

Nutrition and mealtime policy

At Willow Cottage Nurseries we believe that mealtimes should be happy, social occasions for children and staff alike. We promote shared, enjoyable positive interactions at these times.

We are committed to offering children healthy, nutritious and balanced meals and snacks, which meet individual needs and requirements, following the Department for Education nutrition guidance¹.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Allergies and allergic reactions policy.

Our approach to food and healthy eating

- A balanced and healthy breakfast, midday meal, tea are provided for children attending a full day at the nursery
- Menus are planned in advance and in line with example menu and guidance produced by the Department for Education and can be found in the [eyLog parent app resources section](#). These are rotated regularly, reflect cultural diversity and variation and are displayed for children and parents to view; [feedback from parents and children supports menu planning](#)
- Menus include at least **5** servings of fresh fruit and vegetables per day
- We provide nutritious food at all mealtimes, avoiding large quantities of fat, sugar, salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings
- Quantities offered take account of the ages of the children being catered for, in line with recommended portion sizes for babies and young children.

Sustainability

- To provide cost-effective foods, we purchase staple long-life ingredients in bulk, use frozen or tinned fruit and vegetables if appropriate, prepare home-made sauces using raw ingredients, and use left-over foods where possible
- We plan menus to ensure that fruits and vegetables are seasonal and at their cheapest, we use a variety of meat, fish and vegetable alternatives
- We grow and use our own herbs.

Mealtime environment

- No child is ever left alone when eating or drinking to minimise the risk of choking, and a [qualified paediatric first aider is always present during mealtimes](#)
- Staff set a good example, when eating with the children, and demonstrate good table manners. Mealtimes are organised so that they are social occasions in which children and staff participate in small groups. During meal and snack times children are encouraged to use appropriate table manners and staff promote conversation to support social development

¹ https://bit.ly/EYFS_nutrition_guidance

- Staff use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drinks, and feeding themselves
- Any child who shows signs of distress at being faced with a meal they do not like will have their food removed without any fuss. If a child does not finish their first course, they will still be given a helping of any second dish
- Children who refuse to eat at the mealtime are offered food later in the day
- Children are given time to eat at their own pace and are not rushed.

Drinks

- Only milk and water are provided as drinks to promote oral health
- Fresh drinking water is always available and accessible. It is frequently offered to children and babies, and intake is monitored
- In hot weather staff will encourage children to drink more water to keep them hydrated.

Baby feeding and weaning

- We follow babies' individual feeding patterns following conversations with parents. We regularly review these to ensure they continue to meet the baby's needs
- We feed babies responsively according to their needs and support mothers with breastfeeding, through providing suitable places to breastfeed in the setting and making provision for expressed breastmilk
- We prepare infant formula milk if required, following NHS guidelines. Parents can provide chilled or frozen breast milk, unopened carton milk feeds, or unopened formula milk powder stating the quantity to be made up and the correct number of sterilised bottles required for that day. The bottles are returned to parents for sterilisation each day.
- Weaning is introduced in collaboration with parents, including discussions about the stage their baby is at, the types of foods and textures their baby is eating at home and how these are presented to the baby; no assumptions are made based on the age of the baby
- The nursery provides parents with daily written records of feeding routines for all children

Commercial baby food and drink

- We provide fresh food for babies and do not use pre-made commercial baby food or drinks
- We do not permit parents to provide commercial baby food or drinks (other than infant formula).

Management of food allergies and dietary needs

- All allergens are displayed alongside the menus to show the ingredients of each meal
- Individual dietary requirements are respected. Before a child joins the nursery, we gather information from parents regarding their children's dietary needs, including any special dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies that a child has, and any special health requirements. All information is shared with staff involved in preparing and handling food

- Where appropriate, we will carry out a risk assessment in the case of allergies and work alongside parents to put into place an individual dietary/allergy plan for their child. This will be regularly reviewed and any changes shared with all staff
- For each child with special dietary needs, a notice will be displayed in their main dining area detailing the relevant instructions, **this information will also be kept with the daily the register for meals outdoors or in another room.** Place settings are colour coded red to indicate a dietary need
- We give careful consideration to seating to avoid cross contamination of food from child to child.
- **An adult will sit at each table with the children throughout meals to ensure safety and minimise risks**
- **The adult sitting at the table with the children will be responsible for checking that the food being provided meets all the requirements for each child on their table. Children sat with an apprentice under 18 years old will have their meals checked by team leadership.**
- Where appropriate, discussions will also take place with children about allergies and potential risks to make them aware of the dangers of sharing certain foods
- Staff show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. They do not use a child's diet or allergy as a label for the child, or make a child feel singled out because of their diet or allergy.

Provision for cultural and dietary preferences

- Where possible, we provide foods from the diet of each of the children's cultural backgrounds, providing children with familiar foods and introducing them to new ones
- Cultural differences in eating habits are respected.

Learning about food and cooking with children

- Staff support children to make healthy choices and understand the need for healthy eating
- We promote positive attitudes to healthy eating through play, growing, shopping and cooking opportunities and discussions.

Celebrations and special occasions

- We will sometimes celebrate special occasions with treats such as cake, sweets or biscuits. These will be given at mealtimes to help prevent tooth decay and not spoil the child's appetite
- We do allow parents to bring in cakes on special occasions **these (cakes etc) are usually sent home, but occasionally shop bought cake may be eaten as pudding at teatime.**
- We ensure that all food brought in from parents meet health and safety requirements and that ingredients are listed, following the Food Information for Consumers (FIR) 2014.

Food safety and hygiene

- All staff who prepare and handle food are competent to do so and receive training in food hygiene which is updated every three years

- All staff are trained in preparing foods safely to avoid the risk of choking, following the Foods Standards Agency guidelines
- All staff are aware of the symptoms and treatments for allergies and anaphylaxis
- All staff are aware of the differences between allergies and intolerances, including that they need to maintain vigilance as children can develop allergies at any time
- 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.

Food brought from home

- We do not allow children to bring packed lunches into the setting.
- We share the Food Standards Agency choking hazards guidance to support parents to prepare foods to reduce choking hazards
- We provide appropriate storage in allocated fridges
- Food brought in from home are checked prior to giving the contents to the children to ensure any risks from potential allergens or choking hazards are managed.

Our policy is developed in partnership with parents, staff and children and reviewed on a regular basis.