EYFS Food and Nutrition Policy

Introduction

At Oakhill Nursery we are committed to supporting children's health, development, and well-being through the provision of nutritious, balanced, and age-appropriate food. We follow the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the updated 2026 Nutrition Guidance for Early Years Providers to ensure the food and drink we provide meets the highest standards.

Providing healthy, balanced and nutritious food ensures that all children:

• Get the right amount of nutrients and energy they need while they are growing rapidly, which is especially important for children who might not have access to healthy food at home. This can help prevent children from becoming overweight or obese.

• 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.

The early years are a crucial time to reduce health inequalities and set the foundations for a lifetime of good health.

Aims:

- Promote lifelong healthy eating habits from an early age.

- Provide meals and snacks that meet children's nutritional, cultural, and dietary needs.

- Comply with statutory guidance on food and drink for children under five.

- Partner with families to support and respect children's individual food requirements.

- Encourage a positive, inclusive, and sociable dining experience.

We provide:

- Healthy, balanced meals and snacks based on the four food groups: fruit and vegetables, starchy foods, proteins, and dairy.

- Age-appropriate portion sizes.

- Water freely available throughout the day, and milk at designated snack times.

- Menus that rotate every 3 weeks and are reviewed termly.

We avoid:

- Foods high in sugar, salt, or saturated fats.

- Artificial sweeteners and sugary drinks.

Our food provision reflects the guidance in ‘Example Menus for Early Years Settings’ and supports healthy growth and development.

Babies aged 0-6 months

In the first year of life, babies follow individual feeding and sleeping patterns that can regularly change. We will ask parents and/or carers about their baby’s current pattern. These patterns should be kept consistent and should be part of the baby’s care plan each day, wherever possible.

We will be aware of the signs (feeding cues) a baby will show when they are hungry (e.g. mouth opening, puckering, smacking lips, or turning of head towards the bottle) and when they are full (e.g. milk spilling out of the mouth, closing mouth, head turning away, splayed fingers and toes, or pushing the bottle away in an older baby). Children should be fed responsively according to their needs. This means feeding children whenever they show signs that they are hungry, feeding at their own pace and using the cues that they are full. We will never force a baby to finish a feed if they seem to be full. Overfeeding could upset their tummy, make them vomit or gain weight too quickly.

Breastfeeding

In the UK, exclusive breastfeeding is recommended for around the first 6 months of a baby’s life with continued breastfeeding throughout the first year and beyond for as long as the parent or carer and baby wishes to continue.

The NHS provides information on the benefits of breastfeeding - NHS. NHS Start for Life has helpful information and advice on breastfeeding. We will support parents or carers wishing to continue breastfeeding and encourage them to provide breastmilk for their baby while attending the setting.

We will support parents and/or carers to continue breastfeeding by:

• providing a comfortable place to breastfeed within the setting

• signposting to evidence-based and expert information and support

• encouraging parents and/or carers who wish to provide expressed breastmilk for their babies and children to do so.

Storing Breast Milk:

Parents to provide breast milk in a sterilised container or in special breast milk storage bags (named, labelled and dated) and we will store:

- in the fridge for up to 8 days at 4C or lower (you can buy fridge thermometers online) – if you're not sure of the temperature of your fridge, or it is higher than 4C, use it within 3 days
- for 2 weeks in the ice compartment of a fridge
- for up to 6 months in a freezer, if it's -18C or lower

Breast milk that's been cooled in the fridge can be carried in a cool bag with ice packs for up to 24 hours.

Defrosting frozen breast milk

It's best to defrost frozen breast milk slowly in the fridge before giving it to a baby.

Once it's defrosted we will give it a gentle shake if it has separated and use it straight away disposing of any leftover after 1 hour.

Warming breast milk

We will feed expressed milk straight from the fridge if the baby is happy to drink it cold. Or we can warm the milk to body temperature by putting the bottle in a jug of warm water or holding it under running warm water.

We do not use a microwave to heat up or defrost breast milk. This can cause hot spots, which can burn your baby's mouth.

Infant formula

If a baby is not exclusively breastfed, then first infant formula (first milk) should be the addition, or alternative, to breastmilk for babies in the first year of life, unless an alternative milk has been prescribed by a doctor.

Good hygiene is very important when making up infant formula. When preparing infant formula we will wash our hands thoroughly and all bottles, teats and other equipment will be sterilised and drip-dried before use.

We will follow the instructions on how to prepare the formula carefully. Adding too much powder to a feed can make a baby constipated and dehydrated; adding too little will mean insufficient energy and nutrients are provided.

Powdered infant formula is not sterile and therefore needs to be made up with water which is boiled and left to cool for no more than 30 minutes so that it stays at a temperature of at least 70ºC to kill any harmful bacteria. We will let the made formula cool before it is given to a baby.

Babies aged 6-12 months

Introducing solid foods or weaning

Introducing a baby to solid foods is sometimes called complementary feeding or weaning.

This should start when a baby is around 6 months old in collaboration with parents and/or carers. Parents and Caregivers need to continue to give the baby breast or formula milk alongside solid foods.

The introduction of solid foods should only start once a baby can:

• stay in a sitting position and support their own head

• coordinate their eyes, hands and mouth so they can look at their food, pick it up and put it in their mouth

• swallow food (rather than spit it back out). Introducing solid foods helps a baby learn new skills such as chewing and biting. It also introduces new foods, flavours and textures to them. Babies develop at different rates.

We will have ongoing discussions with parents and/or carers about the stage their child is at in regard to introducing solid foods and assumptions must not be made based on age. This includes reaching agreement with parents and/or carers about when and how they want to start introducing solid foods.

We will always go at the baby's pace and let them show us when they're hungry or full.

The importance of different textures

Once babies are comfortable with eating solid foods, it is important to start introducing more mashed and lumpier foods.

It's important to introduce different textures as it helps babies to:

• learn to chew and swallow properly, which encourages mouth and muscle development

• get used to different textures, which means they will be less likely to become fussy eaters or develop sensory needs.

Babies take different amounts of time to get used to texture and lumps. Keep offering lumpy textures from around 6 to 7 months and we always supervise them closely so we can be sure they are swallowing it safely.

How to introduce different textures

We will gradually make purees thicker. We will also mash vegetables or fruit. These thicker and lumpier textures can help babies develop muscles in their mouths.

We will offer finger foods which are easy to grab and hold, such as thin sticks of cheese or bread, soft-cooked broccoli, cauliflower, carrot or banana cut into thin batons. These can encourage a baby's hand-eye coordination, as well as introducing new textures. We let babies touch food with their hands and play with textures, such as portions of cooked spaghetti.

Cutting food safely when introducing solid foods

We will make sure to cut food to a size that's right for a child's size, age and stage of weaning. This helps avoid choking.

Choking can happen with any food, but we will do everything we can to minimise the risks.

Foods that are a good choice for first finger food include:

• soft-cooked fruit such as peeled apple slices or finger sticks of bananas, kiwis

• soft-cooked vegetables in finger sticks such as carrots, broccoli, courgette sticks

• cooked protein in finger sticks such as tofu or chicken.

For more advanced eaters, from around 9 months old, we can cut food into small, bite sized pieces so that babies can practise their pincer grasps.

When preparing food, we note that it is important to avoid round shapes as these are a choking hazard.

We will cut small fruits lengthways and then halve again (quarters).

These fruits include:

• grapes

• raspberries

• strawberries

• cherry tomatoes.

Foods to avoid Babies should not eat:

• much salt, as it is not good for their kidneys. Do not add salt to food prepared for babies or cooking water. Stock cubes and gravy shouldn't be used either

• any sugar. Avoiding sugary snacks and drinks including fruit juice can help prevent tooth decay

• foods that are high in saturated fat, salt and sugar like cakes, puddings, sweet and savoury pastries, biscuits, crisps, chocolate and other confectionery

• popcorn, raw jelly cubes, or whole nuts, which are all choking hazards

• honey (which should be avoided until 12 months) as it can contain bacteria that can make babies seriously unwell

• cheeses made from unpasteurised milk or mould-ripened soft cheeses, such as brie or camembert, or ripened goat's milk cheese and soft, blue-veined cheese, such as roquefort.

There's a higher risk that these cheeses might carry a bacteria called listeria 10 11

• raw and lightly cooked eggs (including uncooked cake mixture, homemade ice creams, homemade mayonnaise, or desserts) if you do not see a red lion with the words "British Lion Quality" on the box

• rice drinks as a substitute for breast milk or infant formula as they may contain too much arsenic

• slush ice drinks, sometimes known as slushies, as they may contain too much glycerol

• raw or lightly cooked shellfish, such as mussels, clams and oysters, which can risk food poisoning.

The NHS has advice on foods to avoid giving babies and young children. NHS Start for Life has advice on Safe weaning - Start for Life - NHS.

Paediatric first aid

A qualified paediatric first aider will be present at all times in the room during all snack and meal times.

Supervision when eating

An adult will always supervise babies and children closely when they are eating. Staff will sit facing children while they eat to monitor for choking hazards, prevent food sharing and quickly identify any allergic reactions.

Special Dietary Needs and Allergies

- We maintain a current list of children's allergies, intolerances, and cultural dietary needs.

- Allergen information is displayed and followed in food preparation areas.

- All staff receive training in allergy management and emergency response.

- We work closely with parents and healthcare professionals to develop individual care plans as needed.

Learning and Mealtime Environment

-Food should not be available within continuous provision or as enhancement resources where no suitable adult is permanently supervising this.

- Mealtimes are a key learning opportunity and are used to teach children about healthy food, hygiene, and manners.

- Children are encouraged to try new foods and take part in preparing simple snacks or meals.

- We support children to serve themselves where appropriate, promoting independence.

- Positive role modelling and discussions about food and health are encouraged.

- Mealtimes are social, inclusive, and calm.

- Children sit together with staff who model positive eating behaviours.

- Independence is promoted by encouraging children to serve themselves where age-appropriate.

Guidance for children aged 1 to 5 years

A healthy plate

We encourage children to eat a balanced diet containing a wide variety of foods. We plan meals and snacks that include a variety of food and drinks from the 4 main food groups every day. The more children try new foods, the wider the range of nutrients they will get from their meals. We will have children eat together in our setting. This encourages them to try foods that they might not try at home. For example, children who won't touch broccoli at home might happily try some if they see their peers eating it.

Partnership with Parents and Carers

- Menus are shared regularly with families and feedback is welcomed.

- We provide information on healthy lunchbox choices (for children bringing food from home).

- Families are consulted about dietary needs, food preferences, and cultural or religious requirements.

- We signpost parents to external guidance and support where appropriate.

Sustainability

- We aim to reduce food waste and promote recycling in food-related activities.
- Our menus favour seasonal, locally sourced, and sustainably produced ingredients where possible.

Packed lunches from home

See separate policy.

Cooking with Children

- Cooking and food preparation activities are part of our curriculum.
- These activities promote fine motor skills, maths, science, and cultural learning.
- Health and safety guidelines are followed at all times.

Celebrations and Special Occasions

- We celebrate in healthy and inclusive ways.
- Families are encouraged to share culturally significant foods that meet our nutrition and allergy guidelines.

Cultural and Dietary Preferences

- We respect and accommodate dietary needs related to religion, culture, and ethical beliefs.
- Parents are consulted to ensure inclusive meal planning.

Key References

- Statutory Framework for the EYFS

- Nutrition Guidance for Early Years Providers

- Example Menus for Early Years Settings

- Food Standards Agency: Safer Food Better Business

- Eat Better, Start Better (Public Health England / Action for Children)

- Start for Life – NHS

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