



LITTLE ELLIES

Food & Drink Policy

Policy Creation & Review	
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Food and Drink Policy

Introduction

Little Ellies recognises the important role that food can play in the development of a child and believes that every young person should have access to healthy, fresh food as well as being educated about the benefits of a balanced diet and a healthy lifestyle.

This policy is to:

- Ensure that all aspects of food and drink in the nursery promote a balanced diet and provide healthy, varied and nutritious meals and snacks for the wellbeing of children, staff and visitors.
- Help to empower children to make informed decisions about the food and drink that they consume and support them to adopt sensible eating habits.
- Promote positive attitudes to healthy eating and access to healthy options.
- Take a holistic approach to food to support the message of maintaining a healthy lifestyle to tackle health related issues such as oral health, obesity and sugar intake.
- Awareness to children that drinking water is available at all times.
- Organise meal times - staff sit with children while they eat to promote positive role models for healthy eating as well as encouraging children to eat.
- Encourage independence such as choices and self-service.
- Obtain information to accommodate the special dietary, religious needs or preference of the child in consultation with Parents/Carers.
- Summarise how Little Ellies liaises with key stakeholder groups relating to the planning and provision of food and drink.

This setting regards snack and meal times as an important part of the setting's routine. 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 *Ofsted*, *EYFS*, *Public Health England*, *Eat Better Start Better guidance*, *Newham Early Start Nutrition Team*, *First Steps Nutrition Trust Charity* and *The Department of Health's Healthy Start Scheme*. At snack and meal times, we aim to provide nutritious food, which meets the children's individual dietary needs.

Little Ellies cater daily for children aged from 6 months - 5 years. The food is prepared on site by our cook from Juniper Ventures based at Ellen Wilkinson Primary School with whom we are associated. Their food hygiene rating is maintained at the highest standard at a rating of 5. The children's backgrounds reflect the diverse local community, and Little Ellies incorporates this into our menus. A well balanced diet is important for good health. It can help maintain a healthy body weight and enhance general wellbeing. Therefore it is important to provide healthy food choices to help children eat well. We have approximately 45 children catered for on a daily basis by our onsite caterers and all our food is sustainably sourced largely from British farmers.

Please note that we are a healthy eating centre, so please help us to maintain our healthy eating status by not bringing in sugary items such as sweets, crisps, fizzy drinks etc. to the nursery. The nursery will celebrate special occasions, for example celebrating festivals/events through encouraging healthy eating recipes and providing a range of healthy and cultural foods limiting unhealthy food choices. Parents/Carers can bring in healthy food such as fruit bags/kebabs, fruit pizzas, mini hummus crunch pots for special occasions such as birthdays, but we ask that cake and other sugary treats are not to be brought to the nursery. Please speak to a member of staff or management prior to any special event so we can support you.

This policy is written based on Government guidelines, and has been developed from the following sources of information:

- Eat Better Start Better Guidance

- Eating well in the Early Years:
<https://www.firststepsnutrition.org/eating-well-early-years>
 - Early Start Nutrition Award – Early Start Nutrition
 - DfE guidance for early years:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/example-menus-for-early-years-settings-in-england>
 - The EYFS statutory framework
- All guidelines show how they can meet the Early Years Foundation Stage welfare requirement to provide ‘healthy, balanced and nutritious’ meals for children.

Our catering company Juniper Ventures are consulted by Management and all the above are taken into consideration when devising our menus. Our menus are changed twice a year and are seasonal; consisting of a spring / summer menu as well as an autumn / winter menu.

This policy has also been developed through consultation with representatives from the Early Start Nutrition Award Scheme, staff and parents voice.

Parents, families and staff all partake in regular consultation of the menus through surveys and we try to ensure these take place at least twice a year. The information is collated and parent voice is further added to our menu choices if appropriate according to guidelines, and can be sourced and sustained. For children, this is built into our curriculum and we focus on healthy foods and its benefits through our core texts on offer each month.

Our Eating Environment

At Little Ellies, we do not have a separate dining hall, and we believe this teaches our young minds the virtues of tidying up and creating a clean and hygienic environment for us to have our meals in, just like our homes. Our children are taught independence in setting up and taking on roles of responsibility from the age of 2. We encourage the children to help with the setting up of the dining table including placing cutlery and crockery on the tables. Children under the age of 2 are supported to wash their hands by a staff member. Our over 2 year olds are encouraged to wash their hands independently before all snack and meal times, as well as being offered self-service and choice whilst feeding themselves.

As mealtimes are a personal, social and emotional time for the children; the children sit with their peers and are encouraged to have conversations.

The children understand all about sustainably sourced foods as they grow seasonal foods including carrots, cress and tomatoes in the Nursery garden. Children will observe the life cycle of the seasonal food and use them in cooking activities through the year as part of their curriculum. Produce is also given to the chef to include as part of their meals such as new potatoes. The children will also explore herbs and spices with their senses developing gross and fine motor skills, in their communication and language and as part of their emotional wellbeing. Children partake in physical activities every day and have access to outdoor play in all weathers. They are encouraged to manoeuvre in different styles promoting active play.

Promoting healthy eating

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

- Before a child starts to attend the setting, we find out from parents their children's dietary needs and preferences, including any allergies.
- We record information about each child's dietary needs in her/his registration record and parents sign the record to signify that it is correct.
- We regularly consult with parents to ensure that our records of their children's dietary needs including any allergies, are up to date.
- We display current information about individual children's dietary needs so that all staff and volunteers are fully informed about them. We ensure all allergen information is displayed beside our menus so that parents are aware and informed.
- 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 plan menus in advance with our stakeholders in conjunction with Early Start Nutritionist service and our chef from Juniper Ventures.
- We display the menus of meals/snacks for the information of parents.
- We provide nutritious food for all meals and snacks, avoiding large quantities of saturated fat, sugar and salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings.
- Provide suitable utensils, plates, cups and bottles (age appropriate).
- Breakfast is provided in the mornings. Parents/Carers are asked on arrival if their children would like breakfast.
- Meal times are the following: breakfast at 8am, lunch at 11.30am and tea at 3.30pm. We have a rolling snack both in the morning and afternoon session.
- 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 vary foods to represent the diet of wider cultural backgrounds, providing children with familiar foods and introducing them to new ones. Staff encourage all children especially fussy eaters to try new foods by being positive role models and giving praise in success.
- Healthy eating displayed in the nursery environment.
- Servings and portions are supervised by practitioners and the children are encouraged to have the correct proportions from each food group.
- We are a NUT FREE school and nursery and take care not to provide food containing any nuts or nut products and are especially vigilant when 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, and about food allergies. We take account of this information in the provision of food and drinks and tailor food accordingly as stipulated by parents on their application form.
- All our meats are halal unless requested.
- We require all 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 together.
- We use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink and feeding themselves (dependent on age)
- 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. We inform the children about how to obtain the water and that they can ask for water at any time during the day.
- In order to protect children with food allergies, we discourage children from sharing and swapping their food with one another.
- Parents are **not allowed** to bring any food from home for their children or have any food stored within their children's bags or boxes, (unless it is a special occasion such as a birthday where we stipulate the kind of foods that can be shared), in order to protect children from allergies and to ensure that all food provided within the nursery are from a trackable source. It is important that any food brought in from home (for a special occasion such as birthdays) is labelled with the child's details, is safely stored until it is needed, and is reheated safely, if appropriate.
- For children who drink milk, we provide full fat milk to babies and semi skimmed milk to over 2s. Formula milk is prepared by manufacturer's instructions in the Nursery kitchen and all breastmilk storage and preparation is stipulated in the Breastfeeding and Formula Milk policy.
- The only drinks that are permitted at the nursery are milk and water.

- For each child, we provide parents with daily feedback and information about feeding routines, intake and preferences. Children are observed at mealtimes - if they are eating too little, Little Ellies will work in partnership with Parents/Carers.
- All concerns/suggestions regarding meals should be referred to the Nursery Manager in writing.

Food allergies

Food allergies can be life threatening. The risk of accidental exposure to allergen foods can be reduced in the nursery setting if we work in partnership with parents to minimise risks and provide a safe educational environment for children.

Therefore to limit and ensure no contamination or exposure to allergen foods occurs we ask that parents take responsibility in the following way:

- Notify the nursery of the child's allergies as soon as an allergy becomes apparent.
- Provide written medical documentation, instructions, and medications as directed by a medical professional.
- Work with the nursery team to develop a care plan that accommodates the child's needs.
- Provide properly labelled medications and replace medications after use or upon expiration.
- Help support the child in the self-management of their food allergy (in an age appropriate manner) including:
 - safe and unsafe foods
 - strategies for avoiding exposure to unsafe foods
 - symptoms of allergic reactions
 - how and when to tell an adult they may be having an allergy-related problem
 - how to read food labels (age appropriate)
- Review policies/procedures with the Nursery staff after reaction has occurred.
- Provide emergency contact information.

As Little Ellies also has a duty of care, we acknowledge and comply by the following:

- Be knowledgeable and follow applicable laws and policies that may apply.
- Review the health records submitted by parents and doctors and ask for updates in a timely manner.
- Include children with food allergies in nursery activities. Children should not be excluded from daily activities solely based on their food allergy.
- Identify a core team/person to work with parents and the child (age appropriate) to establish a care plan that will need to be signed off by all parties, including any health visitors linked to the setting before implementation. Any changes to the plan and the management of any food allergies should be made with the core team/person in liaison with the parent.
- Assure that all staff who interacts with the child on a regular basis understand food allergy, can recognise symptoms, knows what to do in an emergency, and work with other staff to eliminate the use of food allergens in the allergic child's meals, educational tools, arts and crafts projects, or incentives.
- Coordinate with the manager to be sure medications are appropriately stored, and be sure that an emergency kit is available. Medications need to be kept in an easily accessible secure location in the Nursery.
- Review policies/care plan with the core team/person, management, parents/guardians and Health Visitors/doctors after a reaction has occurred.
- Discuss educational visits with the family of the child with regards to food to decide appropriate strategies for managing the food allergy.

Further information on managing allergies in the form of care plans is available via our Medical Needs Policy.