



Healthy Eating Policy and Procedure

Healthy Eating Policy Statement:

Little Acorns Nursery, Montessori Playschool & Acorns After School believes that good health and good food in the early years and school years helps to safeguard children's well-being throughout their lives. It is important that children develop healthy eating habits from a young age for both the pleasure of having a wide variety in their diets and gaining knowledge about nutrition. Meal times are treated as an opportunity for social interaction as well as laying the foundations about making healthy choices.

Our service promotes healthy nutritional choices for our children. We feel it is important at this young age to introduce and educate our children about good nutrition and the health benefits of eating well. Allergens in food we provide will be listed as under Food Information for Consumers (FIC) Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 (S.I. No. Parkview Creche Policies and Procedures January 2022 116 489 of 2014). It is also our intention to ensure that good food hygiene practices are in place in line with relevant legislation.

Principle:

This policy is underpinned by the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 (Síolta Standard 9: Health and Welfare) (National Standard 9: Nurture and Well-Being, National Standard 13: Food and Drink).

Policy and Procedure:

It is the policy of the Service to support parents/guardians' choices e.g. bottle feeding / dietary restrictions/requirements.

Adults always sit with the children and supervise them when eating and drinking snacks or meals.

Procedure:

We do not allow fizzy drinks, sweets, chocolate, crisps, popcorn, nuts or nut spreads. This is communicated to parents. We provide healthy meals freshly cooked on the premises by our cook. Our kitchen is HACCP compliant and our meals are cooked by a qualified and experienced cook. Our menu has been developed to ensure that each meal is nutritionally balanced for growing children. Parents/Guardians wishing to send their child in with their own food will be provided with a list of the safe foods that are only permitted on the premises due to allergen control measures. Parents/Guardians will also



be provided with the monthly menu so that they can arrange for their child to be sent in with the same daily meal plan.

- Babies bottles must be made up and provided to the service in bottles suitable for refrigeration clearly labelled with the child's name.
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- Our staff keep a record of what a child has eaten during the day on the Little Vista App for parents. This allows us to ensure that a child's nutritional needs are being met on an on-going basis.
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- Food is appropriate to the ages, development and needs of children. Food portions will be age and stage appropriate.
- A Menu planning sheet will be used weekly to plan meals listing allergens Meal/snack times are used as an opportunity to encourage good social habits. Whenever possible children and staff eat together.
- Good table manners will be encouraged.
- Children will also be engaged in conversation if they wish.
- Children that are slow eaters will be given time to eat and not rushed. Children are encouraged to feed themselves as appropriate to their age and stage of development.
- Children will be encouraged to sit down when eating and/or drinking. Age and stage appropriate feeding equipment such as feeder cups, knives, forks spoons etc. are always available.
- Allergens in food we provide will be listed as under Food Information for Consumers (FIC) Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 (S.I. No. 489 of 2014). Children with allergies and special diets will be carefully supervised. Staff are fully aware of all allergies within the setting.
- Children will be encouraged to help tidy up after snack time. Cultural and religious dietary habits are respected.
- Parents/guardians are requested to provide details of foods that children can or cannot eat..
- Healthy eating is promoted through an arrangement of activities for the children including play, stories, music, cookery etc
- Drinking water, milk and small snacks are available throughout the day (in between scheduled meals).
- Birthday party food should be discussed in advance with the staff.



Important Note:

If a child expresses that they are hungry, we will ensure they have a snack. Staff are required to inform parents of what the child has eaten during the day and especially if their child has not eaten well. Parents are advised on safety and nutrition in relation to healthy lunches and snacks. Meal/snack time should be engaged in a positive way with the children. Staff must not use any negative association with food at any time with the children.

Meals:

Well-balanced and nutritious meals are provided for the children. A variety of foods is selected from each of the four main food groups every day:

Bread

cereals

rice

pasta

potatoes -

Fruit and vegetables

Milk and dairy foods

Meat, fish and alternatives

- Menus are reviewed and changed monthly to ensure a varied range of food choices for the children.
- Fresh fruit is always available
- Processed meat products such as sausages, burgers, chicken nuggets and fish bites are kept to a minimum.
- If these are provided, healthier cooking methods are used, e.g. they are oven cooked or grilled.
- No food is fried.
- Special therapeutic dietary needs are respected.
- Parents/guardians are requested to give us a copy of the diet sheet provided by their dietician.

Allergies:

More and more children are diagnosed with an allergy, some common allergies are:

- **Peanuts and tree nuts**
- **Sesame and other seeds**



- Fish and shellfish
- Dairy products
- Eggs
- Soya
- Wasp or bee stings
- Natural latex rubber
- Penicillin and other drugs

Rewards and Special Occasions:

Praise and attention are used to help develop children's self-esteem and to act as a positive reward for good behaviour.

Food, e.g. sweets, should not be used as a reward. Little Acorns Nursery, Montessori Preschool and Acorns Afterschool will provide birthday cakes. Cakes should be bought at a shop or HSE inspected and approved restaurant to avoid the possibility of gastrointestinal illness. The cake should not contain nuts, as some children are allergic to nuts.

Healthy eating is promoted through an arrangement of activities for the children including play, stories, music, cookery etc.

The Service participates in special campaigns and initiatives where appropriate.

The implementation of this Healthy Eating Policy will not only relate to the provision of healthy foods and drinks in the Service, in order to promote the nutritional and general wellbeing of the children, but it will also address food related activities involving the children which should encourage and enable them to make healthy choices in the future.

Menus:

The Monthly menu is displayed in the Service and includes a wide variety of healthy foods to include servings of protein, starch, dairy, vegetable, and iron. Any changes in the menu are noted and any foods that are substituted are of equal nutrient value.

● Mealtime Practices:

- There is flexibility around meal and snack times (e.g. where a child is deeply immersed in play).
- Meals and snacks should be appetising and healthy for children. ● The



atmosphere during mealtimes is relaxed with pleasant social interaction among the children and adults.

- Staff sit with children during mealtimes to give examples of positive social skills.
- Children are encouraged to feed themselves independently according to their age and development.
- The crockery, cutlery and drinking utensils used are suitable for the children's ages and stage of development.
- Enough time is allowed for bottle-feeding and mealtimes.
- Healthy meals and snacks are served no more than 3 hours apart.
- Each child is given enough time to eat and enjoy their bottle, snack or meal without being rushed.
- Children who have not eaten or who are hungry are offered: food at times outside routine meal and snack times. (an alternative food option)
- Children are seated at the table or in a highchair during snack and meal times when their food is ready.
- The table and chairs are suitable to their age and stage of development. Children are encouraged to try different food tastes, textures, colours and so forth.
- Children are supported to develop knowledge and skills to make nutritious food choices.
- Learning materials and experiences are available to reinforce nutritious food choices.
- Activities are available for children who have finished their food before others.
- Children with allergies and special diets will be carefully supervised.
- Staff are fully informed about allergies and religious dietary requirements within the setting.
- Ensure that staff and children wash their hands before meals.
- Use disposable gloves when serving the children food including snacks.
- Children are put to sit at the table in highchairs as meals are brought to the rooms.
- Children are not left sitting at a table or in highchairs for too long before the meals are served.
- Staff never blow on or taste the children's food.
- Staff never give the children food that is too hot. Food is let cool before serving it to the children.
- Staff help and encourage the children to eat their meals.
- Staff do not force or demand that a child eats their food but use positive encouragement in a relaxed manner.
- The children are taught table manners and etiquette and shown how to



use cutlery correctly.

- Bibs are available for babies and toddlers at mealtimes.
- Staff will never let one child eat another child's food to prevent allergies or cross contamination.
- Eating areas are cleaned up after each meal.
- The table is cleaned down etc with a clean cloth, using the anti bacterial spray.
- All dishes and cutlery are sent to the kitchen.
- Cups/beakers which are kept in the classroom are washed with washing up liquid and hot water and dried thoroughly.
- The children are cleaned after each meal, hands/clothes etc.
- Children's faces are cleaned with individual pieces of wet cotton wool or baby wipes.
- A chart will be kept in each room with the name of the child and the allergy type.
- For severe allergic reactions, children may use an injectable adrenaline aka Epi-pen/ Anapen/ Jext. In these cases staff needs to be trained on their use and what to do in the event of anaphylactic shock. .

Note: Food & Nutrition Guidelines for Early Years Services available from the Health Promotion Unit of each local Health Service Executive offers guidance on this topic. The Childcare (Early Years Services) Regulations, 2016 also set out guidance in this matter in the Explanatory Guide to the Regulations. For more information on allergies please see: Food Safety Authority Allergies and Intolerance.

Manager's Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Beery', written over a large, faint, stylized outline of a leaf or acorn shape.

Date: 22/7/2023