

20. Food and Nutrition Policy

Policy Statement:

At St Vincent's Nursery we believe that mealtimes should be happy, social occasions for children and staff alike. We promote shared, enjoyable positive interactions at these times.

The revised [EYFS](#) requires all providers to ensure that children are provided with healthy and nutritious food. Healthy eating in the early years helps to safeguard health and well-being throughout life as it supports children developing healthy habits when they are first learning about food. Staff work towards encouraging children and adults to make healthy, informed choices and discourage harmful practices. We share responsibility with parents and other professionals to give guidance and education on health issues and the risks of unhealthy eating practices including dental health issues.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Nursery Chef is responsible for:

- Food preparation and following the principles of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) and risk assessment with regards to the purchase, storage, handling, preparation and serving of food
- Ensuring staff are following guidelines when re-heating food, cooking with the children or using kitchen equipment
- Planning 6 weekly seasonal menus in line with the [Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance](#) produced by the department for education; these are rotated regularly and reflect cultural diversity and variation, and displayed for children and parents to view
- Consulting with staff, children and where possible parents when planning meals and snacks and adapt meals to meet the dietary requirements of all those who attend our setting
- Making recipes available for parents to take home on request
- Reporting any unsafe practice / incidents to the Health & Safety Co-ordinators, Hayley Golden and Karen Wilkinson immediately
- Renewing their Food Hygiene training every 2 years

The Nursery Manager / Health & Safety Co-ordinators are responsible for:

- Reviewing menus that the chef has devised and mealtimes to ensure children's needs are being met
- Ensuring we use reliable suppliers for the food we purchase
- Informing environmental health of any major incident or concern over food hygiene where applicable. Where children and/or adults have been diagnosed by a GP or hospital doctor to be suffering from food poisoning and where it seems possible that the source of the outbreak is within the setting, the Nursery Manager will contact the Environmental Health Department and the Health Protection Agency and will comply with any investigation or act on any advice



given. If the food poisoning is identified as a notifiable disease under the [Public Health \(Infectious Diseases\) Regulations 1988](#) we will report the matter to Ofsted.

- Ensuring equipment is suitable for its use (including fire safety equipment) and provide separate facilities for hand-washing and for washing up in the kitchen area. Appropriate utensils are provided for children suitable to their stage of development.
- Completing regular spot checks on the kitchen environment – i.e. spot checks on fridge temperatures, food storage, stock rotation, dress code, food temperatures, HACCP form completion.

The nursery staff are responsible for:

- Sitting with children while they eat and provide good role models for healthy eating. Conversation is encouraged at each table, staff will observe the children to ensure they are drinking / eating enough and be aware of any behaviour that may suggest the child is thirsty / hungry.
- Ensuring that each child is sat within sight of an adult at all times.
- Recording food intake on Family
- Encouraging children to develop good eating skills and table manners, and saying 'please' and 'thank-you'. We use mealtimes to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink and feeding themselves. Staff will be sensitive to the needs of children who are fussy eaters or small eaters.
- Promoting and practising self-service in Early Learners and Pre-school during all mealtimes, including snacks. In Young Explorers this can be practised during snack times and older children can be supported to self-serve as part of transition process. Mealtime Helpers will be appointed every day in each room, who will hand out cutlery and crockery and help tidy up afterwards.
- Ensuring babies are given plenty of time to feed themselves and hold feeding utensils, and older children encouraged to use knives and forks and taught how to do so correctly. Bibs / mealtime tabards are used where necessary and hands / faces are cleaned with an individual wipe.
- Encouraging children to use the water dispensers located in each room. Babies are offered additional water throughout the day. Additional cool drinks and/or ice lollies are offered after exercise and during warmer weather.

Food Preparation Areas:

When preparing food, staff (kitchen or general) will observe current legislation regarding food hygiene and training by:

- Always washing hands with anti-bacterial soap and hot water before and after handling food, using the toilet or changing nappies
- Using clean, disposable cloths
- Ensuring the use of the correct colour coded chopping boards (e.g. red for raw meat etc.)
- Not being involved in food preparation if they are unwell



- Wearing correct sterile clothing – clean uniform, closed toe shoes etc.
- Holding a current Food Hygiene certificate
- Making sure all fruit and vegetables are washed before being served
- Avoid wearing jewellery, especially rings, watches and bracelets
- Any cuts, spots or sores on the hands and arms must be covered completely with a waterproof dressing
- Fingernails should be kept short and clean, food handlers should not wear non gel nail varnish as this may contaminate food

Temperature control

At St Vincent's Nursery, it is our policy to ensure that any and all foods are stored according to safe food handling practices and at the correct temperature in order to prevent the growth and multiplication of food poisoning organisms, to reduce the rate of food spoilage and to ensure that food quality is maintained.

Fridge temperatures are checked and recorded twice daily to ensure the correct temperature is being upheld.

Cleaning of Food Preparation Areas

Every week the fridge is thoroughly cleaned and all items in the fridge are checked for freshness, and all food past their use by or best before date are correctly disposed of.

- Shelves and drawers are removed and cleaned with warm soapy water
- The inside walls are cleaned from top to bottom with anti-bacterial cleaner
- The seals around the fridge are cleaned to ensure no spillages or stains
- Freezers are defrosted (on non-frost-free) and cleaned once a month following the same procedure

All food preparation surfaces are wiped clean after use with a detergent and cloth, followed by an approved anti-bacterial cleaner and disposable barrel roll. All chopping boards are cleaned after use with warm soapy water, anti-bacterial cleaner and then thoroughly rinsed.

The Nursery Manager and Health & Safety Co-ordinators must ensure that appropriate controls are in place to prevent cross contamination and that these controls are monitored and documented accordingly.

Baby Feeding:

Please see our Caring for Babies and Toddlers Policy for full details on how we support baby feeding, including breast milk / formula milk feeding and weaning.

Mealtimes:

Mealtimes should be a happy, social occasion for children and staff alike. Positive interactions should be shared at these times and enjoyed. At St Vincent's Nursery we are committed to offering children healthy, nutritious and balanced meals and snacks which meet individual needs and requirements.

A balanced and healthy breakfast, midday meal, tea and two daily snacks are provided for children attending a full day at the nursery. Menus are planned in advance on a 6-weekly cycle offering the children vast variety of different foods, tastes and textures, and reflect cultural diversity and variation. These are displayed for children and parents to view. Our menus are seasonal and take into account any festivals that we celebrate at the nursery.

We provide nutritious food at all snack and mealtimes, avoiding large quantities of fat, sugar and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings; we never add salt to our meals and snacks. St Vincent's Nursery is a **nut-free environment**.

Main meals will include a variety of foods from the four main food groups:

- Starchy carbohydrates (up to 4 portions per day)
- Fruit and vegetables (up to 5 portions per day as part of all main meals and some snacks)
- Meat, fish, eggs, beans and non-dairy sources of protein (1 at lunch and 1 at tea)
- Milk and dairy foods (3 portions per day)

Furthermore, we incorporate the following recommendations as outlined in the [Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance](#) within our menus:

- Wholegrain starchy carbohydrates at least once a week for breakfast, lunch and tea
- Using beans, lentils, pulses or a meat alternative as the protein source for at least one lunch and one tea each week
- Oily fish (salmon, mackerel or sardines) at least once every 3 weeks
- Limit processed meat products (sausages, meatballs or fish fingers) to once a week only

Breakfast (8.00-8.30am)

During breakfast time children are served a choice of sugar-free cereal alongside any toasted bread products, i.e. crumpets, toast, pancakes, bagels etc.; they are offered water or milk to drink.

Lunch (11.30am Young Explorers and Early Learners, 12.00pm Pre-school)

This is our main meal of the day. Lunch consists of a hot meal, freshly prepared on the premises that day, using the freshest of ingredients sourced from local butcher and greengrocer. We offer a variety of meals throughout the week; as well as 'meat' dishes on a few days we also have a vegetarian meal on at least one day and a fish dish on at least one day. Lunch is always followed by dessert and we aim to balance eating healthily with a few treats throughout the week; however, majority of the time the dessert is fruit- or yoghurt-based.

Afternoon Tea (4.00-4.30pm)



Our afternoon tea is not meant to replace a child's evening meal as we know most parents look forward to sharing that with their children at the end of the day. The aim of afternoon tea is to bridge the gap between lunch time and going home as many of our children stay with us until six o'clock. For their afternoon tea the children are served either a hot (i.e. a soup & crusty bread) or a cold meal (i.e. pita bread, falafel, hummus and crudités) using fresh ingredients, and a dessert.

Fresh drinking water is constantly available and accessible. It is frequently offered to children and intake is monitored.

Parent Partnerships:

Parents and children are involved in menu planning; they are able to have their input and share with us their favourite family meals through Children's Choice Menu forms which children are asked to complete and bring in. Our chef regularly chooses a meal, as proposed by the children, to cook for the whole nursery.

Parents are asked to respect our healthy eating ethos and support healthy eating habits when bringing in food from home, for example to celebrate their child's birthday; we will be unable to accept cakes or any similar items from parents for this purpose. We ensure that all food brought in from parents meets the nursery requirements as well as the health and safety requirements and ingredients that are listed within the [Food Information for Consumers \(FIR\) 2014](#).

During special events and festivals, such as Hanukkah, Eid etc. parents have the opportunity to enhance the children's learning experiences through bringing in traditional foods that they eat during those special occasions. In those cases, food packaging is carefully checked for allergens, or if home-made, parents are made aware of any allergies within the room and asked to provide a list of ingredients.

Dietary Requirements:

Individual dietary requirements are respected and we ensure that we meet the needs of all children. During the settling-in process, we gather information from parents regarding their children's food allergies, special health requirements or dietary needs including any special dietary requirements and preferences which include:

- Vegetarianism
- Veganism / plant-based diet
- Pescatarianism
- Religious preferences such as halal, kosher or specific foods on certain days

Where appropriate, we will carry out a risk assessment and work alongside parents to put into place an individual dietary plan for their child. Parents must complete a Health Care Plan which contains the following information:

- The allergen: (i.e. the substance the child is allergic to such as cow's milk, wheat, eggs, fish, shellfish, nuts, legumes etc.

- The nature of the allergic reactions e.g. coughing and wheezing, rashes, reddening of the skin, skin swelling, vomiting/ and or diarrhoea which can sometimes be bloody, a bloated tummy, difficulty breathing etc.
- What to do in the case of an allergic reaction
- What is classed as a medical emergency and what procedure to follow

In the case of any severe allergies / intolerances, a separate menu will be devised for the child which will eliminate the allergen completely. If a separate meal is provided for a child, this will arrive into the room on a **red** plate, together with the child's allergen card. The meal will be clearly labelled with the child's name so that all staff members are aware whose meal it is to avoid any mix-ups. In the case of allergies, staff members will ensure that the child is sat at the table next to them so that they can eliminate any possibility of the child accessing food on someone else's plate.

The team at St Vincent's Nursery show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. They do not use a child's diet or allergy as a label for the child, or make a child feel singled out because of their diet or allergy.

Staff Involvement:

Our team act as positive role models throughout mealtimes and set a good example; they eat with the children and show good table manners. Meal and snack times are organised so that they are social occasions in which children and staff participate in small groups – key groups if possible. During meals and snack times children are reminded to use their manners and say 'please' and 'thank you' and conversation is encouraged.

Staff use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, self-serving food and drink, and feeding themselves. Staff understand the need for healthy eating and support children to make healthy choices through daily activities that teach them to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy foods, and the effect they have on our bodies and health.

Children will always be encouraged to try anything that has been prepared for them; however, any child who shows signs of distress at being faced with a meal they do not like will have their food removed without any fuss. If a child does not finish their first course, they will still be given a small helping of dessert. Children who refuse to eat at the mealtime are offered food later in the day.

Children are given time to eat at their own pace and not rushed. No child is ever left alone when eating to minimise the risk of choking and snack stations are monitored at all times.

Learning about Food:

At St Vincent's Nursery, we believe that involving children in cooking activities is a valuable part of their early learning and development. Cooking with children encourages curiosity, builds confidence and helps develop important skills such as counting, measuring and following instructions. It also provides a hands-on opportunity to talk about healthy food choices and the benefits of a balanced diet.



Alongside cooking, we educate children about where food comes from, exploring how fruits and vegetables grow, learning about different food groups and discussing the journey food takes from farm to table. These experiences help foster a positive relationship with food and lay the foundation for lifelong healthy eating habits.

Packed Meals from Home:

In line with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) safeguarding and welfare requirements, and our duty under food safety and allergy legislation, the nursery must ensure that all food provided to children is safe, suitable and supports their health and development. The nursery provides freshly prepared, nutritionally balanced meals that meet children's dietary needs and national guidance. These meals are the safest and preferred option.

Due to the serious risks associated with food brought from home, including allergens, cross-contamination, temperature control, choking hazards and poor nutritional content, the nursery strongly discourages the provision of packed meals from home.

Packed meals will only be accepted in where parents opt out of the 'Extra Mile Fee'; in this instance, all meals and snacks for the day must be provided by the parent and must comply fully with **ALL** of the requirements below. Any food that does not meet these standards will be refused.

Zero Allergen & Cross-Contamination Policy:

Packed meals must contain no allergens and must not have been prepared in any environment where allergens are present. This includes all 14 declarable allergens under UK food regulations:

- Peanuts
- Tree nuts
- Eggs
- Milk / dairy
- Wheat / gluten
- Soya
- Sesame
- Fish
- Crustaceans
- Molluscs
- Mustard
- Celery
- Lupin
- Sulphur dioxide / sulphites

This also applies to:

- Foods labelled 'may contain'
- Foods prepared in shared kitchens
- Homemade food without full ingredient traceability

Any uncertainty will result in the item being refused.



No Temperature Control Facilities:

The nursery does not refrigerate, reheat, freeze or store food brought from home. All packed meals must:

- Remain safe at room temperature
- Be safe to consume for a minimum of 4 hours without refrigeration
- Be packed in a fully insulated container with ice packs

Food that becomes warm, leaks, smells or shows signs of spoilage will be discarded.

Healthy Setting Award – Nutritional Standards:

The nursery holds a Healthy Setting Award and is committed to promoting healthy eating habits. All food brought from home must meet the same standards as our nursery menu and must:

- Be low in sugar, salt and saturated fat
- Contain no confectionery or highly processed snack foods

The following are not permitted:

- Sweets, chocolate, cakes, biscuits
- Crisps, savoury snacks, popcorn
- Sugary yoghurts or desserts
- Fizzy drinks, squash, fruit juice or flavoured milk

Water is the only permitted drink. Food that does not meet our Healthy Setting standards will be refused.

Strict Food Safety & Choking Controls:

The following foods are not permitted:

- Whole grapes, cherry tomatoes, sausages or olives
- Nuts, seeds, popcorn, hard sweets, chewing gum
- Sticky or hard foods (marshmallows, toffees)
- Foods requiring cutting or preparation by staff
- Items with bones, pips or stones

All food must be pre-cut to age-appropriate size.

Mandatory Labelling & Traceability:

Every item must be:

- Labelled with the child's full name
- Date of preparation
- Full ingredient list for each individual food item

Unlabelled or partially labelled food will not be served.

Parental Responsibility:

Parents providing food from home accept full responsibility for:

- Allergic reactions
- Foodborne illness
- Cross-contamination
- Nutritional adequacy

The nursery cannot be held liable for food brought from home.



Right to Refuse:

The nursery reserves the right to refuse or remove any food that does not meet these requirements or poses a risk to any child.

Sustainability:

Sustainability is an important part of our approach to food and nutrition, and we are committed to teaching children about caring for the environment through everyday practices. We aim to reduce food waste by planning meals carefully and using leftovers creatively where appropriate. Wherever possible, we source seasonal and locally produced ingredients to lower our environmental impact and support our community.

We involve children in eco-friendly activities such as separating food scraps, recycling packaging and growing herbs or vegetables in our garden. These experiences help children understand the connection between the choices we make and the health of our planet, encouraging them to become thoughtful, responsible citizens.

Training:

All staff that prepare and handle food are competent to do so; they are required to complete training in Food Safety Level 2 as part of their induction and renew every 3 years to ensure that they remain up to date with any changes.