



Whitegate Nursery School and Early Years Care

Health Eating Policy

Rationale

Our Centre recognises the role we can play and will offer to support and inform our children, parents and families to allow them to make healthier food choices. We aspire to be able to improve the health and lifelong healthy eating habits of our Centre users and the wider community.

Aims

Whitegate aims to ensure that all aspects of food and drink within the Centre promote the health and well-being of children and their families, staff and visitors. For children to learn effectively and be healthy, proper nutrition and good diets are essential. We aim to:

- Provide a whole Centre message about nutrition in all areas of the Centre, which will provide children and parents with the knowledge needed to make informed choices about their diet and health;
- Involve children and parents in the decision making process, e.g. children taste testing, growing opportunities, parental consultations when reviewing / planning new children's menus, during groups and activities for families. Special dietary requirements and allergies will be agreed for all children and displayed in each room, with the child's photograph;
- Provide pleasant and sociable meal and snack times. Allow children the opportunity to self serve and to encourage their independence;
- Develop an awareness of foods from a range of countries and cultures, where appropriate.
- Establish effective partnerships to encourage healthy eating practices to be established as early as possible.

Objectives

1. To encourage children to choose from a variety of healthy snacks, in line with the Smile 4 Life initiative.
2. To only offer foods at snack time which are rich in vitamins, iron and calcium such as fresh fruit and vegetables.

3. To provide drinking water for all children throughout the day. Milk will also be offered at breakfast and snack times (Juice will **only** be offered at mealtimes).
4. To encourage children to choose if and when they want a snack and who they would like to eat with.
5. To work in partnership with families on healthy eating and meal ideas. Through consultation with families and to share menu analysis from our linked food officer (Trading Standards).

Links to other areas / policies:

- Smile 4 Life
- Safer Food Better Business file
- Supporting Positive Relationships and Behaviour policy
- Learning and Teaching policy
- Early Years Care mealtime / kitchen procedures
- Healthy Heroes Improvement Plans
- Be Active Eat Healthy Award

Context

Kitchen and mealtime procedures are reviewed regularly by the Whitegate Early Years Care Manager. The cook completes relevant documentation daily (cleaning schedules, temperature checks and meals prepared), which demonstrates 'due diligence' and is in line with Annual Environmental Health visits. This is reflected in high hygiene rating of the maximum 5 from the Food Standards Agency – latest inspection November 2023.

All staff monitor, and are responsible for; the cleanliness of all food preparation and storage areas and the site supervisor thoroughly cleans these areas each night. All children and staff take part in hand washing before any snack and mealtimes. The teachers and day care management will ensure that cleaning schedules are followed and all staff are aware of current procedures.

The Eating Environment at Whitegate

Whitegate recognises that sharing food is a fundamental experience for all people and is a primary way to nurture and celebrate our cultural diversity; as well as being an excellent way to develop young children's social skills and build friendships.

Mealtimes provide opportunities for children to learn about and try new foods, and to develop their social skills. From a young age, children are encouraged to help set up and clear away tables before and after meals. All children sit around tables (younger babies use table height high chairs) to eat their meals as this will help develop social skills and to learn acceptable eating behaviours. Children have appropriately sized plates, bowls, cups and cutlery relating to their

individual needs / development. The children are provided with adequate time to eat their meals and snacks to ensure all children's needs are met.

Staff sit with the children acting as positive role models and encourage conversation. Practitioners use mealtimes as a valuable time to talk to children about food and encourage them to enjoy sitting together and try their food-even if it is only a small portion.

Some children can be particular about their food; what they eat or how they eat it. 'Fussy eating' or fear of new foods are part of children's development and affect between 10-20% of children under the age of five. We feel it is the role of practitioners to use simple strategies and a consistent approach. In order to help the child overcome any worries. Practitioners will sit with children to role model good eating habits and may sit 'fussy eaters' with good eaters regularly to allow children to see their peer's role model in the same way. No child is disciplined or penalised for not eating their meal but will be encouraged throughout.

Mealtimes are recorded by each room and then parents are informally provided with information on what their child has eaten throughout the day. If a child appears to have a continuing problem with a certain meal, we will work in partnership with the parents to decide on what we can offer for the child, e.g. consider moving the menu around to something the child enjoys. (Nutritionists say a child may need to taste something 10-15 times before they begin to like it; Healthy Heroes—Early Years Toolkit, p. 45).

Provision of Food and Drink for All

All children have access to drinking water throughout the day and are encouraged to help themselves to/ pour their own cup. Children need to drink regularly to replace fluids they lose in physical activity and ensure they do not become dehydrated. Dehydration can affect children's concentration and make them feel tired. It may also affect children's toileting and can lead to infections and health problems.

Each room provides a rolling snack during both morning and afternoon sessions. Children may be reminded about snack time but are free to choose when they have this. All snacks consist of small pieces of fruit and/or vegetables and a drink of milk or water. We encourage children to be involved in the preparation of their snack. Nursery School children are encouraged to contribute to snacks, providing they are healthy. Staff and children are encouraged to wash their hands before and after eating any snacks or meals.

Children who have breakfast have a choice of healthy cereals and/or toast with a choice of milk or water. For each child who stays for lunch and tea, there is a cooked meal, including a pudding. Menus are agreed between the Cook and the Early Years Care Manager and focus is given to nutritional balance, guided by a menu analysis service offered by the Trading Standards Food Officer. As part of children's induction and when new menus are arranged and taste tested, parents, carers, children and staff are consulted for their ideas and opinions. All of our meals are freshly cooked within our maintained kitchen, on a daily basis.

All rooms have developed a self service system age appropriate for their children for all meals and snacks. Children are encouraged to be independent and serve themselves (food and drink);

and are also encouraged to try new foods. Children are not expected to finish everything on their plates and are able to have more if they wish; and all children will be offered a pudding, regardless of whether they have eaten their main meal. Puddings will be offered to all children at the same time. Food **will not** be used as a punishment, or a reward.

Staff will also explain to the children that our cook as prepared this food for them and to have respect when they are eating. For example, to scrape their own plates in order to help the cook with washing up.

We follow the highest possible procedures in order to provide high standards of food preparation and hygiene. However, in the event of a food poisoning issue, which affects 2 or more children, Ofsted and Environmental Health (within 14 days) will be notified. Further advice would be found from these agencies and the Lancashire Food Officer, if possible. Any concerns by parents are to be taken to the Senior Leadership Team.

Breast/Bottle Feeding

We recognise how important breastfeeding can be to the health of mothers and their children and are fully supportive of breastfeeding.

Babies, who still need milk feeds when they start in the Snug, have their needs discussed and planned for during their induction. Please see Bottle Feeding Procedure.

Managing Food Allergies, Intolerances and Special Dietary Needs

We believe it is important to make every child feel valued and included by having healthy food and drink choices appropriate for their needs. On each child's induction, we collect as much information as possible about child's individual needs, whether they are based on cultural, religious beliefs or for any medical reason. Children's choices, beliefs and safety are respected and protected by all staff.

We ensure that children's likes and dislikes, allergies and special dietary requirements are clearly communicated between all staff working with the child and are regularly updated with parents. Each room and the kitchen, has a list (Allergy Protocol) detailing children's medical/individual needs along with their photographs to ensure that all staff are aware of children's individual needs and dietary requirements. This is reviewed termly and updated more regularly if needed.

Any practitioner, who may suspect that a child may have an allergy or intolerance, must speak to their line manager in the first instance so it can be passed onto the families to allow them to seek medical advice.

Supporting Families in the home

Whitegate encourages parents/carers to become actively involved in the promotion of healthy eating to help ensure the best possible outcomes for families. We feel that involvement of parents/carers is crucial as they are the role models for the family.

We link closely with health professionals, share information and encourage families to become involved in events, groups and activities. Where necessary we provide practical support in the home around healthy food choices, preparation and cooking. If parents need help in the home we are able to provide advice and support for example with establishing routines.

We understand that we have the opportunity to influence the oral health of our children, enabling early intervention. Healthy teeth are important to help children eat, talk, smile and feel confident.

Protecting Children's Health – Maintaining a Healthy Weight

At Whitegate, we promote physical activity through accessible free flow indoor/outdoor play, which is available within all areas of the Centre, where children can make their own decisions where to play. Physical activity includes all forms of activity and includes walking, active play and games, (Please see Teaching and Learning Policy for more information). Children are more likely to maintain a healthy weight if they are physically active for at least 180 minutes (3 hours) each day. This is the daily recommendation for children under 5 in the UK, from the Department of Health.

Regular physical activity during the early years provides immediate and long-term benefits for children's well-being. Physical activity is an essential part of children's daily routine and is highly valued at Whitegate. Inactive children have a higher risk of poor health in later life. All children under 5 years should minimise the time spent being inactive for extended periods, (except time spent resting/sleeping). Permanent rest and comfortable areas are available for children to use as they wish.

Celebrations / Special Events:

It is important that children have the opportunity to celebrate special occasions and cultural events. However, many foods and drinks served at such celebrations can be high in saturated fat, sugar and salt, and therefore have limited nutritional value for children. Parents are asked not to bring sweets or cake into the setting for children to give out and to consider a healthier or non-food option such as stickers. We celebrate children's birthdays by giving them a card and offering them a toy from the 'Birthday box', their peers sing happy birthday to them and they are made to feel special on their day.

Learning Opportunities linked to EYFS

Children must be provided with the opportunity to learn about and through food. This integrated within our current policies and changes depending on children's needs and interests:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development-

Our mealtimes offer children experiences to taste different foods, overcome dislikes and learn how to share. Cooking activities offer children opportunities for learning through working with others and creating self esteem.

- Physical Development-

Fine and gross motor skills can be developed through activities such as gardening, using knives, spoons and forks, preparing food and washing up. Mealtimes can be used to help our children make healthy food choices.

- Communication and Language-

We actively encourage sitting around a table eating food together as this is a good way to teach conversation and social skills, such as looking after each other.

- Literacy-

We have many stories involving food. We can use these to teach about ingredients, where food comes from, about food for special occasions and from different cultures. Practitioners can model language which can be developed and senses explored through discussing and describing the taste, texture, size, look and smell of food.

- Mathematics-

Activities such as counting out spoons and pieces of fruit when setting up the table or at snack time are used to support numeracy skills. Sorting and matching foods into different types can help promote children's organisational skills and reasoning.

- Understanding the World-

We provide cooking and taste testing activities to teach children about the ingredients, the seasons, and where food comes from, sometimes from different cultures. We have plots where children have been involved in growing vegetables, discussed life cycles, gardening and how to look after plants. This is also a good form of physical activity.

- Expressive Arts and Design-

We allow children to experiment with art activities which can engage children with food and alert them to different colours, textures and shapes.

We regularly plan, monitor, evaluate and assess learning opportunities relating to healthy eating and include them in children's learning journeys.

Training and Development Needs

All staff have also attended Healthy Heroes briefing (April 2011) as part of the Healthy Heroes project. We have also attended 'Eat Better, Start Better'.

All staff working with children and food are required to hold a current 'Level 2 Award in Food Safety'. Staff are responsible for monitoring their training needs and their Team Leader/ the school Leadership team will arrange retraining when certificates are to expire.

As a Centre, we were awarded the **Be Active Eat Healthy** and **Smile for Life** and we were reaccredited for the **Lancashire Quality Award**.