



FOOD AND DRINK STATEMENT

Adopted: 13 June 2022

Reviewed: June 2025

Aims

As a Healthy Early Years London setting we want to ensure that we promote the health and well-being of the whole setting community through all aspects of food and nutrition and provide consistent messages to children, parents/carers and staff.

We are working towards meeting the Voluntary food and drink guidelines for Early Years settings in England <https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/media/9750/eat-well-practical-guide-final-check.pdf>. We consider sustainability when choosing foods to serve:
<https://www.firststepsnutrition.org/eating-sustainably/>

Our meals, snacks and drinks are scheduled at regular times.

A healthy, balanced and nutritious meal or a snack is offered to children at least every 1½ – 3 hours. Children arrive at Vishenka nursery at 9 am, have snack at 10.30 am, lunch at 11.30 -12 pm and second snack at 3 pm if the child stays in the afternoon. This is because children have small stomachs and high nutrient needs as they grow and develop, to play and learn. Only drinking water or milk is provided. Fresh drinking water is available at all times and staff encourage children to drink water regularly throughout the day.

We serve age appropriate portion sizes.

We serve small portion sizes on child sized plates. Appetites in young children vary. We encourage them to eat healthy foods according to their appetites. It is better for children to ask for seconds than to serve them too much. Children are not praised for finishing the food on their plate. This helps children to recognise when they are hungry and when they have eaten enough. Snacks served are mini-meals, with components as healthy as mealtime choices.

Children are encouraged to try healthy food.

Children are encouraged to have a little of the different dishes on their plate and have a balanced diet. Dried fruit is not served as part of a snack as this can cause tooth decay. Children are allowed to say 'no' to foods and all food served is healthy. Food is not used as a reward or punishment. Children are not praised for finishing the food on their plate but will be praised for trying different foods and demonstrating good manners and eating behaviour.

Meal and snack times are relaxed, calm and with shared conversation.

Meal and snack times are recognised as an important time to develop verbal and social skills, good eating habits and a time to learn about healthy eating. We eat with the children at mealtimes and eat the same



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food. Children always sit at tables in groups for meals and snacks. We can easily offer help, role model good manners and eating behaviour, direct conversation, and create a calm and relaxed eating environment. At the same time, we can supervise the children eating. There are enough tables and chairs of the right height for children to sit comfortably and enough staff available to eat with the children. Children are encouraged to try new food and learn the names of what they are going to eat, have a chat about what healthy food is, benefits of eating healthy, different meals from around the world, different dishes and utensils in different countries. Slow eaters are never hurried up or left alone.

We use food to support the development of children.

All children in our setting are given opportunities to explore food using their different senses. Children are involved in food growing and in food preparation, such as simple cold dishes: sandwiches, dips, salads. We ensure that children and staff wash their hands before food preparation, meals or snacks. Children are involved in setting and clearing the tables and are encouraged to be successful in whatever self-feeding and self-serving they are capable of doing to support their growing independence, for example children collect their own cup and cutlery and take it to their table, where they serve their own food, with some help, from the serving dishes on the table. We provide children with utensils that are appropriate for their ages and stages of development and take account of the eating practices in their cultures. Food is served in a form that young children can eat with minimum assistance and without choking; the texture changing from soft mashed food to adult texture by the age of 12 months.

Parents and/or carers are given information on the meals and snacks provided.

We tell parents and/or carers how much their child ate during the day and foods they particularly enjoyed or tried. Providing information to parents and carers on menus and the routine for meals helps them to plan their child's routine at home. Children benefit when parents and practitioners share information and work together. Staff shares the nursery's approach to healthy eating with parents/carers and children. Families and children are consulted and encouraged to give feedback using survey/questionnaire, comments box about the meals and snacks offered. Family and children's involvement in decision making is included in our nursery's self-evaluation.

We support parents to do the best for their children.

We ask for food brought from home to meet Voluntary food and drink guidelines for Early Years settings in England. We encourage eligible pregnant women and mothers with children under four to register with the Healthy Start scheme and access the weekly food vouchers and free Healthy Start vitamins. We provide effective support and information for parents and carers about all aspects of feeding infants and young children, establish and support our nursery food policy, inform about local healthy lifestyle after school clubs, deliver parent education sessions such as the Healthy Eating and Balance Diet workshops.

We provide suitable food for all.

We follow Department of Health (DH) guidelines on introducing solid food for babies from around six months, when they are displaying signs of being ready. Children with complex needs have their nutrition needs taken into account. Procedures are in place to support and manage children's dietary requirements,



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including fussy eaters. A food/drink substitution, made in the case of allergies or other dietary requirements, will be similar in nutrient content to the food/drink it replaces. Food allergen information is on display. Foods served reflect the ethnicity and cultures of all children using the provision. Parents and/or carers are asked for advice to ensure the needs of all children are met and we learn from carers and parents' experiences and suggestions. We record information about each child's dietary needs and preferences, including any allergies, in her/his registration record. We regularly consult with parents to ensure that our records of their children's dietary needs - including any allergies - are up to date. 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.

Special occasions and birthdays are celebrated with mostly healthy foods or with non-food treats.

We promote non-food celebrations and treats, such as craft projects or stickers, which are pleasant alternatives to birthday sweets. If food is used for celebrations it forms part of a balanced meal provision and doesn't replace healthy foods. Religious and cultural events and festivals are linked to activities where traditional healthy foods can be explored. Parents/carers are encouraged to attend events to celebrate special and cultural occasions.

Only healthy drinks are provided.

We follow DH guidelines on preparing and using formula milk. We only give children first infant milk and only for the first year of life, practicing responsive bottle-feeding. Drinks are offered in an open or free flow cup (without a valve) from six months and bottles are stopped at one year, so that they learn to sip rather than suck drinks. Water and milk are the best drinks for children's teeth, growth and development. We provide full fat milk for children between one and two; we do not use skimmed milk for children under five. Drinking water is available at all times. Juice (even diluted juice) or other sugary drinks are not provided.

We have a supportive breastfeeding environment.

Breast milk is the ideal source of nutrition for infants for at least the first year of life. We have refrigerated storage space for expressed breast milk which is clearly labelled with name and date. Mothers are welcome to breastfeed (or express breastmilk) and a secluded space will be provided, if required. We can direct mothers to where they can access further breastfeeding support. Maternity Breastfeeding Champion NCT trained breastfeeding peer supporter, Baby Wellness Session at The Dalgarno Trust, Baby Weighing & Breastfeeding Support at The SPACE, Baby Weighing & Breastfeeding Support at St Cuthbert's Children Centre.

We have received appropriate training.

We have received food safety and hygiene training if involved in preparing and handling food. We have undertaken other relevant training to keep me up to date on healthy drinks and foods suitable for children under five.