# The Close Day Nursery School Healthy Eating & Nutrition Policy

## Introduction

At the Close Day Nursery School, we aim to implement a whole setting approach to healthy eating to improve and support the health of the children, their families and our own staff. Establishing healthy eating habits from a young age is crucial for children's overall wellbeing and development. By introducing children to a variety of nutritious foods early on, and encouraging a balanced diet, we can shape their preferences and instil healthy behaviours that contribute to a diverse and nutrient-rich diet.

We provide breakfast, AM and PM snacks and a light tea, with lunch being provided by parents/carers. For all meals and snacks offered by the Nursery, we ensure that the nutrition content of the foods offered are taken into consideration. Children need a balanced diet, as it is essential that they get all the nutrients and energy they need to develop. Children will be provided with a range of opportunities to learn about food and make healthier food and drink choices. We encourage children to be involved in activities, such as food tasting, cooking and exploring textures through play as well as role playing experiences involving food in every nursery room.

We promote positive attitudes towards food during mealtimes and have adults sitting with the children to help social communication.

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*Children's early experiences with food can shape future eating habits. This can impact children's long-term health, including maintaining a healthy weight and good oral health – Department for Education, April 2025*

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In accordance with the healthy eating and nutrition guidance from the Early Years Foundation Stage, we have devised this policy to ensure that there is consistency and clear understanding regarding food and nutrition, throughout the nursery and for families. Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance

*Policy aims*

1. To provide healthy food/drink choices throughout the time children are in our setting and to ensure any food brought in from home complements this.
2. To ensure that all aspects of food and drink promote the health and wellbeing of the children and staff.
3. To ensure food is nutritionally appropriate to the age/stage of each child.

## What we provide

We provide breakfast, mid-morning, mid-afternoon snacks and a light afternoon tea for those who stay until 5:30pm. The food offered will be part of a healthy, balanced, nutritious, tasty and varied diet. We will always consider the nutritional traffic light system highlighted on the food packaging.

**Breakfast**

Breakfast is an important meal that should provide 25% of a child's energy requirement and contributes significantly to their vitamin and mineral requirements. Our breakfast menu includes a selection of healthy breakfast cereals and brown toast with healthy spreads.

**Snacks**

Snacks are an important part of the diet of young children and can positively contribute towards a balanced diet and their daily energy and nutrient needs. We provide a range of fruit and vegetables, a starchy snack such as toast or crackerbreads, and a protein rich food such as cheese, soft cheese spread or humous.

**Late afternoon tea**

For children staying with us until 5:30pm, we will provide a variety of light tea options such as sandwiches, pasta, rice, pitta bread or crackerbreads with cheese, vegetables and fruit.

**Drinks**

Fresh drinking water is always available. At breakfast and snack times we will provide milk (full fat milk for under 1s). We will not be accepting any form of squash or flavoured water into nursery. We highly recommend not introducing squash into your children's diet. Once children have the taste for it, it can be become difficult for them to want to drink water. Water and milk are the two drink options which both NHS and Early Years Foundation Stage state that young children need. Squash and sugary drinks can affect their nutrient intake due to the sugar content and sweet flavour and can also have a negative impact on children's teeth.

**Allergies / special dietary requirements**

The setting will provide food in accordance with children's religious beliefs and cultural practices as required**.**

We are a nut free setting – parents are made aware of this when they enrol and its clearly stated in our packed lunch leaflet. This is to protect any child or adult who attends who may have a severe allergy to nuts.

In addition to this:

- We obtain necessary information from parents in advance of a child starting nursery regarding their dietary requirements, preferences or food allergies.
- All practitioners are fully aware of children who may have allergies – these children have a photo of themselves displayed, stating their dietary requirements, whether medical, cultural or vegetarian requests.
- Ensure that a vegetarian / vegan option is provided at every mealtime.

## What parents provide

Parents are required to provide packed lunches for those children who stay for lunch. All parents receive a leaflet about what sort of food their child's lunch should contain. We will be encouraging parents to provide a lunch that complements our healthy food ethos (please see the leaflet at the end of this policy).

There are foods within the Nutrition Guidance, published by Department for Education that should be avoided. Therefore, the following foods will not be provided by the nursery, and cannot be packed in lunch boxes:

- Dried fruits such as raisins, dried apricots and banana
- Flavoured dried rice, pasta and noodle products, e.g. instant packet foods
- Sweetened yogurts and fromage frais, including non-dairy alternatives – **plain unsweetened yogurts are recommended instead**
- Foods high in saturated fats, e.g. sweet and savoury pastries, sugar, cakes, crisps, sweets, chocolate and any confectionary
- Any products containing artificial sweeteners – this encourages children to prefer sweet foods
- Skimmed milk – the nursery provides semi-skimmed milk for 2+ years and full fat milk for under 2s. For children who have dietary requirements, we will provide an alternative option to cow's milk, such as oat milk or soya milk
- No sugary drinks, including smoothies, fruit juice and squash

## Baby room

Drawing from our own knowledge and trusted sources such as the NHS, we know that under 2s have different needs and requirements regarding food. They need full fat options for some products such as yogurt and cheese, as they need energy and fat to support their growth. We incorporate milk and dairy products within our baby room snack rota, as we know they are a good source of protein and calcium. Calcium helps build bones and keep teeth healthy and are therefore important to include within their diet. We have rice cakes, wafers and baby crisps on offer – all are low in salt and sugar and they are never given large quantities. Fruit and vegetables are offered and highly encouraged, role modelling a good balance of foods, all whilst supporting babies' growth and development.

We have reduced sugar rusks, which is not part of our main snack list. We have these for our younger babies to mix with their formula / milk as required, and this will always be discussed with parents/carers. We do not offer any other biscuit form. We have baby pouches such as carrot, green veggies and lentil bake for those who are still within the puree eating stage and cannot yet eat whole / larger foods. The nutritional value and ingredients are always taken into consideration.

## Baking/cooking related activities

We will not bake biscuits or cakes within the nursery. If a food related activity has been planned, it will involve healthy foods e.g. vegetables, fruit or other healthier options. These activities include making soups or smoothies to try, oatmeal bakes with fruit, or wrap pizzas with various vegetable toppings.

## Birthdays and celebrations

Birthdays will be celebrated in ways that don't involve confectionary, large iced birthday cakes or biscuits. We advise parents to provide small individual cakes for these special occasions or fruit platters.

## Rewards

Food and sweets will not be used as a reward, instead we reward with stickers and superstar certificates.

## Staff leading by example

We understand that as Early Years Practitioners we have a key role in influencing children's knowledge, skills and attitudes about food, so it is important that they are familiar with healthy eating and nutrition guidelines. Any changes to guidelines regarding eating and nutrition will be cascaded to staff throughout the setting.

It is essential that all staff are committed to setting a positive example with food in the setting and will be encouraged to always promote healthy eating. During mealtimes, there are occasions where the staff will sit at the table with children to eat their own lunches – all staff will ensure they bring in healthy lunches and will be encouraged not to have unhealthy food or drinks, ensuring they are excellent role models for the children.