



Food Policy

'The provider must promote the good health of the children. Take necessary steps to prevent the spread of infection, and take appropriate action when they are ill'

Policy statement

We are fully committed to the health and well being of children, the nature of meal times, the food that is provided, the pace and responsiveness on how food is offered; all these affect children's emotional and physical well being. Snacks and meal times are an important part of the setting's day which enhances attachment, increases feelings of security and provides warmth, acceptance and an overall sense of wellbeing.

We recognise the importance encouraging young children to eat well and learn about food. This not only helps protect their health while young but also sets the foundations for their future health and wellbeing.

This whole setting food policy adopts a 'whole setting approach to healthy eating including, policies, procedures and practises'.

The named person responsible for healthy food provision and food education is Deputy Manager

Monitoring and evaluating the setting approach to and provision of food.

The following activities have been undertaken to monitor and evaluate the approach to and provision of food:

- Eat Better Start Better menu planning checklists is completed when new menus are introduced.
- Menus have been reviewed by Loughborough University Sport Science Department for nutritional advice
- The expertise of Loughborough University Sports Science Department has informed feeding practises.
- Termly meetings with the catering provider to discuss quality, feedback and any other issues.
- Daily feedback on the quality and content of the food to LSU catering staff.
- Peer observations of feeding practices are undertaken termly
- Feedback from parent's and families

Planning healthy meals, snacks and drinks

The LSU catering team provide catering services for a wide range of clients with different expectations and requirements. The food is prepared separately for the nursery to the other food outlets. The team have established a sound understanding and adhere to the standards set in the Eat Better, Start Better Guidelines for Early Years Settings in England which have been developed to ensure early years' settings meet the EYFS welfare requirements for the provision of healthy, balanced and nutritious food and drink. Menus are based on guidance from Eat Better, Start Better guidance and audited using the recommended menu checklist. Due regard is also given to the suggested seasonal recipes for early years setting from the Children's Food Trust and bench marked against other academic early years providers. New menus are introduced on a twice yearly cycle to incorporate seasonal foods and give children a chance to try different food.

The ingredients used are selected for being low in saturated fat, sugar and salt and are well below the recommended guidelines for early years. The menus have been designed to limit or avoid some foods, for example processed foods high in fat and salt such as beef burgers. Cooking practices such as baking rather than frying, no added salt help to ensure that an appropriate amount of fat, sugar and salt is provided for children. Only reputable suppliers are used to source ingredients.

We recognise by exposing children to a wider range of food this will increase the familiarity of the different sensory properties and foster acceptance. By offering a four-week menu we hope to shape children's preference and aid in establishing a healthy diet and introduce children to a wider variety of healthy foods from an early age. Menus have been designed to covertly restrict a child's access to unhealthy options. For example, sugary drinks, processed biscuits, high salt or sugar foods.

Menus include foods from different cultural backgrounds, providing children with familiar foods and introducing new ones. A vegetarian alternative is offered on days when meat and fish are served.

Guidelines for salt

To limit the amount of salt eaten by children product labels are checked to choose those offering lower salt content. For example, the canned pulses used have no added sugar or salt and are washed prior to use.

The sauces are made from raw ingredients where possible and any ready prepared sauces used are 2017 salt guideline compliant, these sauces are also used instead of adding in stock and seasoning in to certain dishes to enhance their flavour and maintain a consistency for the children to relate to. For example, the beef bolognese has a small amount of sauce added for consistence of flavouring.

Flavourings have been selected as they are allergen free and for their low salt and sugar content which fall well below the food standards recommendation. When sauces are thickened cornflour is used to accommodate allergen dietary requirements.

We use whole cuts of meat and typically 80/20 VL mince in beef or lamb which are always sourced from reputable and reliable suppliers. Where possible we will use British and or Irish meats and strive to use welfare awarded products such as Red Tractor Farm Assured. Any surplus fat produced during the cooking processes is removed before the dish is compiled or served. Sausages are chosen for the meat content and school compliant recipes.

We feel it is important to expose children to alternative healthy options of every type of food occasionally. We source and use products that where possible resemble that of the meat product being served and essentially has good nutritional content.

Guidelines for sugar

The breakfast cereals provided are those which offer low or medium in sugar content. Dishes which are sweetened usually use naturally sweet foods such as carrot cake and fruit crumble. Canned fruit is in juice, without added sugar or syrup. When preparing desserts, puddings and cakes, foods that contain artificial sweetness are avoided as they may encourage children to move preferences for very sweet foods.

The Eat Better Start Better guidance states desserts, puddings and cakes made with cereals (such as rice or oats), milk and fruit can be included as part of a healthy, balanced diet for young children. Desserts and cakes provide energy (calories) and essential nutrients such as calcium and iron. As recommended we provide one dessert from each of the following groups each week to ensure children are getting a variety of different dessert types:

- hot fruit-based desserts such as crumbles or baked apples
- milk-based desserts such as semolina, rice pudding or custard
- yoghurt or fromage frais with a low sugar content
- cakes and biscuits containing fruit, such as carrot cake or fruit flapjack
- cold desserts such as fruit salad.



Starchy food

Starchy foods provide energy, carbohydrate, fibre and B vitamins. The menus are planned to provide a range of bread, potatoes and sweet potatoes, starchy root vegetables, pasta and noodles, rice, other grains and breakfast cereals. As the guidance recommends we provide a portion of starchy food as part of each meal, a starchy food as part of at least one snack each day and at least three different varieties of starchy food across each day, and across each meal and snack every week. These will include a variety of wholegrain and white starchy foods each week. Therefore, we offer a balance of white and wholemeal as recommendation state young children should not eat only wholegrain options, as they can fill up before they have taken the energy they need.

Drinking Water

Fresh drinking water is available and accessible at all times. A drink station is available in all rooms which is visible to children. Babies in the Discoverers room are offered drinks regularly and systematically during the day. Toddlers in the Explorers room are encouraged to use the symbols on lanyards to indicate they would like to use the drinks station. In the Investigators room the children can independently help themselves to a drink.

Meeting the Early Years Foundation Requirements

Meals and snacks are planned using Eat Better, Start Better guidance an evidence-based age appropriate national best practice food and drink guidelines.

Menus for meals and snacks are planned for a four-week rota to include different tastes, colours and textures and seasonal

Menus are shared on notice boards and the website to ensure parents/carers know what is provided.

We currently have a significant number of children with diagnosed dietary needs. It is a priority to ensure every child has the same food choice as their peers which also meet their individual needs. Menus are streamlined to reduce the allergens in the foods being used and identify similar alternatives.

Managing fussy eaters

With regards to food preference we are committed to the point of view that children are expressing an innate trait in humans when they are picky eaters. Food refusal is a normal part of toddler development. Toddlers develop a fear of new foods (Neophobic response) in the second year. This peaks around 18 months and some children are warier of new foods.

Children will be given the opportunity to accept new foods and try previously liked foods as repeatedly offering has shown to lead to an increased willingness to taste the food and an increased accepting for food variety. Children need time when exposed to new foods, it takes 15 to 20 exposures to foods before a child will be willing to try a new food.

Procedure

- Children are encouraged to try new foods and there is an agreed approach to manage fussy eating.
- Encourage self service even with the babies.
- Continue to offer a variety of foods and give praise and encouragement.
- Signpost parents to for information on feeding practices.

The eating environment and social aspects of meal times.

The children eat in their rooms which are clean, warm, bright and the furniture, plates, and cutlery are suitable for young children. Food is served in individual serving bowls at the table as far as possible. There is a designated area for food service in each room.

Procedure

- Children in the Explorers and Investigators room are involved in preparing, cooking and/or serving foods at snack and mealtimes. Children are encouraging to self serve to encourage choice and self regulation.
- Meal and snack times are used as an opportunity to talk to children about healthy eating, to help children to develop good eating habits, social skills including speaking and listening.
- Staff and children eat together (where possible in their key group), and staff engage children in conversation and act as positive role models.
- We endeavour to give children enough time to finish their meals and snacks.

Communicating with children and families

Finding out about and respecting cultural and dietary food needs is essential in bridging the two worlds of nursery and the home. Food can become a cause of conflict between parents and practitioners. By finding out about food practises at home and explaining how meal times happen in the nursery positive relationships can be developed making it easier to resolve any difficulties should they occur.

Procedure

- Parent's and practitioners have an opportunity to discuss children's individual dietary requirements and the timing of meals and snacks and the type of food that is provided. This provides an opportunity for families to share their views.
- Professional voice of practitioners at induction, daily conversations and information on the website are used to share the setting's approach to healthy eating with parents/carers and children.
- Families and children are consulted and encouraged to give feedback about the meals and snacks offered.

Learning about food

Food is more than meal times. Learning about food and using food as a learning activity integrated into the seven areas of learning and development is considered throughout the settings educational programme.

Procedure

- Children are given the opportunity to grow, shop, prepare and cook food.
- We participate in the Annual Loughborough University Fruit Route.
- Children and parents/carers are given the opportunity to participate in food activities together (cooking sessions, visits).

Promoting breastfeeding

We recognise the importance of supporting mothers who are breast feeding when returning to work or study. On induction practitioners will raise awareness of the facilities we offer. The Discoverers room has a comfortable, intimate space with a sofa where mothers can breast feed. Practitioners will work with mothers to provide a flexible routine to support breastfeeding.

Rewards, celebrations and special events and birthdays

Birthdays are important. We welcome the celebration of birthdays which can be recognised in many ways. We encourage families to consider alternatives to cakes and sweets.

Menus reflect celebrations such as the Chinese New Year and Christmas dinner. Within the nursery food is never used as a reward.

Procedure

- Birthday cakes provided from home are checked for ingredients and possible allergens.
- Sweets or confectionary are not consumed in nursery but sent home to enable parents to make their own decision.
- On occasions confectionary that has been donated is available in reception for adults as a gesture of appreciation.

Manager's signature

July 2019

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