

## Nursery Food Policy

At **Early Start** we recognise the importance of children having a healthy balanced diet to support their growth, development and learning. Mealtimes (breakfast, lunch, snack and tea) are an important part of the nursery day: they provide an opportunity for children to develop positive attitudes towards food, providing a sociable time where children learn about healthy eating, through trying different types of food.

The nursery food policy applies to all staff, parents / carers, catering and other professionals visiting our settings. It applies at all times, including and during celebration events / days; cooking activities and during trip / excursions outside of the nursery

### Food and Drink

All menus are planned in line with the Eat Better Start Better voluntary food and drink based guidelines, which you will find [here](#)

Lunch and Tea are prepared off site and delivered each week by a food catering company, (The Nursery Catering Company). Their menus operate on a three-weekly cycle and are changed twice a year, to ensure variety and a range of seasonal ingredients.

All our food caters for children who may have food allergies or specific dietary requirements.

We provide breakfast and serve a mid-morning and afternoon snack. Water is freely available across the day and milk is also provided at snack times.

Children are encouraged to contribute to feedback on menu suggestions termly: this is collected by staff and feedback to management via the suggestions/communication box

Meals and Snacks are offered at the following times:

- Breakfast:** 8:15am-8:55
- Morning Snack:** 10:00am-10:30am
- Lunch:** 11:30am-12:00pm
- Afternoon Snack:** 14:00pm-14:30pm
- Tea:** 16:00pm-16:30pm

### Drinks

Children are encouraged to drink water throughout the day, there is a water station available from which older children (2 to 5 years) may help themselves. Water is served at lunch and tea time, and children are offered a choice of milk and water during snack time. We encourage choices from as early an age as possible. Under twos (over ones) are offered water throughout the day and are supported with a free flow beaker or doidy cup. A free flow cup is introduced to babies from 6 months old and we encourage, support and guide parents to Bin the Bottle from around 12 months.

## **Milk & Breast milk**

We recognise the importance of ensuring a consistent approach amongst staff with families when providing support and signposting on infant feeding. We will ensure families are supported to access evidenced based information and signposted to services. We are committed to ensuring all staff will receive the relevant training in infant nutrition.

*“Breastfeeding is the best form of nutrition for infants.*

***Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended for the first 6 months (26 weeks) of life as it provides all the nutrients a baby needs”.***

We encourage families to bring expressed breast milk or to breastfeed before and after work at our nursery settings. We ensure breastmilk is stored safely in line with guidelines. We have available information on local breastfeeding support groups. We display Start4Life resources.

We recognise early relationship building is also important for formula fed babies and mothers. Families who choose to formula feed their infants will be supported to do so safely and correctly. We have available information leaflets on safe preparation of bottles and responsive feeding. We ensure staff follow the safe preparation of bottles in line with steps outlined in the Start4Life ‘*Guide to Bottle Feeding*’ to ensure infant formula is prepared safely. We display and provide families with Start4Life resources where they can receive additional infant feeding support, advice and information.

Under ones parents are required to provide a suitable formula milk in the original packaging. Along with a suitable bottle (all bottles are sterilized). We advise after their child’s first birthday to introduce the child to full fat milk (blue top) between 1 – 5 years, considering individual child’s dietary requirements: along with moving away from the bottle; and all drinks being given in a free flow cup or beaker.

## **Food Safety and Hygiene**

Our nursery kitchen holds a five-star rating from the London Borough of Newham Environmental Health Department. All other meals are prepared on the premises by members of staff who hold a level 2 qualification in Food Safety and are competent in health and safety with regards to food preparation and storage. Our fridge and freezer temperatures are regularly monitored.

## **Menu**

The menu is displayed in our public area, nursery rooms, kitchen and an example on our website. Our menus are on a three week cycle and change at least twice per year. We are flexible with regards to celebrations/festivals. If the children have participated in a cooking activity, occasionally we will make a change to an item on the menu for an alternative of equal quality and nutritional value/content. Any foods offered for celebrations, festivals or cooking activities are still in line with the Eat Better Start Better guidelines.

We do not permit any food brought in from home/outside including but not limited to; packed lunches, food for celebrations or festival etc.

We accommodate a variety of diets in the nursery, for example vegetarian, vegan, lactose intolerant, various allergies, and religious specifications.

No extra charge is levied for this. Parents' comments and suggestions regarding the food we provide, or their child's preferences, are always welcome. These can be given via our comments book or through the Tapestry account.

### **Meal Time Environment**

We treat meals and snacks as social occasions, encouraging conversation with opportunities to learn. Children learn good table manners and are encouraged to say please and thank you, and not to talk with their mouth full. Staff help where appropriate but encourage children to eat by themselves and self-serve where possible.

Babies are given the opportunity to hold a suitable spoon while an adult feeds them with another spoon; their snacks consist of finger foods allowing them to self-feed (over ones).

The Nursery provides children with utensils that are appropriate for their ages and stages of development. Older children are encouraged to help set the tables, to scrape their plates and clear away afterwards, and to serve (as much as possible) their meal/pudding themselves. All children are allowed pudding, whether they have eaten their first course or not. Children can serve themselves second helpings of the main meal, we would encourage them to take extra servings. Where there is a problem with a child not eating on a regular basis we liaise with parents, and utilise our fussy eating strategies, taking the age and health of the child into account. Under no circumstances should a child have their food taken away from them as a form of punishment.

Details of food provided and quantity eaten are recorded in our on-line care diary which staff and parents all have access to on Tapestry.

### **Fussy eaters**

All children are encouraged to try all the food, but never forced to eat or drink anything. When children are refusing to put food onto their plate the staff encourage them as best as possible but never force them. Methods that have been found to help when encouraging fussy eaters to try new foods include;

Role modelling; sitting fussy eaters with good eaters at mealtimes as it has been shown that children will adopt the food preferences of their peers if they eat together regularly.

Offering rewards; praise children for trying new foods no matter how little they eat. The focus should be on individuals and their eating habits rather than just giving praise to dinner winners.

The staff themselves role model good eating habits and for this reason the Nursery provides meals and snacks for the staff on duty. Staff also demonstrate good role modelling of using cutlery and good manners at the table

Exposure to foods; Give children regular and repeated chances to taste new foods. The child must taste the food to change their preferences and it can take as many as 10 to 15 tastings before they accept it

## Food Activities

We encourage and engage children in cooking and baking simple meals and desserts as it's an enjoyable and very instructive for children at the nursery (see menu or weekly planning). Children themselves will sometimes prepare part of the snacks and puddings, for example cakes, fruit cocktails or pizzas ensuring that recipes vary between sweet and savoury and in line with the Eat Better Start Better guidelines.

Cookery activities can incorporate practice in mathematics and self-care, for example in measuring or counting ingredients and reinforcing the importance of handwashing, etc. Children also feel a sense of pride in making a meal for their peers or taking it home to share with their family. Teaching children where their food comes from and sustainability is also very important. All Early Start Nursery settings have an area where the children can grow their own fruit and vegetables, composting (where practical). We recycle packaging that our food and supplies are delivered in using this in the room to junk model with the children.

While Early Start Nursery discourages an abundance of food play, as it is seen as wasting food and confusing the children at meal times, we also see the importance of children learning through direct experiences. For this reason, dried pasta, lentils and rice may be used in the role play area for example or jelly and spaghetti in the messy area. In all such cases, wherever possible food will be coloured or left dry so as not to appear the same as when a child should be eating it at meal times.

## Allergy Management – please refer also to our Allergy Management policy

When parents start their children at Early Start Nurseries they are asked if their child suffers from any known allergies. This is recorded on the registration form. If a child has an allergy, an allergy protocol form will be completed (and a request for supporting evidence provided) and relevant actions to support that plan may need to be implemented across the nursery and will include:

- The allergen (i.e. the substance, material or living creature the child is allergic to such as nuts, eggs, bee stings, cats etc)
- The nature of the allergic reactions e.g. anaphylactic shock reaction, including rash, reddening of skin, swelling, breathing problems etc.
- What to do in case of allergic reactions, any medication used and how it is to be used (e.g. EpiPen)
- Control measures – such as how the child can be prevented from contact with the allergen

This form is kept in the child's personal file. Parents train staff in how to administer special medication in the event of an allergic reaction

We have a list of children's allergies and food preferences posted in the nursery kitchen, in all the children's room. All are reviewed and updated regularly. Parents are regularly consulted to ensure that the records of their children's dietary needs are up-to-date.

<b>This policy was adopted on</b>	<b>Signed on behalf of the nursery</b>	<b>Date for review</b>
<i>March 2022 Updated</i>	<i>J Elder</i>	<i>March 2023</i>