



Healthy Snack Policy and Lunch Times

EYFS (2024) 3.37 states:- “Whilst eating, children MUST be within sight and hearing of a member of staff”

All staff MUST be able to see each child to ensure children are eating in a way to prevent choking and prevent food sharing and be aware of any unexpected allergic reactions.

Policy statement

The Life Nursery regard snack and meal times as an important part of the nursery day. Eating represents a social time for children and adults, helping children to learn about healthy eating, promoting independence and choice.

Good nutrition in childhood can help to prevent a variety of health problems, both in the short term and later in life. There are increasing concerns that many children are consuming too much fat, sugar and salt and too little fibre, fruit and vegetables. Packed lunches can contribute to almost a third of a child's weekly intake, therefore needs to be balanced and nutritious. – (Public Health England)

“We are absolutely committed to giving children the best start in life. We know how important a balanced diet is in shaping a healthy lifestyle and getting this right in early childhood is key.” – Public Health Minister, Dept of Education 2017.

“It's vitally important that children eat well in early life, not only to provide them with the nutrients they need to grow and develop, but also for their long life health. With almost a quarter of children starting school overweight or obese. Childrens' health in the early years needs to be a key focus in tackling the obesity epidemic.” – British Nutrition Foundation 2021.

The Life Nursery promote healthy eating using resources and materials from ‘HENRY’ (Health, Exercise, Nutrition for the Really Young). At snack times, The Life Nursery aim to provide nutritious food, which meets the children's individual dietary needs.

We also encourage ‘table manners’ as we know that eating in chaotic environment can cause poor concentration and rushing whilst eating which could lead to dangerous situations e.g. choking. We encourage children to sit upright whilst eating and not to speak whilst they have food in their mouths. Appropriately sized chairs are provided for each child.

In the newly revised EYFS (2024) Oral Health is embedded throughout. The life nursery strive to promote Oral Health through a variety of learning opportunities for our children that are

implemented daily. We teach the importance of self – care and mouth hygiene and also how different foods can affect the health of our teeth.

Procedures

The Life Nursery follow these procedures to promote healthy eating during snack and lunch time sessions.

- Before a child starts to attend the setting, The Life Nursery ask their parents about their dietary needs and preferences, including any allergies.
- The Life Nursery ask parents to record information about each child's dietary needs in the Registration Form and 'All About Me' booklet and ask parents to sign the form to signify that this is correct.
- The Life Nursery display information about individual children's dietary needs are displayed in the kitchen to ensure staff, volunteers, students are fully informed about them.
- The Life Nursery regularly consult with parents to ensure records of their children's dietary needs – including any allergies - are up-to-date. Parents sign the updated record to signify that it is correct.
- Staff are aware that allergies can occur at any time and unexpected allergic reactions can happen.
- Known allergies, intolerances and care plans are displayed in the kitchen on the display board.
- Staff are aware that choking can be silent.
- Staff are vigilant in ensuring children do not share foods.
- The Life Nursery 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.
- The Life Nursery display the menu of snacks for parents to view on the 'Parent Board'.
- The Life Nursery provide nutritious food for all meals and snacks, avoiding large quantities of saturated fat, sugar and salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings.
- The Life Nursery introduce foods from the diet of each of the children's cultural backgrounds, providing children with familiar foods and introducing them to new ones.
- The Life Nursery take care not to provide food containing nuts or nut products and especially vigilant where we have a child who has a known allergy to nuts.
- Through discussion with parents and research reading, The Life Nursery obtain information about the dietary rules of the religious groups to which children and their parents belong, and of vegetarians and vegans, as well as about food allergies. We take account of this information in the provision of food and drinks.

- The Life Nursery demonstrate sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. The Life Nursery 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.
- The Life Nursery will NOT provide children with grapes, cooked sausage, raw carrot, popcorn, mini eggs and hot dogs to avoid choking.
- The Life Nursery will endeavour to cut small soft foods which are round in half and these include blueberries and cherry tomatoes.
- Drinking bottles with teats are discouraged due to liquid being drawn into the lungs.
- The Life Nursery organise snack times so that they are social occasions in which children and adults participate.
- The Life Nursery use snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink, feeding themselves and washing their own plate and cup.
- The Life Nursery 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.
- The Life Nursery provide fresh drinking water and this is accessible to all children at all times. Staff encourage and model to children how to obtain the water.
- The Life Nursery inform parents who provide a packed lunch for their children about the storage facilities available in the nursery.
- In order to protect children with food allergies, The Life Nursery discourage children from sharing and swapping their food with one another.
- The Life Nursery provide semi-skimmed milk in such as on cereal and also as a drink which is supplied by Cool Milk. Each child is entitled to one third of a pint of milk per day.
- The Life Nursery work in partnership with parents and gain knowledge from health professionals in developing healthy eating practices within the nursery.
- The Life Nursery meets the fully requirements of the Safeguarding and Welfare requirements of the EYFS framework: Health.
- The Life Nursery aim to support children with strong food preferences (fussy eating), working with parent/carers and providing strategies to overcome this.
- The Life Nursery take into account children with special educational needs during snack/lunch time, understanding restricted diets and different abilities in independence and social skills.
- Children who refuse to eat at mealtimes will be offered food later in the day.
- Children will be given time to eat at their own pace and not rushed.

Celebrating Special Occasions

- If parents wish to bring in a cake for friends to celebrate their child's birthday, this should be shop bought and still in packaging to enable all ingredients to be seen and any allergy advice.
- All cakes and sweets which are brought in for children to share with their friends are sent home for the childrens' parents to decide whether they allow their child to have these.
- All ingredients from any packaging will be photocopied to inform all parents/carers what ingredients are used.
- Should the nursery request donations of food for eg parties, we have a list of healthy options for parents to choose from. We kindly ask for no foods to be cooked/baked at home due to childrens' allergies and cultural preferences.

Packed lunches

The Life Nursery cannot provide cooked meals and children are required to bring packed lunches, we:

- Childrens' lunch boxes are checked prior to children eating to ensure no foods are deemed as a choking hazard. If so, these are removed and parents are notified.
- ensure perishable contents of packed lunches are refrigerated or parents are required to provide an ice pack to keep food cool;
- inform parents of The Life Nursery's Snack policy on healthy eating;
- inform parents that we do not microwave cooked food brought from home due to the risk of food poisoning;
- encourage parents to provide sandwiches with a healthy filling, fruit, and milk based deserts, such as yoghurt or custard. The Life Nursery discourage fizzy and sugary drinks;
- discourage packed lunch contents that consist largely of crisps, processed foods, sweet drinks and sweet products such as cakes, chocolate or biscuits;
- do not allow children to eat nuts as part of their packed lunch due to the risk of an allergic reaction to the child or other children in the nursery;
- do NOT allow children to eat grapes, cooked sausage, popcorn or raw carrot to avoid choking.
- provide children bringing packed lunches with plates, cups and cutlery; and
- ensure that adults supervise and sit with children to eat their lunch so that the mealtime is a social occasion.
- Discourage parents from bringing juice bottles in packed lunches.
- Encourage parents to provide their child's lunch in a container that can be stored securely and appropriately until the lunch time period.

- Will within reason, send any uneaten packed lunch food items home so parents can also monitor what their child has consumed.

Working in partnership with parents/carers

The Life Nursery understand the importance of parents/carers supporting their child in having a healthy balanced diet. They play a massive role in encouraging healthy eating habits from an early age and providing them with the nutrients they require through their diet.

We require the support from our families when packing their child's lunch box to be mindful of the amount of unhealthy foods given. The Life Nursery are able to offer advice on alternative healthy options if needed. We encourage parents to promote independence at home, e.g. feeding themselves, using cutlery etc.

If a parent/carer raises concerns about their child's eating, The Life Nursery will provide different strategies to support this and will also give advice about relevant guidance and other health professionals they can access.

Legal framework

- Regulation (EC) 852/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Hygiene of Foodstuffs.
- EYFS (2024)

Further guidance

- Safer Food, Better Business (Food Standards Agency 2024)
- NHS (2016) Fussy eaters
- Change4life
- HENRY (2020)
- Department for Education (most up to date version)
- Safeguarding Support Limited – March 2025

This policy was revised by Louise Gray, Nursery Manager – May 2025

Policy read by: