports all seven areas of learning for the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. The children in Pre-School also attend a weekly gardening club where they plant a variety of fruit, vegetables, and learn how where food comes from. We cultivate the food grown and eat it in Nursery.

9 Eating behaviour

Children need a variety of food exposure from around 6 months. The more variety the better. Babies regulate their food intake to meet their energy needs and it is normal for their appetite to change week -to-week rather than day-to-day. After the age of 4-5, children override the ability to eat for energy needs and begin to pick up learned behaviour such as:

- Finish what is on your plate
- Eating when others are eating even if not hungry
- Comfort eating

10 Eating habits 12-24 months

Some children develop a Neophobic response to food around this age. It is a normal part of development and in most children, this will diminish with time. Children dislike bitter tastes which is associated with vegetables and will prefer discreet food such as bread, plain rice, chicken nuggets, spaghetti hoops and chips and they may refuse to eat any other food. A child who develops this Neophobic response, a disgust or dislike for the sensory qualities of food (colour, small, taste, or texture) should never be forced to eat it.

10.1 Golden strategies to help through this phase:

10.1.1 *Repeated exposure*

the more exposure a child has to refused foods, the more familiar they become with sensory properties (colour, taste, texture) and more likely to accept it. Most parents tend to give up after 2-3 attempts, a child needs at least 15-20 exposures. Do not give up!

10.1.2 *Do not hide it*

serve it separately in small amounts, do not try to hide it as your child will become wary of “trusted” food. It does not need to be on the same plate. At this stage, it is about making your child comfortable around food.

10.1.3 *Copying others*

Parents, siblings and Nursery staff are powerful role models. Parents often comment that children eat better at Nursery as they are copying other children’s behaviours. It is important to remember that they are as likely to copy the healthy eating habits as they are the unhealthy ones! If you want your child to try the new or refused food, they need to see others doing it as well. Eat together!

11 What is causing food refusal?

There are many factors as to why a child may be refusing food:

- Not having a snack and meal routine may result in grazing and feeling full at mealtimes. It is worth keeping a diary and reviewing your child's daily routine.
- Are they tired when you are feeding them? This can cause lack of interest in food.
- Are they under the weather or constipated? This can affect their appetite.
- Have there been any changes to routine such as starting at Nursery, or toilet training?
- Are they being distracted by the television, tablet or toys? These may work in the short term, but they prevent your child from engaging at mealtimes and taking note of what they are eating and causes the challenging behaviour to increase in the long term.
- Are they drinking too much? The average 1-5-year-old should consume up to 500mls of fluid in a day (around 6-8 drinks per day), avoiding too much milk and sweet, sugary drinks.
- Are they feeling anxious? Mealtimes should be relaxed and enjoyable, without the pressure to eat.
- If in doubt about your child's ability to chew or accept lumpy foods, always consult medical advice.

12 Appetite

Children will eat to appetite, and this may not look the same every day. As parents, you need to think about what your child has eaten over the course of a week and not daily.

Learn to recognise the signs of fullness:

- Playing with food or little interest
- Turning their head away
- Pushing food or spoon away
- Using words "no", "all done", "get down"
- Clenching their mouth shut
- Easily distracted from eating
- Repeatedly spitting food out

It is important to keep mealtimes relaxed and enjoyable. The more you pressure your child to eat, the more likely food refusal will increase. Provide manageable portions and do not overload their plates. If you are worried about your child's weight, please speak to your Health Visitor.

13 Avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID)

In rare cases some children may develop ARFID which is an eating disorder. This usually presents itself in one or more the following ways:

- Eating a very restricted range of food
- Rarely appearing to be hungry or asking for food
- Avoiding or refusing to sit down for meals
- Needing distraction to eat
- Turning away consistently
- Anxiety or disgust; vomiting at the sight, smell or taste of certain foods

- Eating very small amounts
- Refusing to self-feed
- Spitting out food
- Crying/screaming at mealtimes
- High anxiety over new foods
- Difficulty in eating a range of settings
- Only accepting certain brands of food
- Foods chosen based on how they feel; dry, crunchy, soft, smooth

If parents are in any way concerned, they must seek the medical advice of a Health Care Professional. We will implement a Care Plan for any child that is diagnosed and adopt a whole family approach.

14 Top tips to remember

Choose one or two to begin with; small changes can make a big difference!

- Plan mealtimes to last around 20-30 minutes to avoid frustrated children (some children are naturally slow eaters so if they are happily eating after 20 minutes, leave them to it!)
- Reflect on what you are offering your child; have a consistent meal and snack routine. Do not worry if they do not have everything as they will have up to 6 opportunities to eat throughout the day
- Make mealtimes relaxed and enjoyable
- Encourage independence; lay the table, scrape the food into the bin, wash up, help prepare the food, grow the food!
- Do not be tempted to offer alternatives, your child will quickly learn that this is what will happen! Be consistent in offering the refused food, remember it can take up to 10 or more exposures before they try it
- Praise the small wins; tolerating a food on their plate, tasting a food, eating it without fuss (remember to move the goal posts!)
- Have a reward system in place such as a sticker chart; for tolerating a food, trying a food, tasting, smelling
- Think about how you present the food; do they prefer it not touching? Raw versus cooked with vegetables? Make the food exciting and colourful but do not overload the plate
- Do not pressure your child to finish everything, most children will eat to appetite
- Consistency is key; change will not happen overnight!
- Only buy what you want your child to eat or alternatively, keep sugary foods out of sight and out of reach
- Help your child to learn about food and involve them in the meal planning, cooking and preparation as they grow

We are more than happy to discuss any of our strategies or tips if you have any concerns. If you are interested in learning more, please visit www.earlystartgroup.com to complete a free online course: Positive mealtimes: Fussy eating strategies for families.

Useful information:

[Fussy eaters - NHS
www.childfeedingguide.co.uk](http://www.childfeedingguide.co.uk)

Appendix B

Gallery Photographs

We say the lunch time prayer together with a “prayer leader” every day before each meal. Here, you can also see a red wrist band indicating this child has an allergen.



An example of how children are sat at the various tables. You can see they are wearing their green allergen wrist bands and have a green tray indicating no allergens or requirements.





These are the trays we use for our children. The cutlery is proportionate for children aged 1-5. This is a typical example of the portion size. The children are offered more should they want it.



This is how we teach the children to cut their food; we hold our hands over theirs and encourage them to try at the same time.



The children feel confident to cut their food themselves.

This is the heated hostess trolley from which the food is served. There is always additional food for children who would like more.

