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## 6.5 Food and drink

### Policy statement

Our setting regards snack and meal times as an important part of our day. Eating represents a social time for children and adults and helps children to learn about healthy eating. We promote healthy eating using resources and materials from the Pre-school Learning Alliance. At snack and meal times, we aim to provide nutritious food, which meets the children's individual dietary needs.

We send out to all our Parents "Advice on Healthy eating" leaflet (a copy attached)

### Procedures

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

- 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.
- If any changes to their child's dietary needs Parents are asked to update the Pre-School and provide us with new guidelines
- We display current information about individual children's dietary needs so that all 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 provide nutritious food at snack time, avoiding large quantities of saturated fat, sugar and salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings.

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Health

- When we have a party or a special occasion, we include a variety of foods from the four main food groups:
  - meat, fish and protein alternatives;
  - dairy foods;
  - grains, cereals and starch vegetables; and
  - fruit and vegetables.
- We include foods from the diet of each of the children's cultural backgrounds, providing children with familiar foods and introducing them to new ones.
- We take care not to provide food containing nuts or nut products and are especially vigilant where we have a child who has a known allergy to nuts.
- Through discussion with parents and research reading by staff, 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 require staff to show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. Staff 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.
- We organise meal and snack times so that they are social occasions in which children and staff participate.
- We use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink and feeding themselves.
- 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 have fresh drinking water constantly available for the children. Each child has their own named water bottle. We inform the children about how to obtain the water and that they can ask for more water at any time during the day.
- In accordance with parents' wishes, we can offer children arriving early in the morning, and/or staying late, an appropriate snack provided by the parent.
- We inform parents who provide food for their children about the storage facilities available in the setting.
- We give parents who provide food for their children information about suitable containers for food.
- In order to protect children with food allergies, we discourage children from sharing and swapping their food with one another.
- For young children who drink milk, we provide semi skimmed milk.

### *Packed lunches*

Children are required to bring packed lunches, we:

- ensure perishable contents of packed lunches are refrigerated or contain an ice pack to keep food cool;
- inform parents of our policy on healthy eating, we also send out a healthy eating leaflet to all parents;
- inform parents of whether we have facilities to microwave cooked food brought from home;
- encourage parents to provide sandwiches with a healthy filling, fruit, and milk based deserts, such as yoghurt or crème fraîche, where we can only provide cold food from home. We discourage sweet drinks and can provide children with water or diluted fresh fruit juice;
- discourage packed lunch contents that consist largely of crisps, processed foods, sweet drinks and sweet products such as cakes 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 staff sit with children to eat their lunch so that the mealtime is a social occasion.

### **Legal framework**

- Regulation (EC) 852/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Hygiene of Foodstuffs.

### **Further guidance**

- Safer Food, Better Business (Food Standards Agency 2011)

### **Other useful Pre-school Learning Alliance publications**

- Nutritional Guidance for the Under Fives (Ed. 2010)
- The Early Years Essential Cookbook (2009)
- Healthy and Active Lifestyles for the Early Years (2012)//