



Healthy Early Years Policy

Our vision statement: "An early years experience to nurture children's full potential"

We understand that it is the responsibility for everyone working in our setting to positively influence children's food preferences, as well as their physical activity habits that they form in their early years. The positive influence this can have on their health and development outcomes now and later in life is remarkable.

Food, Drink & Oral health

We follow the guidelines of the Children's Food Trust 'Eat Better Start Better' project and the 'Early years nutrition trust' to promote health and well-being of the children and their families through food served in our setting, fulfilling requirements to the Early Years Foundation Stage. We also have regard to the Government's publications: 'Example Menus for Early Year's Settings in England' (Parts 1 & 2) and Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance (September 2025).

Children are provided with breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea and mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks. Children are supported to select, prepare and serve their foods where practicable. Our eating environment is welcoming and provides accessible resources, where appropriate, to serve their own foods and drinks. Staff join children for meal times as positive role models and to encourage positive eating habits. We pride ourselves on providing healthy, balanced and nutritious summer and winter menus which are available to view in the entrance to the setting; within our brochure and on our website. On a daily basis the food being served each day will also be displayed on the noticeboard as you enter the nursery.

Fresh drinking water will be made available and accessible to children at all times. Milk is offered and is supported by the nursery milk scheme (whole milk until the age of 2 years old then progression to semi-skimmed). No juice drinks or additives are provided.

Our menus are carefully designed to ensure we:

- Give the right amount of energy and nutrients needed to support children's growth and development appropriate to their age.
- Ensure a balanced calorie intake suitable for age and energy requirements.
- Encourage children to eat a wide range of foods and develop healthy eating habits into adulthood. This includes being part of the farm to fork

approach and actively planting, nurturing and harvesting our own produce.

- Promote good oral health and a positive energy around healthy food choices.
- Collaborate with children, families and staff to provide an exciting and inviting selection of inspiring foods.

For younger children, we will use suitable sterilising equipment for bottles and feeding equipment and staff have been trained in the hygienic preparation of bottles and baby food. We encourage breastfeeding and the positive health benefits, supporting the NHS 'Start 4 life' programme. We will provide a suitable environment for this. Promoting good oral health is paramount and we share information with children and their families regarding this. We support parents to find and register at a dentist and encourage regular visits.

Information will be given verbally when you collect your child, and through our online 'ParentZone' software application on what they have eaten and how well they have eaten that day. We value feedback regarding our food and drink provision and gain this from our annual parent/carer questionnaire and from regular team contributions.

Special Dietary Requirements and Preferences

During the registration and settling in process you will be asked to complete a 'Care Plan' and inform us of any specific dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies that your child has and any special health requirements. This information will be recorded and shared with our nursery cook; your child's keyworker and room leader.

A list of all special dietary requirements and details of children with food allergies are held on the individual child's records and displayed in the nursery kitchen. We ask parents/carers to keep us up to date with any changes to these requirements.

Due diligence is used where a child is known to have extreme reactions to a particular food and in such cases separate cooking equipment and utensils will be used.

Where we are informed that a child has a particular preference, we will try to accommodate this, however, in the interests of all children being offered a healthy and balanced diet, this preference may not always be possible. We encourage children to try new foods and experience different textures and flavours so far as they are comfortable with this.

We will never discriminate against a child and staff will show sensitivity in providing for children's individual diets and not use their diet or allergy as a label for the child or make a child feel 'different' because of this.

It is our aim to positively incorporate a variety of foods from different religions and cultures and provide opportunities for the children to learn about these.

If families choose to provide their own foods it is required that they too follow our positive healthy approach to eating. We will be unable to serve foods high in sugar or salt and these will be returned to you and healthier alternatives offered. This includes the supply of birthday cake; birthday's can be celebrated in many ways and we ask therefore that cakes are not brought to nursery as they do not comply with the healthy early years' guidance.

We thoroughly support 'fussy eaters' by working closely with children and families to aid a positive sensory journey with food. We actively share information from Medway Tri for you and NHS better health to support children and their families to enhance positive eating habits.

Food awareness, safety & hygiene

We encourage the children to make healthy choices and this is incorporated in their everyday activities and learning.

The nursery has a dedicated cook with a Level 2 qualification in Food Safety and all food is prepared on site using fresh ingredients where possible. All staff who prepare food also possess a Level 2 qualification and are responsible for the safe preparation, serving and storing of food served to the children in their care. We also use Medway Council's 'Safer Food, Better Business' catering guidance to record meals prepared and follow strict guidance on recording of temperatures. Staff participate in a variety of regular training to enable them to adhere to our positive ethos.

All food is sourced from local supermarkets and where possible delivered directly to the nursery. We have a nursery vegetable and herb garden where the children help to nurture the homegrown produce which is then used in preparation of their nursery meals.

We encourage the children to participate in cooking activities and preparation where appropriate. We feel that this is a positive way of enhancing healthy diet and giving the children a chance to try a selection of different foods, textures and tastes. Strict hygiene practices and allergen guidance are always followed and explained to the children age appropriately, for example, hand washing and not eating food that has fallen on the floor.

Physical activity

We fully understand the importance of physical activity during the children's day and follow the guidelines set out by the NHS to ensure that all children fulfil this during their day. Staff are positive role models and engage in activities with the children to give encouragement and new ideas. Staff are aware of the importance of developing the vestibular and proprioceptive senses and incorporate activities to support this.

We collaborate with parents to share the information from the World Health Organisation regarding physical activity, sedentary screen time and good quality sleep; these are all monitored at the nursery. Children aged under one year old are encouraged to be active throughout their day using a variety of ways; crawling, reaching, grasping, rolling and incorporating a total of 30 minutes of tummy time during their awake time.

One to two year olds spend at least three hours per day taking part in physical activities. These include free play, art & design, messy play, climbing, construction, group games and dance.

As the children get older, they still require three hours of exercise, one of which should be more vigorous; therefore the three to four year olds take part in a broader range of activities to heighten their activity level.

We aim for all age groups to experience the outdoor nursery environment daily in our secure gardens. They are able to explore, climb, jump, play sports, ride & scoot, join in ball games, paint and dig in an inviting large outdoor space.

The nursery offers a 'Let's get active' lending library providing resources, activity ideas and literature that the children can take home to heighten awareness.

We are an advocate for active travel to and from the nursery. We teach the children about road safety and have high-visibility vests available for families to borrow for their journeys.

We offer an indoor area for the storing of pushchairs, bikes and scooters to support traveling on foot.

Emotional health and wellbeing

Well-being is a broad term that covers how you feel about yourself and your life. It encompasses the physical, emotional (and mental), social and spiritual areas of a person. Under the Early Years Foundations Stage (EYFS) this is covered in the children's personal, social, emotional development and physical development, both of which are prime areas of learning and development.

Mental and emotional well-being includes:

- Acknowledging, expressing and coping with feelings and emotions
- Thought processes
- Reducing stress and anxiety.

Social well-being includes:

- Relationships
- Family (close and extended)
- Friends
- The feeling of belonging and acceptance

- Compassion and caring approaches.

Spiritual well-being can cover the following:

- Value and beliefs held
- Personal identity and self-awareness.

Children's mental and emotional well-being are supported. We provide a safe environment that allows for caregiver to child co-regulation. This practice supports the process of children building the capacity for self-regulation, through providing activities in which children are able to recognise and express their emotions, including emotional literacy. This enables us to provide support for children who may be experiencing big emotions they cannot cope with just yet, including sadness and over-excitement. We support children's developing self-regulation through carefully planned activities and resources, modelling calming strategies, naming and talking about feelings and by providing opportunities for children to practise their self-regulation skills.

Staff are able to recognise when a child may need support with their emotions and will provide this one-to-one or in a small group, whichever is more appropriate. Teaching children to recognise and manage their emotions at a young age helps support foundations for doing this throughout their life.

Staff use the Behaviour Support Policy to ensure a consistent approach.

We know that the care and education of babies and young children is highly rewarding. However, we are also aware of the day-to-day demands and pressures of modern life can place a high level of demand on all of our staff. In order to support our staff team, the management team put procedures in place that ensure staff well-being remains one of the key focuses of our practice. In doing this, we aim to provide our team with a safe, inclusive and nurturing working environment that acknowledges their needs, not just within the workplace but as a whole person. As a nursery, we support staff well-being, not only to ensure that children receive high quality care, but also to ensure our employees feel supported and cared for, as part of a team. We are proud of our open-door approach and endeavour that there is always someone available to meet with staff or other carers to discuss any subject matter at any time.

We attend regular training and liaise with outside agencies to enhance our knowledge and support network.

Progression

We are committed to keeping our knowledge up to date and relevant with the voluntary food, drink and physical activity guidelines. Staff will undertake relevant training to keep themselves informed of changes and new thinking, always with the aim of enhancing children's experiences and health for when they are with us and for their futures.

We will participate in the Healthy Early Years (HEY) pathway to ensure we are giving the best start for the children in our care. We will also continue to maintain a strong relationship with our children and their families and to listen to their views and feedback.

As a team we pledge to work together to provide positive role models for all children in our care.

Further Information:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67f8e61c04146682e61bc84c/Nutrition_guidance_for_early_years_providers.pdf