

The Avenue Children's Centre
Healthy Eating / Food and Drink Policy

Statement of intent

This setting regards snack and meal times as an important part of the setting's session/day. Eating represents a social time for children and adults and helps children to learn about healthy eating.

Aim

At snack and meal times, we aim to provide nutritious food, which meets the children's individual dietary needs and ensure that we help our children to be healthy

Methods

- Before a child starts to attend the setting, we find out from parents their children's dietary needs and preferences, including any allergies.
- We record information about each child's dietary needs in her/his registration record and parents sign the record to signify that it is correct.
- We regularly consult with parents to ensure that our records of their children's dietary needs - including any allergies - are up to date. Parents sign the up-dated record to signify that it is correct.
- We display current information about individual children's dietary needs so that all staff and volunteers are fully informed about them.
- We 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.
- We plan menus in advance, involving children (where appropriate) and parents in the planning.
- We display the menus of meals/snacks for the information of parents.
- We provide nutritious food at all meals and snacks, avoiding large quantities of saturated fat, sugar and salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings.
- We include a variety of foods from the four main food groups:
 - meat, fish and protein alternatives;
 - dairy foods;
 - grains, cereals and starch vegetables; and
 - fruit and vegetables.
- We include foods from the diet of each of the children's cultural backgrounds, providing children with familiar foods and introducing them to new ones.
- We take care when providing food containing nuts or nut products and are especially vigilant where we have a child who has a known allergy to nuts. **Due to a child attending that has a severe Nut Allergy we are not cooking with any nut products. (May '22)**
- Through discussion with parents and research reading by staff, we obtain information about the dietary rules of the religious groups, to which children and their parents belong, and of vegetarians and vegans, and about food allergies. We take account of this information in the provision of food and drinks.
- We provide vegetarian food if required and we make every effort to ensure Halal meat or kosher food is available for children who require it.
- We require staff to show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. Staff 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.
- We organise meal and snack times so that they are social occasions in which children and staff interact.
- We use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink and feeding themselves.

- We 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.
- Fresh drinking water is available for the children. The children can ask (verbally or with visual prompts) for water at any time during the session/day.
- In accordance with parents' wishes, we offer children arriving early in the morning - and/or staying late - an appropriate meal or snack (breakfast and tea).
- We can inform parents who provide food for their children about the storage facilities available in the setting.
- We can give parents who provide food for their children information about suitable containers for food.
- In order to protect children with food allergies, we have rules about children sharing and swapping their food with one another.
- For children who drink milk, we provide whole pasteurised/semi skimmed milk.
- For each child under two, we provide parents with daily written information about feeding routines, intake and preferences.
- We encourage all our children to try different foods, however, if a child refuses food regularly but still insists on eating pudding we would discuss this matter with parents/carers to ensure that every child is getting a balanced diet.
- We do not provide food for children under the age of 1 as we believe this is a vital time in their development. We request that parents provide all feeds and meals that we will then heat or make up. We do have appropriate storage facilities.
- Where a child simply refuses a food we do not provide alternatives, however, do encourage them to eat it and ensure that we provide a range of meals that meet the needs of all our children. We can take into account the children's likes and dislikes which are discussed with parents when they register their children.
- We will only use verbal encouragement when asking children to try different foods.
- Menus are reviewed weekly to ensure that a variety of meals are offered for children and so that we can make best use of fresh seasonal produce.

Packed lunches

Where a child chooses to bring a packed lunch, we:

- inform parents of our policy on healthy eating;
- encourage parents to provide sandwiches with a healthy filling, fruit, and milk based deserts such as yoghurt or crème fresh. We discourage sweet drinks and can provide children with water.
- discourage packed lunch contents that consist largely of crisps, processed foods, sweet drinks and sweet products such as cakes or biscuits. We reserve the right to return this food to the parent as a last resort.
- provide children bringing packed lunches with plates, cups and cutlery; and
- ensure staff sit with children to eat their lunch so that the mealtime is a social occasion.

Reviewed **May 2022**

Next Review **May 2023**