

018: Food and Nutrition Policy

The food and nutrition policy sets our commitment to ensuring every child is provided with a nutritionally balanced diet. As part of our additional services and provisions policy Bright Beginnings will offer a pescatarian menu. A pescatarian diet is one which offers fish and similar to a vegetarian diet does not include meat products. Meals are cooked on site by our designated catering team. The menus have been prepared by our Centre Cook regarding:

- **Early Years Foundation Stage Guidance (EYFS) 3.47.** *Where children are provided with meals, snacks and drinks, they must be **healthy, balanced and nutritious**.* (2014)
- **Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings in England: The Children's Food Trust.** (2012)
- **Advice from University of Leeds Food and Nutrition Department (2017)**
- **Eat Well Guide Public: Health England (2016)**
- **Early Years Nutrition Support Programme QM**

We have received the committed certificate from the Early Years Nutrition Support Programme and worked with a Registered Nutritionist to achieve an Accredited Certificate.

Meals and foods offered throughout the day at Bright Beginnings offer children a balanced nutritional diet essential for healthy growth and development meeting guidelines for salt and sugar, calorific intake and reflect criteria set out in the Early Years Nutrition Support Programme QM. Children should be offered additional meals/foods at home to ensure their calorie intake is met for the day. If children are following a vegetarian or vegan diet it is important that they consume 3 portions of protein a day, so it's important that parents of vegetarian or vegan children ensure additional protein is provided at home as they may be provided with two portions at nursery. Appropriate sources of vegetarian protein, eggs, beans, pulses, tofu, soya, nuts or Quorn. The Centre will only use free range eggs in foods prepared in our kitchen.

The UK Government recommends that all children aged 6 months to 5 years are given vitamin supplements containing vitamins A,C and D every day. Before doing so please access the NHS link below which details further information about dosage or speak with your Health Visitor who will be able to advise you.

[Vitamins for children - NHS](#)

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Meals within the Centre:

Light Breakfast - Available from 8.00am until 9.15am

This is a light breakfast of a portion of fruit and either cereals with milk or brown or white toast served with milk. It is expected that you would provide your child with some breakfast prior to arriving at the Centre if they attended a morning session.

Lunch - Served at 11.30am

A balanced and nutritious 2 course meal served with fresh water

Light Tea- Served at 2.45pm

A balanced and nutritious two course light tea served with fresh water. It is expected you will provide your child with a further meal or supper after leaving the Centre at the end of the Centre day.

Mid-Afternoon Snack - offered between 1.30 and 2.00pm

Breadstick, oat cake or similar carbohydrate alternative with milk

Evening Snack – offered between 4.45pm and 5.15pm

Options include vegetable sticks, fruit, oat or rice cake or similar carbohydrate alternative with water

Fresh water - Children have continuous access to fresh drinking water daily. Playscheme children have access to a water cooler within the Zone. Grasshoppers / Dragonfly / Bumblebee / Ladybird /Caterpillar and Butterfly children have access to fresh water all day, using individually labelled drinking bottles.

Milk - in addition to milk provided for breakfast cereals and used in cooking, milk is provided for your child to drink during mid afternoon snack time. In line with national nutritional advice and standards, we offer our children over the age of 2 semi skimmed milk as well as full fat.

Bright Beginnings Menus

Menus are planned by the Centre Cook. We are always open to ideas and support when developing our menus and welcome contributions/recipe ideas from parents. Menus include a variety of dishes as we work to reflect our rich and diverse mix of families and children attending. Centre Seasonal menus are developed with the 14 most common allergens displayed, as directed by the Food Standards Agency. These are available on the Centre Website and throughout the Centre. The current 'weeks' menu is displayed in the entrance vestibule to the Centre. Lunch and tea contain a portion of protein, a starchy carbohydrate along **with at** least one portion of fruit or veg, only one second course per day will contain added sugar which meets with Early Years Nutrition guidance.

Spring – March, April and May

Summer – June, July and August

Autumn – September, October and November

Winter – December, January and February

Menus cover four weeks, being rotated to cover each three-month period.

Dietary Requirements, Allergies and Intolerances

The Centre Cook will work closely with families to ensure medical dietary needs will be catered for. If your child does not have any medical dietary exemptions, they will be expected to follow the balanced and healthy menu that we provide. You will be able to discuss your child's specific medical dietary requirements during your child's induction period. Should you feel your child is intolerant or allergic to certain foods, we will insist you seek expert advice from a qualified dietician or medical professional.

Children who require an alternative meal will have their food served on a named orange plate from the kitchen team which is easily identifiable for the adults working with the children. If the food for that day is suitable, an empty orange plate will be placed on the trolley. At each mealtime and snack time all staff collecting the food trolley from the kitchen is responsible for checking that the food being provided meets all the requirements for each child by checking with the Centre catering team.

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You must provide us with a copy of the diagnosis and dietary advice in order we can meet your child's medical dietary needs within the Centre. This will ensure your child continues to have their dietary needs met within the Centre and at home. A suspected intolerance could be a sign there is an underlying medical issue and medical advice should be sought. Children under the care of a qualified dietician will be periodically retested which can lead to the reintroducing of foods. We are committed to working together to support your child and any information changes and updates to your child's diet will be shared with all staff involved in the preparing and handling of food. Allergy action plans for managing any known allergies and intolerances must be kept up to date and shared with all staff.

Due to the extremely high volume of children we are catering for, the centre is not able to offer alternatives based on parental wishes unless the request is of a medical or religious nature.

Mealtimes

Staff help children to regard meals times as a relaxing social occasion. In all play areas children sit in small groups or key groups, around tables supported by an adult. Staff encourage children to develop independence whilst feeding themselves and self-serving food, age-appropriate eating utensils and cutlery are provided. To demonstrate and model healthy eating habits our staff are encouraged to take a small amount of food prepared by the kitchen. Eating the same food as the children is a great way for our team to promote positive interaction and conversations around tastes and textures of food. The staff will offer praise and encouragement to children for trying foods on their plate whilst respecting fullness cues. Some of our young children may display fussy or picky eating habits, the team will ensure these children are seated with good eaters. If a child really does not want to eat after gentle encouragement, the team will take the food away without making any fuss. Children will always be offered the second as this forms part of the overall nutritional balance of the whole meal.

Safer Eating

Mealtimes are always supported by adults and will always have a paediatric first aider in the playroom to help ensure children are kept as safe as possible when eating at Bright Beginnings.

The Centre will prepare food in a way to prevent choking. [This guidance on food safety](#) for young children: includes advice on food and drink to avoid, how to reduce the risk of choking and links to other useful resources.

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Babies and young children will be seated safely in an appropriately sized low chairs while eating in a designated eating space where distractions are minimised. We know that choking can be completely silent therefore it is important to be alert to when a child may be starting to choke. Where possible children will be forward facing a whilst they eat so adults 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, we will record details of the incident detailing where and how the child choked and parents and/or carers made aware.

Food from home

Food or drinks (other than formula or breastmilk from home) are **not permitted under any circumstances** within our Centre care rooms or within the kitchen area. All play areas display door signage supporting this initiative. This is to protect the children attending our Centre who have allergies. Please ensure you check your child's belongings, bags, pockets etc., daily prior to entering play areas and remove any items of food. Our staff team are permitted to store and consume foods purchased outside the Centre or prepared in their home in staff designated areas.

Weaning

Most babies, by the age of 6 months are ready to start to add solid food to their diet, as they need more iron and nutrients than milk alone can provide. We of course allow parents to take a lead and will follow their individual home routines.

Food is normally bland to start with, usually baby rice mixed with breast or formula milk – introduced in very small 'taster' amounts, using sterilised utensils. Milk is still their main source of nutrition. We will then start and offer pureed vegetables / fruit, introducing different food every couple of weeks in the beginning.

Once fruit and vegetable have been established in the diet, full fat cow's milk products can be introduced e.g. yoghurt, custard, cheese sauce. Alongside fruit we will offer rice pudding and semolina.

We recognise that all children are individuals; some start trying solid food earlier, others later, some are choosy, while others like everything and anything. We will have ongoing discussions with parents and/or carers about the stage their child is at regarding the introduction of solid foods, including understanding the textures the child is familiar with. Food will be prepared in a suitable way for each child's individual

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developmental needs, working with parents and/or carers to help children move on to the next stage at a pace that is right for the child.

Solid food is offered at lunchtime, with children relaxed on a knee, eventually moving into a chair which is around the table with their peers. Following the NHS guidelines for weaning we will also introduce a free flow beaker at to help your baby learn how to sip which is better for your baby's teeth. The sterilisation of all equipment used to feed babies less than one year is vital to their health we ensure we manage and implements this practice. We aim to work with parents offering similar foods, portions and time of day to establish weaning. Gradually offering a variety of food and introducing a pattern / routine of three meals a day (two with us here – if full day) with a drink at each mealtime. As baby eats more solid food, his or her milk intake will start to decrease.

6 – 9 Months

We will introduce the majority of new food such as pasta, bread, fish etc. Our aim is by the time the child is 6 months the baby will be eating food from the general nursery menu and can experience even more tastes. We will then make the food a little more textured / lumpier which helps learning to chew. Initially using a handheld blender to puree food, then slightly blending, mashing by hand. Finger foods will be offered, to promote chewing, such as toast, bread, breadsticks, pitta bread, pieces of banana etc. It is vitally important to develop this action as chewing helps develop jaw muscles. These are then used to help pronunciation and the formation of sounds and words. Once children can manage finger foods, we will reduce the type of pureed food offered at teatime.

9 – 12 Months

Babies are given one or two spoons to help assist in self-help skills as they try to feed themselves. Your baby is now usually ready to sit at the table, so it becomes more of a social occasion for everyone. By 12 months we would begin to discourage bottles and start to solely use a beaker cup. We find by that time that many children are ready to begin or have already weaned themselves off the bottle. We also encourage children to have full fat cow's milk (or an alternative if the child cannot have cow's milk) as their main drink, after their first birthday.

We work closely with parents' wishes and children will move on to the complete Centre pescatarian menu as and when they are ready.

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Useful information around weaning can be found at;

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/solid-foods-weaning/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning>

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/taking-care-of-childrens-teeth/>

Policy reviewed on:	15/01/2025
Signed on behalf of the Centre	Fiona Hakin