



## 1.1 Healthy Eating

We recognise the importance of a healthy lifestyle and diet and understand that establishing a balanced diet in childhood helps establish healthy eating habits for life. This policy states the ways in which our Nursery Schools support children to develop their knowledge and understanding of the importance of a healthy diet in their everyday lives. The first five years are when children start learning about food from an early age and those who develop good eating behaviours and consume a variety of foods from a young age are more likely to carry on these good behaviours as they get older.

This policy also describes how the nursery helps children to develop the skills and attitudes that will help them make informed healthy choices both in and out of nursery. In order to reflect the importance of healthy eating, this policy specifies the types of food and drink that we will provide in our Nursery Schools at different times.

In order for us all to meet our full potential we need to be healthy and fit in all aspects of health, these include physical, intellectual, social, emotional, environmental and spiritual health.

A healthy diet is one which allows for a balance of different foods that sustain the wellbeing of the individual. Different lifestyles result in different dietary needs and individuals need to be aware of these and the effects of different foods on their bodies. A healthy, balanced diet may vary between individuals from different cultural, ethnic and social backgrounds.

## 1.2 Nursery Food Provision

Linden Tree Nursery Schools regard meal times as an important part of the setting's day. Eating represents a social time for children and adults and helps children to learn about healthy eating. We promote healthy eating and at snack times, we aim to provide nutritious food, which meets the children's individual dietary needs. Therefore our meals and snacks meet the Caroline Walker Trust guidelines Through the meals provided from our lunch and tea supplier 'Zebedees'.

The Nursery Schools and the catering company 'Zebedees', are dedicated to providing a balanced menu of lunches, with no additives. The needs of children with individual dietary needs, due to medical, cultural or religious reasons are catered for appropriately.



Allergies and Food Exclusions We will only remove an item of food from a child's diet for the following reasons

- Religious choice
- Vegetarian
- Allergies/intolerances as recorded and advised by a Doctor

We follow the following procedures to ensure meals are safe for all children attending our Nursery Schools:

1. All Staff who prepare snacks, meals or lead cooking activities at our Nursery Schools have basic food hygiene training and a knowledge of allergies, dietary requirements and healthy eating.
2. 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 their registration record and parents sign the record to signify that it is correct.
3. We regularly consult with parents to ensure that our records of their children's dietary needs - including any allergies - are up-to-date. Parents sign the up-dated record to signify that it is correct.
4. We display current information about individual children's dietary needs so that all staff and volunteers are fully informed about them.
5. We implement systems to ensure that children receive only food and drink that is consistent with their dietary needs. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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 or his diet or allergy.
8. We actively encourage children to wash their hands before and after handling food.



## Meal Times and Process

It is important that all meals are seen as a family event for the children and teachers. We use meal times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink and feeding themselves. We achieve this by:

- Classical music is played for each meal time; breakfast, snack, lunch, snack and tea. The music will be only set at background music volume.
- All children are given a 5 minute warning before meal times, before cleaning the classroom together and then are encouraged and supported to wash their hands
- All children guided to and supported where needed, to sit around the table, no more than 6 around a table, with a teacher sat at the table with them.
- Our children are not to be fed in a high chair that is not part of the table, it is important that from a young age we instil the joy of social eating, if children are only fed separately in their high chairs, it can create a segregated eating atmosphere.
- 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. Children are encouraged from 8/9 months to start to attempt to feed themselves. Along with their own spoons, the teachers will have another spoon and will encourage their fine motor skills.
- For our under twos we encourage messy eating, the children are encouraged to use their hands to bring food to their mouths, this is a fundamental part of them developing their gross and fine motor skills.
- Over twos are encouraged to use a knife and fork at lunch and tea meal times. They are also encouraged to serve their own meals, and to tidy away after their meals. This promotes a great sense of responsibility and control over their meal times. From this it creates a calmer and positive meal time experience.
- 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. It is provided in a water bottle with their name and picture on which is accessible all day.

Meals are provided between these times

*Breakfast -8.00 am to 9.00 am- We provide it during this time so that morning circle time and activities are able to start by 9.30 am. If you choose to bring your child in after 9.00am please ensure that breakfast has been provided at home before this time.*

*For breakfast we provide a specific range of food, this has been carefully thought out to tackle childhood obesity, promote healthy eating, and have a consistent amount of carbohydrate and energy for the morning until snack. We only offer one portion for breakfast. The food on offer for breakfast is; Weetabix and Porridge.*



*Morning Snack -10.00 am to 10.30 am- We provide a choice of two fruits each morning snack. We rotate and offer a variety of fruits over the week. For the over twos, they are able to choose and prepare their fruit for morning snack. Morning snack is also provided with a cup of milk for their daily calcium intake.*

*Lunch – 11.30 am to 12.30 pm – Our food is provided by Zebedees, please see our Menu for food provided which is seasonal. Children will only receive one suitably sized portion, we do not give seconds as this promotes unhealthy habits towards eating. If children do not try a mouthful of lunch, dessert will not be provided, nor will another meal. Dessert is offered to all children, and again only one portion is given.*

*Afternoon Snack 3:00pm to 3.30 pm- The food provided in the afternoon is a vegetable snack, it can range from raw peppers, celery, tomatoes, cucumber, carrot, broccoli etc. This can at times for the over twos be served with dip.*

*Tea 4.30 pm to 5.15 pm – The food provided for supper is from Zebedees. In the summer it is a cold Mediterranean mix of food, in the winter it is a hot meal. Again with pudding. As the same with lunch, only one portion is provided for both the meal and pudding.*

It is our practice that if a child chooses to not eat one of the meals provided, an alternative will not be provided as that will encourage picky or fussy eating. At our nursery they are offered food every 2 hours so if they happen to not want one meal, they will be offered a meal again 2 hours later.

The role of parents or carers

Linden Tree Nursery Schools are aware that the primary role in the children's healthy eating education lies with the parent or carers. We wish to build a positive and supporting relationship with the parent or carers of children at the nursery through mutual understanding, trust, and cooperation.

In promoting this objective, we will:

1. Inform parents about the nurseries healthy eating education policy and practice.
2. Encourage parents to be involved in reviewing the settings policy and making modifications to it as necessary, using the policy of the month procedure.
3. Inform and support parent or carers about best practice known with regard to healthy eating so that they can support key messages being given to children at the nursery.



## Supporting children who are fussy or picky eaters

Although there is no single widely accepted definition, fussy or picky eating is characterised by an unwillingness to eat familiar foods or to try new foods, as well as strong food preferences (Taylor et al., 2015).

NHS guidance on fussy eating states that it is common for toddlers to refuse to eat or taste new foods. This is not seen as worrying, as long as the child eats some food from the four main food groups (fruit and vegetables; potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates; dairy or dairy alternatives; and beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins). The guidance suggests to look at what a child is eating over a week, rather than a day and if your child is active and gaining weight, with no obvious health problems, then are getting enough to eat.

Children's taste preference start in the utero, so when a child is in the embryonic phase, the more variety of foods a mother has during pregnancy, the more they are likely to accept those foods when they're born. The same is with breast milk, flavours such as garlic and vanilla can be tasted through that.

Strategies we use for helping to instil positive eating habits

### DO'S

- Remain calm
- Provide lots of time at meal times- not to rush the child
- Give incentives e.g. high fives, well done etc.
- Repeated exposure to food
- Offer food 10-15 times without pressure to eat something
- They may accept it on their plate to begin with, the next step could be touching it and next just bringing it up to their lips, but each time they are getting more used to that food
- Role model- sit and eat the same food with them- be enthusiastic- a family meal
- Talk lots about the food. Saying things such as, 'yummy, these peas are delicious' and 'these potatoes will give me lots of energy to help me think and play' help children to think positively about the food they are eating
- Biggest and best is sensory exposure- messy play, squishing it, smelling it etc.
- Only one practitioner or parent to focus on encouraging the child

### DON'T'S

- Any physical reward should never be food based e.g. chocolate or an alternative meal
- Don't put pressure on them



- A parent should seek help from a GP when it affects their growth and development e.g. obese or malnourished
- Introduce unhealthy food
- Allowing too much choice e.g. at snack more than 2 fruits or veg can be overwhelming for choice
- Don't overwhelm with portion sizes- please see the NHS food portions guide book
- Don't give an alternative meal if they don't eat their meal- they will always wait for something else
- Don't give more than one portion
- Children may think they need to empty bowls or plates, don't encourage them, stop when they stop, you may be stretching their stomach- remember they have another meal in 2 hours' time
- Do not force feed
- Don't provide too much milk in the day

If you would like more information on healthy under 5s eating and why it is ok for a child to miss a meal if they choose not to eat it. Please contact our Training Manager to see our PowerPoint training presentation on healthy eating.

### Birthdays and Special Occasions

Parents are politely asked to check with management for allergies before bringing in treats and cakes. We operate a no nuts policy, and would ask all parents to please check recipes and ingredients, prior to bringing to the nursery.

We will be unable to serve the cake or treats during meal times at the nursery, however we can celebrate with the child, and then provide a piece for the children to take home.

1. 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. (During cooking activities)