



Food Policy

INTRODUCTION

Polegate School Nursery is committed to promoting the health and well-being of its children and their families through encouraging them to eat well and to provide information and healthy food choices. This policy outlines the organisation, teaching and management of healthy eating at Polegate School Nursery.

The policy was initially formulated through consultation with the Nursery staff during team meetings, and the thoughts of parents/carers taken into consideration through informal dialogue, questionnaires, 'Dear Parents' letters, and multi media opportunities. The children were also involved through observation, talk quotes and including them when planning food to be grown in the edible garden and other activities involving food.

Copies have been given to staff, kept in office and displayed for parents.

CURRENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The EYFS welfare requirement is for the provision of healthy, balanced, nutritious food and drink. Research confirms that healthy eating habits in the years before school are very important because they influence growth, development and academic achievement later in life.

This policy has also taken into consideration the voluntary food and drink guidelines for early years settings in England.

A healthy, balanced diet for children aged one to five years is based on the four food groups which provide a range of essential nutrients that children need to grow and develop :

Starchy food, fruit and vegetables, meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non dairy sources of protein, milk and dairy products.

The type and amount of fat children consume is important, not high in saturated fat, and so is that the children do not eat too much sugar and salt. The wider the variety of food and drinks eaten, the better the balance of nutrients provided.

AIMS

Aim: To provide food and drink that meets the nutritional requirements of young children in our care. Portion size guidelines are also addressed.

Aim: To promote and encourage every child to eat well, enjoy a varied diet and establish healthy eating habits to take them into their school years.

Approach: At Polegate Nursery we work hard to promote a holistic approach to food with our children through growing it, cooking it, sharing it, eating it and enjoying it together , all the time encouraging children to eat well and extend their knowledge, understanding and experiences of healthy eating.

FOOD AND DRINK PROVIDED

Snacks

The menu for snacks are planned to meet the national voluntary food and drink guidelines and we make sure children eat regularly with meals and snacks no more than 3 hours apart.

We operate a rolling snack programme which encourages children to prepare and select their own snack promoting independency and self-care. We manage and organise this carefully ensuring that the children sit down at a table to eat their snacks, are supervised at these times, and are monitored to ensure that they eat an appropriate amount of food safely to reduce the risk of choking.

Menus for snack are planned in advance. A 3 week cycle approach is used as a base to ensure that variety and seasonality of food is considered when new menus are planned. Each 3 week cycle is reviewed and frequently taking into account children's interests and small achievable, next step, independent skills.

Snacks are varied included different colours and textures of food.

Dried fruit is not provided as part of snacks.

It is our belief that children should have access to drinking water throughout the day.

Water

Research shows that children need regular fluid intake so drinking water is made available and accessible at all times. We encourage our children to help themselves to water at all times and promote when this is particularly important eg after energetic play, hot days. We only provide water and milk between meals and as part of snacks.. The nursery has a water and milk only drinks policy to avoid access to juices, fizzy drinks, squashes, flavoured water, flavoured milk and energy drinks.

Hot lunch

Parents can pay an additional fee for their child to have a hot school dinner, prepared in the school kitchen, via the company Chartwells. Chartwells provides nutritional, balanced meals compliant with school food standards. We monitor portion size and provide parent with regular feedback.

FOOD AND DRINK PROVISION MONITOR

The settings food monitor is Sharon Trent, Nursery Lead Teacher. She has responsibility for developing policy and practice and monitoring healthy food and drink provision.

COMMUNICATION WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

We liaise with families about the timing of meals and snacks and how these fit with routines at home. We share our food policy with parents and carers when their children start to attend our nursery and consult them when updating it. We give informal and formal feedback on how well and what their children are eating in our setting. We also monitor and assess this through the health and self care strand of the EYFS curriculum. We make sure our snack menu is displayed and consult parents and carers about the food we provide and ask for feedback. We encourage parents to attend food events at the setting eg our open afternoons termly and cooking events that promote healthy eating eg through nursery specifically or the school as often as possible.

Breastfeeding - This setting supports breastfeeding by providing support and information for breastfeeding mothers and providing a quiet, comfortable place to breastfeed.

Lunchboxes - We provide parents with information and advice on what makes a healthy lunchbox, including examples of food and drink to include. We make sure that these examples are in line with guidelines and the nursery food policy.

Hot lunch - We share with parents the Chartwells menu. We encourage them to select a variety of healthy meals for their child. This also helps with school readiness if they will be school dinners when they start school.

THE EATING ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF MEAL TIMES

The organisation of our snack time provides opportunities for children to not just learn about and try new foods but also to develop their social skills. The children sit together and are encouraged to learn acceptable eating behaviours. We acknowledge that children will eat at different speeds and so we make sure they all have enough time to eat their meals and snacks, so that those who eat more slowly do not miss out either on food or other activities. Part of the established snack routine is that children wash their hands before/after eating meals and snacks.

The area used for eating is clean and inviting, and free from distractions. We use appropriate sized furniture, plates, bowls, cups and cutlery and encourage children to eat independently. An appropriate talk prompt is often added. We also encourage them to choose the food they are going to eat for themselves and to try new foods.

We do not expect children to finish everything on their plate and they have the opportunity to have second helpings if they are still hungry.

Food is not used as a punishment or as a reward and no child is left alone while eating. We use our meal times as a sociable occasion and a valuable time to talk to children about food. Children are encouraged to set up and help clear away tables and when possible staff sit with the children to eat, acting as a positive role model and encouraging conversation.

Fussy eaters - We use a range of strategies to support our fussy eaters:

Modelling including sitting with their peers/good eaters/staff

Exposure including regular repeated chances to taste new foods, smaller taster portions

Rewards including praise, lunch time stickers, celebrating small steps and attempts

No pressure - not force a child to finish or eat everything. Instead giving smaller portions first and then have the opportunity for successful seconds.

Involved in growing, harvesting and cooking with the food from the edible garden.

CELEBRATIONS AND SPECIAL OCCASSIONS

It is important that children are given the opportunity to celebrate special occasions and cultural events and we respect that food and drink is often used to mark these occasions. However we think carefully about celebrating these events in other ways here at Polegate Nursery. We want to reduce the amount of high fat, sugar and salt children can consume at these times, especially as we have a lot of children celebrating birthdays etc in the same setting. So we celebrate special occasions with songs, decorating rooms, craft and play activities. If Birthday children really want to bring in a token for their friends they are allowed to bring in non-food items such as stickers.

SPECIAL DIETARY NEEDS AND DIVERSE DIETS

Polegate Nursery liaise with parents to ensure we are aware of the dietary needs of all children and staff are made aware of such needs. This is often begun as part of their transition to nursery. The nursery aims to meet the needs of all children who need a special diet due to an allergy, intolerance, medical need, SEN or disability. We are supported by the NHS and ISEND. We aim to provide children of all cultures and religions with snacks which meet their dietary needs and all children have the opportunity to explore foods from different cultures. We follow the CFT guidelines for catering for special dietary requirements : Requesting information before they start the setting, working with the family to write and agree a clear plan, ensure all staff are fully informed and information is clearly displayed, ensure appropriate food is provided and ensure staff know how to deal with a severe allergic reaction. (part of first aid training)

FOOD BROUGHT IN FROM HOME

If families want to supply their own snacks we provide guidance to help them choose appropriate food and drink for their children that is in line with our food guidelines. We make sure it is brought into the setting with appropriate labels and is stored safely until it is needed.

LEARNING THROUGH AND ABOUT FOOD

We provide adult and child led opportunities for the children to learn through food and about food. We have an edible garden that the children help plant, maintain, harvest and then use in our snacks and regular cooking. Food is incorporated across the curriculum including our science, art, physical development, communication, literacy, language and PSE. We also learn through and about food as part of our outdoor learning, mini themes and trips.

STAFF TRAINING

Core staff involved in food preparation all take part in food hygiene and safety training. Members of the team also attend training and then cascade the information and practise with the team of the team through meetings to enhance professional development.

MONITORING & EVALUATION

The food and drink monitor will have lead responsibility for providing healthy food and drink in the setting. A range of measures will be used to evaluate impact of the policy in line with the above mentioned areas. The policy will be reviewed annually.

Signed: Sharon Trent

Date revised: May 2021