Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School
"Nurturing curiosity and inspiring imagination"



2025-26

Healthy Eating Policy

DOCUMENT STATUS

Produced By	Version	Date	Action
Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School	1	07.03.22	Adopted by school's Teaching and Learning Committee
	2	09.06.25	Adopted by school's Teaching and Learning Committee
	3	29.06.26	Approved by school's Teaching and Learning Committee

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Legislation

- Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 1 September 2021

Reference Material

https://digital.nhs.uk/news/latest-news/significant-increase-in-obesity-rates-among-primary-aged-children-latest-statistics-show
https://www.warrington.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-02/orford_-_2020_ward_profile.pdf
https://www.dentalhealth.org/news/campaigners-look-to-address-childhood-tooth-decay-issue-2020
https://theurbanworm.co.uk/
Eat Better, Start Better – Children's Food Trust
Healthy Eating Guidance Published for the Early Years Sector – Gov.uk
The Eat Well Guide – Public Health England
Charging and Remissions Policy – 2022
Links with Oral Hygiene Policy, Pupil Allergies Policy, Food Handling and Preparation Policy

Approval

Governing body free to delegate to a committee of the governing body, an individual governor or the headteacher.

Review Frequency

Governing body free to determine.

Amendments

v2

- Change of lead from Karen Roberts to Melody Ostler
- Removal of reference to a food compost bin and addition of food waste containers

v3

- Links to Food Hygiene and Preparation Policy and Pupil Allergies Policy
- Removal of information regarding the management of allergies. Reference now made to the Pupil Allergies Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School offers 52 full time equivalent places for children aged 3 and 4, 12 full time equivalent places for 2-year olds and our specialist provision offering 10 full time equivalent places for children with SEND. The school is open to families during term time only and we also offer wrap around care through our breakfast and after school clubs.

1.2 The nursery is based in an area of high deprivation with some of our families living in temporary and/or overcrowded accommodation. Within Warrington, the numbers of children who are overweight exceed the national figures, with Orford having one of the highest rates in the authority. Tooth decay in the under 5's is also above the national average.

1.3 In our mainstream classroom, Garden Room, we provide a snack bar with open access throughout the majority of the session, with water and milk freely available. Parents and carers are asked for a voluntary contribution towards snack foods, in line with the school's charging and remissions policy, and milk is free of charge. Children attending our 2-year old provision and specialist SEND provision are offered a 'group' snack during their 3-hour session. The children with SEND who attend Rainbow Room often have very restricted diets, due to their sensory needs, and will refuse the snack foods offered in our other classrooms. For this reason, with parental agreement, children are offered different food items which are motivating to them. It is our aim for these foods to be low in salt and sugar. It is also our aim to support children to try new and different tastes with the aim of extending their diet. During forest school sessions, all children sit together as a group and are offered a high-energy snack and warm drink.

1.4 In developing this policy, parents and carers, children and staff have been consulted and the needs of children under 5 have been taken into consideration in the light of training received. Aspects of Healthy Eating are shared regularly with parents/carers in a number of ways, including workshops, information shared on our website and newsletters, conversations with key staff and Tapestry posts where parent/carers' comments are invited. It is our intention to review this policy and assess its impact through consultation with our families, staff and governors.

2. Our Aims

- All aspects of food and nutrition in nursery promote the health and wellbeing of children, families, staff and visitors
- We take a consistent approach to Healthy Eating across nursery which is self-evaluated regularly via feedback from children, families and staff. Monitoring of safe food hygiene practices is also included as part of our self-reflection
- Children are involved in food preparation and serving as part of their nursery session

- Children and parents/carers have the opportunity to prepare food and cook it together through our Healthy Eating workshops
- We promote healthy eating habits that will lead to lifelong health and well-being
- We recognize that healthier children learn more effectively. We aim to have an impact on health-related issues, such as children being under or over-weight and/or having poor dental health which are significant factors in Warrington/Orford
- We consider the recommendations of *the Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings in England* and the *Eat better, start better guidance* when reflecting on our healthy eating practice in school
- Teaching assistants, Emma Hall and Melody Ostler, lead on healthy eating in school

These aims are in line with the Statutory Framework for the EYFS which states that 'where children are provided with meals, snacks and drinks they must be healthy, balanced and nutritious'.

3. Drinks and Snacks during the morning and afternoon sessions

3.1 All snack food is stored in line with safe food practice by classroom staff and overseen by the staff member/s with relevant Food Handling/Hygiene Certificates who are also responsible for checking correct storage and use-by dates on products such as milk.

3.2 Children access snack time in different ways, depending on which room they attend. During these sessions, children are always offered fruit and or vegetables in addition to any other food products that may be on the menu and are given a choice of milk or water to drink. During hot weather, water is available to all children throughout the session.

Garden Room – 3- and 4-Year Old Provision

Here, children have access to a 'rolling snack' for the majority of the session in our dedicated snack area. Children are invited to help prepare the snack area prior to it being opened. This preparation is supported by staff to ensure good hygiene practices and safety. The children's preparation depends on the snack for that day but always involves chopping or peeling fruit and vegetables and preparing drinks.

Children settling into the room and/or those needing additional support will be accompanied to access the snack area by a member of staff and are helped when it is needed. During snack time, children are encouraged to sit at the table whilst eating, something that is not common practice for many of our children initially.

Once open, children then have free access to the area and are encouraged to serve themselves, collecting their own cup and plate, pouring their chosen drink and selecting their healthy snack. Children are also encouraged to clear away when they have finished, placing cups and plates in the designated area.

Staff members are on hand to support children with good hygiene practice and hand washing prior to accessing snack and with pouring drinks. Staff also use snack time as a social event and encourage children to talk and listen to each other. They also use this time to model and support good table manners, using cutlery when appropriate and opportunity to talk about healthy eating. Staff will encourage children to try the range of food products on offer that day without putting pressure on them to eat.

Children are encouraged to remove their photograph from the board in the snack area once they have had snack. This enables staff to check which children have accessed the area and afford the opportunity of at least a drink to those who haven't before the area is closed and cleaned down.

Sunshine Room – 2-Year Old Provision

Our 2-year olds have snack together as a group at a set time during their session and staff encourage children to wash their hands before this starts. Coming together as a group for snack provides children with the opportunity to sit at the table when eating, something that is not common practice for many of our children, and is a social time with opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills.

Staff prepare snack for the children although there are opportunities for them to cut and spread with food products and use cutlery, depending on the snack available that day.

Children are encouraged to select the snack they want and pour their own drinks and staff sit with the children to help them do this. Staff use snack time to talk about healthy eating and table manners and help children to use knives, forks and spoons. They also encourage children to try the food on offer that session but they are not pressured to eat. Once snack time is finished, children are encouraged to clear away.

Rainbow Room – Our Specialist SEND Provision

Children access snack time in their family group at a set time during the session and are supported by staff to wash their hands before this starts. Children are supported to sit together at the table when eating. This is an opportunity for them to engage in a sociable activity, develop their communication skills (using language, vocalisations, gesture, eye gaze, Makaton signs or PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System)) and ability to wait for their needs to be met.

Staff prepare snack for the children although there are opportunities for them to cut and spread with food products, pour their own drink and use cutlery (appropriate to their level of ability) depending on the snack available that day.

Children are encouraged to try new or unfamiliar foods but are not pressured to eat. Once snack time is finished, children are encouraged to clear away by putting their plates and cups in to a bowl.

Forest School – accessed by all rooms

During these sessions, children come together as a group to have snack around the camp fire. Hands are cleaned with antibacterial hand wipes prior to food being shared and staff follow safe food hygiene practices when preparing food. To ensure safety around the campfire and follow our 'forest school rule', children are offered a choice of drink and food items once seated and are served by staff.

Snack time in forest school is a little different to classroom-based snack time. Here, children are frequently supported to cook food on the camp fire, often things they have requested like toast or smores (toasted marshmallow sandwiched between a chocolate biscuit). As forest school sessions are especially active, children are provided with a high energy snack.

Again, staff use snack time as a social activity where children are encouraged to talk and listen. Staff are rightly vigilant that children remain seated during this activity to ensure safety around the campfire and children needing additional support are helped by staff to do this.

4. Healthy Choices

Snack times across nursery are used to engage children in experiencing and talking about making healthy food choices, including portion sizes. Children are encouraged to take small amounts and are able to take more if needed once this is finished. We use these times to talk with children about specific dietary requirements too. This helps them to develop an understanding that some people have allergies or other medical needs, some people make ethical food choices (eg, they are vegetarian or vegan) and some people make food choice because of their faith (eg, halal and kosher food).

5. Lunchtimes

A growing number of our children stay for lunch as part of our 30 hours offer. For children not entitled to a free school meal, their parents/carers provide a packed lunch. Healthy eating advice is given to parents on the types of food and drink brought in from home as part of our induction pack. Parents needing additional guidance are directed to further information on our school website and our Healthy Eating leaders are always available to offer suggestions and support.

Lunchtime for children is one hour, with the first 30 minutes having lunch and the second engaging in activities. The whole of this period is supervised by school staff who take their 30-minute lunch during the first or second period of this time.

If staff supervising the lunch period consider that the lunch provided by parents is not balanced, with correct portion sizes or nutritious, they will pass this information on to the child's key worker who will sensitively speak with parents/carers and may introduce them to one of our Healthy Eating leads.

6. Allergies

As part of our admissions process, families receive a home visit from a key worker. During this time, staff gather information about the child and parents/carers are asked to disclose any allergies in addition to completing the details on the admission documentation. Please refer to the school Pupil Allergies Policy for further details on how this is managed.

7. Provision for Staff

During the 3-hour session, staff are able to access water or milk and those choosing to bring in their own water bottles are required to store and consume the contents in the room kitchen area. Hot drinks are not permitted in the classrooms or outdoors when children are present, with the exception of forest school sessions where staff are able to share the warm drinks available to the children during snack time.

Staff may choose to model good eating habits by having their own cold lunch with the children if supervising during the first 30 minutes of lunchtime. The staffroom is available for use of all staff during their allocated lunch time. This area has facilities for making hot drinks, a fridge for staff to store food and a microwave for heating lunches. Staff are not permitted to heat food in the microwaves in the classrooms during times when children are present.

8. Festivals and Celebrations, including Birthdays

In nursery we celebrate children's birthdays by singing 'Happy Birthday' and providing them with a present and card. We use a pretend cake so the children have the experience of blowing out the candles and photos of this are shared with parents/carers on Tapestry. Parents wishing to bring in sweets or cakes to share with the class or child's key worker group are asked to offer these to parents/carers to take for their child at the end of the session.

When we celebrate other festivals, things like Chinese New Year or Christmas, or have nursery celebrations, we will make parents and carers aware of the food that has been shared through our Tapestry posts.

9. Curriculum

We frequently cover topics related to food, healthy eating and bodily awareness, including through stories like 'Handa's Surprise', 'The Three Bears' and 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar'. These books and others like them lend themselves to exploring food and health related activities.

Within nursery, children regularly have opportunities to engage in cooking activities, things like making healthy pizza, fruit smoothies or soup, in addition to our

‘exploratory cookery sessions’ which give children the opportunity to explore a variety of foods by observing, tasting, chopping, grating, juicing and peeling.

Our Healthy Eating parent/carer and child workshops provide families with the opportunity to work together to create a healthy meal with their child in the session and get advice and support related to the healthy eating agenda. We encourage parents and carers to replicate their recipes at home and share their results on Tapestry.

Throughout the year, children take part in activities in our kitchen garden to grow and harvest a range of fruit and vegetables which we use for snack: for example, lettuce and tomatoes as part of a salad or potatoes and carrots cooked into a soup. We consider that giving children the opportunities to grow a range of produce gives them an understanding of where certain foods come from and further engages them in the healthy eating agenda through using this produce to create healthy meals. In addition, children engage in cooking and baking activities linked to celebrations or events, things like Gruffalo Crumble, celebration biscuits or pancakes. Staff use these opportunities to raise children’s awareness of the types of foods that are not recommended to eat daily but can be enjoyed less frequently as part of a healthy balanced diet.

Children take part in local visits to the supermarket to explore the food there and purchase items needed for cookery or snack, as well as to the garden centre to buy seeds to plant in our kitchen garden. We also have a range of visitors like the dentist, who explores keeping our teeth healthy and promotes the nursery tooth brushing programme.

10. Sharing Information with Parents and Carers

The Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School induction pack and website contain information about healthy eating and the services provided to support a healthy lifestyle. Information regarding a child’s health and dietary requirements is collected during their induction. Our newsletter often contains information related to ‘being healthy’, parents/carers are invited to a range of health-related workshops as part of our Stay and Play sessions and our Healthy Eating leads are always happy to provide support and advice.

During any nursery educational visits where parents/carers are required to bring along small snack, we encourage them to bring a healthy food item and drink. On longer visits where a packed lunch is required, parents/carers are provided with a leaflet with suggestions of what a healthy packed lunch could include. During such times, staff are also encouraged to model good practice by ensuring that their own lunch is healthy and such events may also provide an opportunity for staff to discuss issues with parents such as sweets, healthy drinks and portion size.

The relationship between parents/carers, the child’s key worker and all staff is central to the way we operate as a Sandy Lane family. Staff are approachable and available to discuss any issue with families, including those related to health and diet. If concerns are raised by or with parents or carers about the child’s health and

remain unresolved, staff should raise these with the DSL (designated safeguarding lead) where concerns will be noted and followed up.

11. Sustainability

At Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School we are increasingly mindful of our role in reducing our impact on the environment. Food waste is minimal as children are encouraged at snack time to take small portions initially and then to take a second helping if they have finished and want more. We use crockery and cutlery which can be washed and reused rather than disposable items.

Our kitchen garden is a source of fresh fruit and vegetables which supplement our fruit delivery and additional items purchased from the supermarket are transported to nursery without the use of disposable carrier bags.

Each classroom, and the staffroom, has a food waste bin containing a compostable liner and all such waste is disposed of in line with legal requirements.

12. Consultation

Parents and carers attending our Friends of Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School have been consulted to support the contents of this document. If you have any comments or questions about this policy, please speak to a member of room staff in the first instance.