



Eating Well Policy

Mealtimes should be a happy, social occasion for children and staff alike. Positive interactions should be shared at these times and enjoyed. The Mulberry Bush is committed to offering children healthy, nutritious and balanced meals and snacks which meet individual needs and requirements.

What children eat affects their health both now and in the future. They need a balanced diet to grow properly, keep healthy, fight off illness and tackle problems such as diabetes and obesity.

Nursery food has an important role to play in developing children's social and personal attitudes and behaviours around food.

We will ensure that:

- Two daily snacks are provided for children attending a full day at the nursery, one for children attending for half day.
- A healthy, balanced midday meal will be provided for children.
- Menus are planned in advance by the school's kitchen, rotated regularly and reflect cultural diversity and variation. These will be displayed for children and parents to view
- We provide nutritious food at all snack and mealtimes, avoiding large quantities of fat, sugar and salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings
- Menus (including snacks) will include at least 3 servings of fresh fruit and vegetables per day for a child who attends all day.
- Fresh drinking water will be constantly available and frequently offered to children and babies. Milk is also available at snack times.
- Individual dietary requirements will be respected. We will gather information from parents regarding their children's dietary needs including any allergies. Where appropriate we will carry out a risk assessment in place in the case of allergies and work alongside parents to put into place an individual dietary plan for their child

- Staff will show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. They would 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.
- Upon enrolment, parents are required to provide information regarding their child's dietary needs, allergies and preferences. These will be discussed with the parent's at settling in sessions and any special provisions or reasonable adjustments will be agreed.
- Allergy plans will be created and signed by both parents and Nursery staff and displayed in the relevant spaces in Nursery.
- Senior staff working in each age group will be responsible for ensuring the correct, allergy safe food is given to each child at meal times.
- Staff will set a good example and eat with the children and show good table manners. Meal and snack times will be organised so that they are social occasions in which children and staff participate in small groups. During meals and snack times children will be encouraged to use their manners and say 'please' and 'thank you' and conversation will be encouraged.
- Staff will use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink, and feeding themselves. Staff will support children to make healthy choices and understand the need for healthy eating.
- We provide foods from the diet of each of the children's cultural backgrounds, providing children with familiar foods and introducing them to new ones. Cultural differences in eating habits will be respected.
- Any child who shows signs of distress at being faced with a meal he/she does not like will have his/her food removed without any fuss. If a child does not finish his/her first course, he/she will still be given a small helping of dessert. Children not on special diets will be encouraged to eat a small piece of everything.
- Children who refuse to eat at the mealtime will be offered food later in the day.
- Children will be given time to eat at their own pace and not rushed.
- Quantities offered will take account of the ages of the children being catered for.
- We will promote positive attitudes to healthy eating through play opportunities and discussions.
- The nursery will provide parents with daily written records of feeding routines for all children.
- No child is ever left alone when eating/drinking to ensure that there is no risk of choking.
- There will always be a member of staff sat at the table with children while they are eating and drinking, with the member of staff keeping the children in sight and ear shot at all times.
- Children will sit at height and age-appropriate tables and chairs/highchairs at mealtimes.

Snacks

Snacks are available at 10am and 3pm. Nursery aims to provide appropriate snacks for each age group and encourage children to choose where appropriate to promote independence. Snacks available include:

- Fresh fruit (apple, pear, banana, grapes, melon etc)
- Fresh vegetables (carrot, cucumber, pepper, tomatoes)
- Crackers, breadsticks and cereals
- Cheese
- Toast
- Biscuits (limited to one per child)

Meals

Nursery meals are included in the price when booked in for a morning or full day sessions. All meals are served with vegetables and there is either a pudding or a starter.

- 1 portion of protein rich food
- 1 portion of grains or potatoes
- At least 1 portion of vegetables

Examples of our meals are:

- Spaghetti Bolognese
- Cottage Pie
- Chicken Curry and Boiled Rice
- Sausage and Mash

A vegetarian/vegan option is always available if required. ☐

Dietary requirements

The Main Schools Kitchen prepares all our lunchtime meals, as well as providing us with snacks. We liaise with them regularly to update them on all children's dietary requirements, to which they plan and prepare alternatives for any baby/ child with a food allergy or intolerance.

When prepping snacks/ serving lunch, staff ensure there's no cross contamination by using separate serving utensils, chopping boards and knives.

We use colour coded plates for children with special dietary requirements;

- Dairy Free- Yellow Plate
- Gluten Free- Red
- Other allergies - Red
- Vegan- Green

The list of children's dietary requirements is displayed in the kitchen and on our online platform Family.

Baby led weaning

Guidelines recommend that babies start to eat solid food at 6 months, starting with small amounts of food and increase this gradually as the child gets older. Food consistency and variety should also gradually increase as the child gets older or as per their developmental stage, as should the number of times that the child is fed; the World Health Organisation (WHO) Guidelines recommend 2-3 meals per day for infants 6-8 months of age and 3-4 meals per day for infants 9-23 months of age, with 1-2 additional snacks as required.

Baby Led Weaning means letting the child feed themselves from the very start of weaning, rather than taking food from a spoon offered by an adult. Baby led weaning means no purees, no ice cube trays, no food processor, no potato masher and no baby rice. This is a way of introducing solid foods, by letting babies choose what they eat and feed themselves when they are ready. This means it is more likely to tie in with their ability to take food into their mouth, move it around and swallow safely. The nursery discusses this with parents as part of the settling in process and supports the routines already set up with the parents at home. Food is provided by the nursery (please see above) however, if parents want to bring in food from home, they are more than welcome to do so. The textures and tastes that children are accustomed to will also be discussed as part of the settling in process, and staff will be made aware of the stage of weaning for each child.

All staff are aware of baby led weaning and understand the difference between gagging and choking. Please refer to the Safety and Well-being section of this policy for more information about First Aid.

Safety and Well-being

Should a child become ill or require First Aid during mealtimes there will always be at least 2 members of staff supporting and facing the children during snack and mealtimes. Pre-School staff are permitted to serve lone work at snack times **provided that there are staff present in the room next door to assist if necessary**. All staff are Paediatric First Aid trained, and we ensure staff are confident in knowing what to do in an emergency. The First Aid procedure must be followed in the event of an emergency during snack or mealtimes; this is discussed in regular staff meetings to ensure staff confidence and competence. Please refer to the Accidents and First Aid, Messy Play and Weaning Policy.

Safer Eating

Mealtimes and snack times for babies and children can be a high-risk environment for choking incidents and allergic reactions. Knowing how to prepare food appropriately for each child, working with parents when a baby is being introduced to solid food (or weaning) and how to supervise children whilst they are eating are all important safety issues.

Whilst children are eating there should always be a member of staff in the room with a valid paediatric first aid certificate.

- Before a child starts at The Mulberry Bush we obtain information about any special dietary requirements through our enrolment forms and all about me documents.
- If there are any food allergies or intolerances noted, these are then discussed prior to the child starting and then through the settling in sessions. The staff and Kitchen are then informed to ensure we provide alternative meals/ snacks if required.
- At each mealtime and snack time the staff must be clear about who is responsible for checking that the food being provided meets all the requirements for each child – this will be the senior member of staff in each room.
- We have ongoing discussions with parents and/or carers and, where appropriate, health professionals to develop allergy action plans for managing any known allergies and intolerances. This information is reviewed regularly by the room leader, parent and SENDCO and shared with all staff.
- Staff are trained to be aware of the symptoms and treatments for allergies and anaphylaxis, the differences between allergies and intolerances and that children can develop allergies at any time.
- The baby room staff work alongside the parents for babies/ children starting or are in the middle of weaning onto solid food. They discuss what has already been tried at home, parental preferences in relation to the preparation of lunches and familiar textures (pureed, small lumps, big lumps, baby led weaning etc) to get a clear idea of how to support the baby/ child during mealtimes and to prevent choking.
- We prepare food in a suitable way for each child's individual developmental needs, working with parents and/or carers to help children move on to the next stage at a pace right for the child.
- Babies and young children should be seated safely in a highchair or appropriately sized low chair while eating in our snack/ lunch area.
- Children must always be within sight and hearing of a member of staff whilst eating. Choking can be completely silent therefore it is important for staff to be alert to when a child may be starting to choke. Staff should sit facing children whilst they eat so they can make sure children

are eating in a way to prevent choking and so they can prevent food sharing and be aware of any unexpected allergic reactions.

- When a child experiences a choking incident that requires intervention, providers should record details of where and how the child choked and parents and/or carers made aware via a telephone call as well as on collection. The records should be reviewed periodically to identify if there are trends or common features of incidents that could be addressed to reduce the risk of choking. Appropriate action should be taken to address any identified concerns. Any incidents of choking will be recorded on Evolve and highlighted at termly health and Safety briefings.

Useful links in relation to Safer Eating

The BSACI allergy action plan,

<https://www.bsaci.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/BSACIAllergyActionPlan2018NoAAI2981-2.pdf>

NHS advice on food allergies

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/food-allergy/>

treatment of anaphylaxis

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/anaphylaxis/>

NHS Start for Life Weaning

<https://www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/baby/weaning/>

DFE Guidance on food safety for young children

<https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/safeguarding-and-welfare/food-safety>

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