

Healthy Eating Policy

Statement of intent

This setting regards snack and mealtimes as an important part of the setting's session/day. Eating represents a social time for children and adults and helps children to learn about healthy eating. The nutritional principles of this policy are based on current evidence-based findings, including Department of Health guidance, Healthy Tots, and the Eatwell Guide being the agreed model for ensuring a healthy balanced diet.

Aim

In accordance with The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework nutritional guidance April 2025, snacks provided are healthy, balanced, and nutritious.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67f8e61c04146682e61bc84c/Nutrition_guidance_for_early_years_providers.pdf Where packed lunches are provided by parents, they are expected to follow healthy eating guidance on the Playgroup website and in the leaflet provided by the Playgroup. To provide healthy, balanced, and nutritious food/drink choices throughout the day (or time children are in the setting) and ensure any food brought in from home compliments this. To ensure that all aspects of food and drink promote the health and wellbeing of children, staff, and visitors tour setting. To ensure food is nutritionally appropriate to the age/stage of each child. See guidance below.

Methods

- 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 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 keep individual children's dietary needs recorded in the register, so that all staff and volunteers are fully informed about them.

- We implement systems to ensure that children receive only food and drink that is consistent with their dietary needs and preferences as well as their parents' wishes.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- We organise meal and snack times so that they are social occasions in which children and staff participate. Staff also provide a good role model for healthy eating and have a key role in influencing children's knowledge, skills, and attitudes about food.
- We use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink, and feeding themselves. Children are also given plenty of time to eat.
- 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.
- 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 session/day. Children are expected to bring in their own water bottles which they can access independently throughout the day.
- We inform parents who provide food for their children about the storage facilities available in the setting.
- In order to protect children with food allergies, we have rules about children sharing and swapping their food with one another.
- For children who drink milk, we provide semi-skimmed pasteurised milk.
- Parents/carers will be informed if their child is not eating well.

- Food prepared by our staff is healthy, balanced, and nutritious and meets the guidance in the Nutrition for Healthy Tots guide.
- All staff are trained to Level 2 Food Hygiene standard. (Apart from new starters who will attend training as soon as possible)
- We do not encourage the regular eating of sweets or other foods high in sugar or fat, especially as a reward for good behaviour, or other achievement. Other methods of positive reinforcement are used. (See Behaviour policy). Equally withholding food will not be used as a punishment.
- Where children bring sweets in for their birthday, children are given them at the end of the day so parents can decide when/if they can have them.
- We encourage diversity around food and encourage everyone to share food customs at special occasions/festivals.

Packed lunches

We are not able to provide cooked meals at lunchtime. Children are required to bring packed lunches daily. We:

- Inform parents of our policy on healthy eating. See our Healthy Eating leaflet and guidance below.
- Encourage parents to provide sandwiches with a healthy filling, fruit, and milk-based deserts such as yoghurt. We discourage sweet drinks and can provide children with water or milk.
- Discourage packed lunch contents that consist largely of crisps, processed foods, sweet drinks, and sweet products such as cakes or biscuits. We reserve the right to return this food to the parent as a last resort.
- Provide children bringing packed lunches with plates and cups and cutlery where required.
- Ensure staff sit with children to eat their lunch so that the mealtime is a social occasion.

Breakfast Club

Breakfast is an important meal that should provide 25% of a child's energy requirement and contributes significantly to their vitamin and mineral requirements. We provide low sugar cereal.

After School Club snacks

At 3.15pm all children in the setting school are offered an afterschool snack. These snacks are fruit, yoghurt or low salt carbohydrates and children are offered milk and water.

Food and drink guidelines for children aged 1-5 years April 2025

Food	Guideline
<p>Fruit and vegetables These include: • fresh, frozen, tinned or dried fruit and vegetables • pulses such as lentils and beans.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide at least 1 portion of vegetables and/or fruit as part of each main meal (breakfast, lunch, dinner) and as part of some snacks (not including dried fruit). • Provide a variety of vegetables or fruit across the day and each week • Limit baked beans to once a week if this is being counted as a vegetable. • Avoid dried fruit as a snack. It should only be provided as part of a meal. • Avoid fruit tinned in syrup and choose fruit tinned in juice. • Avoid added salt and sugar in tinned vegetables and pulses and choose no added salt and sugar options or those tinned in water.
<p>Starchy Carbohydrates These include: • bread • potatoes, sweet potatoes, and other starchy root vegetables • pasta and noodles • rice and other grains • breakfast cereals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a portion of starchy food as part of each main meal (breakfast, lunch and tea) each day. • Provide plain starchy food such as plain savoury crackers, or unsalted unsweetened rice or corn cakes as part of at least 1 snack each day. • Provide at least 3 different types of starchy food and a variety of wholegrain and white starchy foods across breakfasts, snacks, lunch and tea each week. • Provide wholegrain starchy foods for at least 1 breakfast, lunch and tea each week. • Limit sugar and salt content in breakfast cereals.

	<p>Choose those with the lowest sugar and salt content which are labelled as 'low' (green)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit the salt content in bread and bread products. <p>Choose those with a lower salt content which are labelled as 'low' (green) or 'medium' (amber) in salt.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit starchy foods which have been fried to a maximum of once a week (e.g. chips, fried rice and fried noodles). • Limit tinned pasta in sauce (e.g. spaghetti hoops) and choose no added sugar options. • Avoid cereals labelled as 'high' (red) in sugar such as sugar-coated or chocolate-flavoured cereals. • Avoid flavoured dried rice, pasta and noodle products e.g. packets and pots of instant flavoured noodles, pasta and rice.
<p>Dairy and plain, fortified plant-based alternatives These include: • milk • cheese • yoghurt and fromage frais.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide 3 portions of milk and unsweetened dairy foods each day (which includes those provided at home). • Provide non-dairy alternatives that are unsweetened, and calcium fortified (e.g. oat milk or soya milk). • Provide full fat dairy foods (such as cheese and unsweetened yoghurt and fromage frais) for children under the age of 2 and gradually introduce lower-fat dairy options after this age. • Avoid sweetened yoghurts and fromage frais (including non-dairy alternatives)
<p>Proteins These include: • beans, pulses and nuts • meat and poultry • fish and shellfish • eggs • meat alternatives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a portion of protein as part of lunch and tea each day. • Provide a variety of protein sources as part of lunch and tea across the week. • Provide at least 1 lunch and 1 tea for children each week which uses beans, lentils, pulses or a meat alternative as the protein source.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide vegetarian and vegan children with a variety of protein sources such as beans, pulses, and meat alternatives each week as part of lunch and tea. Provide oily fish (such as salmon, sardines or mackerel) at least once every 3 weeks; this can be provided as part of lunch or tea. When oily fish is not provided as a main meal in the week, you could try to provide oily fish as a snack. • Limit oily fish to a maximum of twice per week. • Limit the provision of processed meat products (e.g. sausages, breaded chicken, meatballs), processed fish products (e.g. fish fingers, fish cakes), and products made from meat alternatives (e.g. vegetarian sausages), to once a week for each of the 3 types as these products can be high in saturated fat and salt.
For all foods	<p>Avoid foods high in saturated fat, salt, and/or sugars like cakes, sweet and savoury pastries, biscuits, crisps, chocolate and other confectionary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid artificial sweeteners as they may encourage children to prefer very sweet foods
Drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide children with access to water throughout the day. • Provide only fresh tap water and plain milk to drink. • Provide whole milk, semi-skimmed cow's milk or unsweetened calcium fortified non-dairy alternatives for children from 1 year of age. • Avoid skimmed and 1% cow's milk. • Avoid sugary drinks (including fruit juices, squash and smoothies).

Please see:

https://assets.ctfassets.net/dvmeh832nmjc/10EirRzB8F7iMahdZkWNDb/3e7eb82bf95af23b06266b7fced62575/Portion_sizes.pdf for correct portion sizes.

Please see: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2014/1603/contents/made> for guidance on what the setting should provide as a snack for After School Club children.

Belton Playgroup

This policy was adopted at a meeting of Belton Playgroup Association:

Held on: 2nd June 2026

Signed on behalf of committee:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Spencer', is enclosed in a light grey rectangular box.

Name and role of signatory: Anna Spencer, Chair of Committee

Review date: April 2027