



Food and Drink

Little Star Nursery regards snack and meal times as an important part of the nursery's day. Eating represents an interactive and social time for children and adults and an important learning opportunity. We are committed to a policy of healthy eating and follow the Department of Public Health guidelines in order to give children a healthy mind and body and aim to provide nutritious food, which meets the children's individual dietary needs. We hold the "gold standard" award for Healthy Outcomes 2016.

Allergy Management & Dietary Requirements

- Before a child starts to attend the nursery, we find out from parents their children's dietary needs and preferences, including any known allergies.
- We record information about each child's dietary needs in her/his registration record.
- 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 are fully informed about them. This is also a priority during new staff induction. When volunteers are in the nursery they do not have any responsibility for the distribution of food and drink.
- Where possible we include foods from the diet of each of the children's cultural background, this can be through snack times, meal times or cooking activities: providing children with familiar foods and introducing them to new ones.
- We do not 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 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.

- 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.
- In order to protect children with food allergies, we discourage children from sharing and swapping their food with one another.

Meal and Snack Times

- We understand that children in the early years need a high energy intake in line with a healthy balanced diet. On average they will eat 3 small meals and 2 – 3 snacks per day depending on their needs and individual appetites. With this in mind we provide morning snack around 10.15am, lunch at 12.30, afternoon snack at 3.15pm and Tea at 4.30pm.
- All our main meals are home cooked, on site by our trained cook. They follow the nutritional guidelines as advised by Banes healthy early years, giving children a balanced diet covering all main food groups. Sugar is limited with substitutes used such as maple syrup in cakes.
- These menus are based on observations and feedback from the children regarding their tastes and preferences, as well as feedback from parents.
- We believe in providing nutritious food for all meals and snacks, avoiding large quantities of saturated fat, sugar and salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings. We keep food as close to its natural form as possible. Following the Early Years 5 Food Groups processed products are kept to a minimum.
- All members of staff hold relevant Food Safety level 2 standard. .
- We organise meal and snack times so that they are social occasions in which both children and staff participate. When children see adults eating the same food they are offered it helps with their acceptance, particularly with unfamiliar foods.
- We use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence at an age appropriate level through making choices, serving food, using safe utensils to cut food for themselves, drinking and feeding themselves.
- Food will not be treated as a reward or punishment. Food will not be held back in preference for something else. This is in recognition that all food that we serve is good food. For example, whilst all children are encouraged to try all foods, they will not be “punished” for not eating their main meal by being denied a pudding.

- 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.
- Whole pasteurised milk is provided at both morning and afternoon snack times (or a non dairy alternative) for under 3's and semi skimmed milk for over 3 year olds.
- Water is available at meal times as well as being constantly available during the day for children in individual drinking bottles that are recognisable by their names.
- We do not serve fruit juice or squash in line with recommendations on sugar intake and dental care. This also helps to better prepare children for transitions into school when they will be offered only water and milk.

Babies 12 – 24 months

- The menu is planned to be suitable for babies from 12 – 24 months, either in a form suitable for spoon feeding or to eat as finger food.
- If supplying your own food for your baby then it must be supplied in a sealed container clearly labelled with the child's name.
- If possible please can you identify on the labelling any ingredients that may be a potential allergen for other children (eg nuts, milk).
- Food supplied will be re heated to a temperature of 75 degrees celcius or above.
- We supply whole milk but if you wish to supply formula milk please do so in your child's cup or bottle, again clearly marked with their name. Alternatively we can make up formula milk for the purposes of freshness throughout the day with clear written instructions given as to quantities.

Babies under 12 months

- Menus will be shared with parents and modified as necessary. Alternative baby food may be provided by parents.

Cooking

- Children are often encouraged to participate in food preparation and cooking activities, making a variety of recipes covering all of the 5 food groups.
- Children do not have unsupervised access to the kitchen.
- When children take part in cooking activities, they:

- are supervised at all times.
- understand the importance of hand washing and simple hygiene rules.
- are kept away from hot surfaces and hot water.
- do not have unsupervised access to equipment such as knives, blenders etc.

Reviewed September 2019