

Food, Nutrition and Healthy Eating Policy

- **Policy Statement:**

At the Childrens Learning Centre, we are dedicated to providing a safe, nourishing, and developmentally appropriate food environment for all children. This policy aligns with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Nutrition Guidance. We aim to promote healthy dietary habits, prevent food-related incidents, and collaborate closely with families to support the nutritional needs of every child while embedding nutrition, food safety, and safer eating principles into daily practice.

It includes mandatory staff supervision while children are eating, attention to allergy management, and specific seating and feeding practices to reduce choking.

It ensures that allergy action plans, parental collaboration, and PFA-trained supervision are ingrained into the setting's operations.

At the Childrens Learning Centre we endeavour to develop positive eating habits early on. Children's early experiences with food can shape future eating habits. This can impact children's long-term health including maintaining a healthy weight, and good oral health.

Age-Appropriate Nutrition and Feeding Practices

Infants (0–6 months):

- We fully support exclusive breastfeeding or formula feeding during this stage.
- Breast milk will be stored, labelled, and warmed safely following NHS and Food Standards Agency guidance.
- Formula will only be prepared and served using water at 70°C or higher and left to cool **no more** than 30 minutes, as per government guidance
- Good hygiene practise is followed during all feed preparation.
- Bottles will never be propped, and feeding is always carried out by a member of staff to reduce choking risk and support bonding.

Infants (6–12 months):

- Weaning will be introduced gradually in consultation with parents and based on individual readiness.
- Foods will be appropriately textured (mashed/pureed) and free of added salt, sugar, or honey.
- Common allergens (e.g., eggs and dairy) will be introduced one at a time and closely monitored for reactions.
- Children will be seated in a highchair or low chair, always supervised during feeding.
- A weaning plan will be created with the parents and updated regularly.

Toddlers and Young Children (12 months–5 years):

- Meals are balanced and align with government portion size guidance: each meal includes a starchy food, fruit or vegetable, protein, and dairy (or alternatives).
- Snacks are healthy and low in sugar/salt. Water is always available.
- Foods that pose a choking risk (whole grapes, raw carrot sticks, etc.) are cut appropriately or avoided.
- Mealtimes are calm, social experiences with adult's role-modelling positive eating behaviours.
- We avoid processed foods, sweetened drinks, and high fat/salt/sugar products.
- Only tap water and milk are offered at the setting.

Allergen Management and Choking Prevention

- Before a child starts, we collect comprehensive dietary information, including allergies, intolerances, and preferences.
- Allergy, intolerance and preference action plans are created with input from parents and any healthcare professionals and updated regularly.

- A designated staff member from each room, each day, is responsible for verifying each child's food is safe to eat.
- Children are never permitted to share food and are closely observed during meals.
- Choking incidents are documented and reviewed as safeguarding "near misses".
- Two valid **Paediatric First Aid (PFA)** trained staff are always present during meal and snack times.

Breastfeeding and Formula Support

- Breastfeeding is welcomed and supported on-site.
- Expressed milk is stored and served following safety protocols.
- Formula provided by parents is prepared to NHS standards.
- Responsive feeding is practised to meet the infant's needs, comfort, and feeding cues.

Communication with Parents

- Menus are shared with parents and tailored where possible to cultural, ethical, and dietary needs.
- Ongoing communication is encouraged around food introduction, preferences, and concerns.
- Parents are involved in planning for dietary needs, weaning timelines, allergy action plans, intolerances and texture progression.
- We provide resources to support healthy eating at home, including government guidance on portion sizes, weaning, and food safety.
- Feedback is welcomed to inform continuous improvement.

Mealtime Environment

- Children are provided with a variety of foods and textures to explore during mealtimes.
- Mealtimes are, calm with no additional distractions, such as music in the background, and offer positive interactions.
- Children are encouraged but not forced to try new foods.
- Practitioners sit at the same level, facing the children to monitor for any allergic reactions or choking.

Food Safety and Hygiene

- All food handlers have **Level 2 Food Hygiene** certification.
- Food is stored, prepared, and served following Food Standards Agency (FSA) guidance.
- Kitchen and preparation areas are cleaned daily, and equipment is sanitised.
- Food temperatures are checked regularly with calibrated thermometers and recorded.
- Our main meal of the day is supplied by Hungry Monsters, a catering supplier in Hampshire, providing, healthy, fresh, nutritious meals. Kitchen staff serve the food following all food safety and hygiene guidance.

Sustainability and Food Waste

- Menus include seasonal and local ingredients where possible.
- Children are taught about sustainable eating and food origins through discussion and activities.
- Food waste is minimised, as part of our sustainability commitment.