

Policy 8:

Menu, Meals and Nutrition Policy

Updated: October 2025

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Section 1:

What are the specifics of this Policy?

Which other Policies apply to this Policy?

Most Policies apply to this Policy, but these Policies particularly apply?

- Staff Policy – Policy 1
- Care, Learning and Play – Policy 2
- Safety Policy – Policy 6
- Health Policy – Policy 7
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy – Policy 9
- Special Needs, Disability and Inclusion Policy – Policy 10
- Parent and Carer Partnership Policy – Policy 12
- Safeguarding Policy – Policy 13

What guidelines does the Nursery follow when designing menus?

The EYFS states: It is important that the **food and drink** provided for children is balanced across each day, and that children eat regularly, with breakfast, lunch, tea, and two or three snacks provided daily, either within an early-years setting or at home. The Nursery follows the latest Government guidance when reviewing and designing menu plans. This can be seen here:

We have updated all of our menus in line with the new Early Years Nutrition Guidance document:

[Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance](#)

What does this Policy do?

This policy outlines the day to day, management of food planning, nutrition, and menus. This ensures that parents and children have varied nutritional choices and that all members of the nursery community are aware of their role within the Policy.

Who does this Policy apply to?

This policy is for the children and staff including ancillary staff and particularly our nursery chef who requires a full working knowledge of this Policy.

Who has responsibility for monitoring this, policy?

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The nursery chef, and the nursery manager have responsibility and share any thoughts or concerns with the Nursery Director.

What about Policy review?

Due to seasonal patterns of attendance portion control and menus are kept under constant review by the nursery chef. The policy is reviewed periodically or if required by the nursery managers. The Nursery Director oversees this policy. The Policy is also reviewed when Government guidance is updated, current advice can be found here: [Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance](#)

Who has responsibility for implementing the Policy?

The nursery chef, manager and all staff who engage in the feeding and preparation of food for children have responsibility. The senior member of staff on duty must provide positive and negative feedback to the Manager immediately the Manager returns on duty; this includes children's enjoyment of the meal or snack portion control, food freshness, presentation and quality.

Is there a qualified person who advises about nutrition in nursery menus and what advice is followed?

We have a registered child nutritionist, reviews and oversees our menus ensuring sound guidance and advice. The latest guidance is always followed.

Who can have a copy of this Policy?

All staff, parents, students, nursery chef, and professional visitors can be offered a copy of this policy or access it on our website.

Section 2:

What does the Policy Statement, basis of the Policy and aims of the Policy tell us?

What are the Aims of this Policy?

The aims of this Policy are to ensure that every child in our care receives high quality, nutritional, appropriate food, and that parents and children can make informed choices. We strive to ensure that children enjoy their meals in a relaxed, family service environment. We ensure that the Welfare Requirements are fulfilled: *"Children are provided with regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs. Food and drink are properly prepared, nutritious and complies with dietary and religious requirements"*.

What is the basis of this Policy?

The basis of the Policy is that food is fresh, freshly prepared, nutritious and meets current guidelines for young children. The menus rotate every three weeks at each Nursery. The rotating menu ensures that children are aware of the different options available for the different age groups and the full variety of choices. Food is ordered and delivered freshly each week. The nursery chef cooks and prepares fresh food for the children each day. Parent's recipes and comments are welcome. Quality fresh fruit that is served raw and vegetables that are used as crudités and for salad must be delivered freshly each week. Correct amounts must be ordered ensuring no wastage and full usage.

What is the Policy Statement?

The nursery upholds the focus of the Welfare Requirements *"Adequate and nutritious food and drink are essential for children's wellbeing. The registered person and staff have a good understanding of children's dietary and religious requirements and meet these appropriately to promote children's healthy growth and development."* We provide all children in our care with the highest quality food from recognised suppliers. Food is prepared and served in hygienic conditions and the chef's Food Hygiene certificate is clearly displayed in the kitchen. Menus are carefully balanced to provide healthy options and include at least five portions of fruit or vegetables each day. Protein sources are lamb, pulses, chicken, fish, dairy, Quorn and soya products, including the children on a vegetarian diet. Nursery food is attractive, wholesome and fresh to ensure that children receive a high level of nutrients, as required by the under-five's. The menu is varied and contains fresh seasonal ingredients as such is subject to substitutions and changes. At each meal appropriate dishes are served to the different age groups of children that we cater for. Wholemeal and wholegrain products are included in the menus to ensure children have enough fibre. The children enjoy healthy snacks such as: vegetable snacks, rice cakes, fresh fruit, and oat cakes. Our nursery chefs take great care and pride in home cooking, which avoids most convenience foods, artificial flavourings, colourings and preservatives. We can cater for children's cultural needs, religious requirements, allergies and other dietary requirements or preferences such as a low sugar diet, veganism, or vegetarians. We

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include a wide variety of dishes and tastes from around the world in meals that are inviting and delicious for younger children. Fresh drinking water is always available in each of the children's rooms. Portion sizes are based on the latest recommendations depending on children's age and, or development.

How can parents and carers support the nursery with our menus?

We usually adopt seasonal menus and change menus as required. We often retain some of the children's favourites and change the day or week we offer these dishes. We consult parents for new ideas family favourites and other dishes their children enjoy at home. We try out these recipes with the children and refer to the latest guidelines. Parents and carers can ask their children what they enjoy eating at Nursery. We ask for feedback on all new recipes from older children who can vote on what they like best!

Section 3:

Why is nutrition important in the early years for children and what are the benefits of outstanding nutrition?

What is the value of fresh nutritious food?

The growing body of research is clear in that, a healthy diet for young children, leads to healthy adolescents and adults. Nursery has a responsibility to ensure that children are offered a healthy, balanced, varied and nutritious menu which provides the best balance of vitamins, minerals, protein, good fats, fibre and carbohydrates for as needed for babies, toddlers and under 5's. We follow the latest guidance and menus are overseen by a qualified Child Nutritionist.

Section 4:

How must the staff ensure meals be enjoyed by the children and that the children understand hygiene and the value of healthy food?

What are the conduct requirements for mealtimes at Nursery to provide an environment of shared family service where children understand hygiene and the value of healthy food?

- Good hygiene is essential so all children must wash their hands before any food is consumed.
- Staff must talk to children about health and good hygiene during the handwashing process.
- Older children can be used as role models and spread around the tables, younger children and new children must sit with a member of staff, who they know well, preferably their Key Worker.
- As children grow autonomy and self-help skills must be encouraged and children helped to learn to feed themselves.
- Younger children must sit in smaller groups with an adult at each table.
- All staff must be seated when talking to children and serving food.
- Bowls and plates must be passed around the table encouraging children to help themselves.
- Staff must use a knife and fork and provide excellent role models for children.
- Staff must not eat food from another source whilst sitting with the children.
- Staff must be encouraging children to engage in conversations with them and with the other children.
- Younger children must be asked: *'How much would you like? Who many spoons of food would you like? Would you like some more? How hungry are you today? Do you think this is very healthy? How will it help you grown? What do you think of the taste, texture and flavour of?'* And more enabling questions that encourage children to verbalise their thoughts.
- Older children of 18 months or older must be supported to serve themselves food at breakfast, lunch, and tea. The snacks should be fully self-service as children get older, except where there are children with allergies, who will need guidance.
- The nursery chef must ensure that all foods are separated into appropriate coloured bowls for serving to cater for children with allergies, intolerances and preferences so the children are able to choose what and how much they would like to eat of each dish. Staff must encourage and support the children to make the right choices to ensure a balanced meal.
- Children must be encouraged to use age appropriate cutlery and two items of cutlery when needed. An example is a knife and fork or a spoon and fork for their main course and a spoon for their dessert.
- A higher level of organisation and consistent staffing for different groups of children will ensure staff know the children on their table and are able to encourage child to develop to the next stage and enjoy their meals.
- Children who are slow eaters must be placed close to an adult who knows them and who has an ongoing relationship with them.
- Children must be their own judges as to portion control unless we have parental instruction on preferences.

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- Food plates must be scraped away from the tables at which children are still eating. Older children of 18 months or more must be supported to empty their own plates.
- Food plates must not be scraped into fresh food, as this may be required by other children who require more.
- Tables must be adequately cleaned between courses or before dessert is served using an appropriate product, and the correctly colour coded cloth.
- Colour coded crockery is used for children with allergies and dietary requirements.
- Tables must be cleaned thoroughly after the meal using an appropriate product D2.3 and the correct colour coded cloth.
- Children will be encouraged to explore new tastes, textures, and flavours.
- Children wash their hands and faces after lunch using water soap and paper towels. Staff must accompany them.
- Staff must understand dietary needs, allergies, preferences and religious and cultural requirements and varying patterns of eating behaviours.
- Autonomy is encouraged for older children with the use of our trollies.
- Mealtimes must be relaxed, enjoyable and pleasurable; staff must constantly endeavour to ensure compliance with this.
- Each child should have a personal table place mat or name label made indicating dietary requirements, allergies and preferences with their first name only, preferably made by the child.
- Water must be at an accessible level at mealtimes.
- Children will be grouped consistently so that staff get to know and understand the portions they like and the stage of autonomy they are at.
- Children will be part of the setting up and clearing away of lunch
- Spare food from a table will be available for other children – encouraging sharing and caring,
- Babies have special chairs and are fed in groups of three.
- Children progress to sitting in chairs around the nursery tables and feeding themselves.
- Staff are encouraged to eat with the children at lunch times, however this is not a necessity. Staff must eat food identical to the children and not import any other food.
- Correctly sized and appropriate cutlery and crockery is provided, and children are encouraged to move on to the next stage when appropriate
- The nursery chef is always involved in the whole of the mealtime and engages with the children
- Mealtimes afford an excellent opportunity for children to develop table manners and social skills.
- Staff who are not on duty must never remove food from the children for their own consumption.
- Desserts must be offered if children do not eat their main course.

Section 4:

Why is nutrition important in the early years for children and what are the benefits of outstanding nutrition?

The growing body of research is clear in that, a healthy diet for young children, leads to healthy adolescents and adults. Nursery has a responsibility to ensure that children are offered a healthy, balanced, varied, and nutritious menu which provides the best balance of vitamins, minerals, protein, good fats, fibre and carbohydrates for as needed for babies, toddlers and under 5's. We follow the latest guidance Early Years Foundation Stage 2025 guidance and menus are overseen by a qualified nutritionist who specialises in children's nutrition and oversees other nursery menus.

Section 5:

What does the Nursery do to meet all dietary requirements and allergies?

How are staff kept informed of dietary requirements?

The Enrolment Form contains a section requesting information of dietary requirements and preferences. Managers liaise with parents who have requirements and preferences. Staff are kept informed monthly. The Manager prints an updated dietary requirement schedule which is read and signed by all members of staff. A care plan or other detailed plan for children with allergies must be in place via consultation with parents and generally involvement of a consultant or GP. Updates may be required from time to time. The Nursery is a nut free environment however most food products now carry disclaimers so must be excluded from the diets of children with allergies to nuts or sesame. There may be occasions when we need letters from professionals involved in a child's allergy diagnosis. This is covered further in the relevant policy. Children's dietary requirements and preferences must be added daily to the 3 point dietary check form.

How are parents informed of what their child has eaten?

Parents are informed daily of what their child has eaten via, the Family platform and app updates, verbal feedback and menu rotas. This enables parents to know that their child has had their allergen dietary needs, preferences, cultural and religious requirements are met. The nursery team will update parents if the menu changes suddenly due to issues in delivery, supply etc. This will be communicated via the Family App.

How do we cater for dietary requirements?

Children have dietary requirements due to cultural requirements, religion, dietary preferences, and allergies. Children-First cater for all children's needs and preferences. We have a comprehensive Nursery management programme which enables us to print full details of our children's dietary requirements and food allergies. Any child suffering from anaphylactic allergy to a specific item is required to provide full information from the child's consultant and parent. Children with preferences, allergies or cultural and religious have different coloured plates, bowls and beakers which are the same size and shape as the other children. This system is used by many schools, so it enables the children to start to understand more about their personal requirements or allergies.

Allergen safeguarding: We have children at nursery with life threatening allergies who are at risk of experiencing anaphylactic shock. This condition is life threatening. In some cases, a child can touch an allergen and go into shock. Children must not bring any food into the nursery at any time other than a pre-arranged supermarket birthday cake which shows allergens on the packaging. Our nurseries are nut and allergen aware. These foods amongst others, can trigger a reaction resulting in being hospitalised: nuts sesame, wheat, oats, dairy products, egg, beans, pulses, lentils, and fish. As children have made different allergies, no exceptions can be permitted. Parents are required to support the nursery to ensure that all children are safeguarded from allergies and remain healthy happy and safe. Our teams are trained in allergen awareness by The Allergy Badge: <https://www.theallergybadge.com/> Children with allergies are monitored very carefully during meal and snack times and a team member is always beside or very close to these children. Children must be encouraged to share toys but must not to share food.

What measures are in place to protect children with allergies from allergens?

Nursery has this in place:

- Red plates, bowls, beakers, appliances, stickers, and food serving bowls for children with allergies and intolerances,
- Green plates, bowls beakers and stickers for vegetarians.
- Yellow plates, bowls, beakers and stickers for pescatarian children.
- Orange plates, bowls, beakers and stickers for vegan children.
- Blue plates, bowls, beakers and stickers for preference children.
- White plates bowls and beakers for children without specific requirements,
- A dietary chart now coded with red, white and green,
- A three, tier checking system which is colour coded with red, white and green,
 - Tier 1 - chef to check
 - Tier 2 – trolley runner to check,
 - Tier 3 – senior in room to check,
 - Placemats with allergens on as a final check,
 - The form for the 3-tier system can be found in Section 7 below.
- Allergen stickers on all food served,
- Red storage in the kitchen for allergen free food,
- Large red stickers with child/children's names on foods in the allergen free cupboard,
- Allergen training for all staff on the training App.
- Specific other training where needed either by a specialist at nursery or by Zoom.
- Updated information and discussion at monthly staff meetings if children change days or start at nursery.
- A separate cupboard and fridge with only allergen free foods in it.
- Working with parents as to when their child can try different foods at nursery or is on, 'the ladder'.

What about bottle feeds, milk, formula, soya, goats' milk, formula and breast milk?

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All milk feeds for babies are provided by parents daily, this enables parents to choose their child's preferred brand. Babies milk for the day must be measured out by the parents at home and brought into Nursery. Water must be measured into the bottle and the powder separate. All items must be clearly labelled with the child's name. Empty bottles are collected, sterilised, and provided by the parent or carer each day. Expressed breast milk is a bodily fluid and is subject to health and safety procedures and policy.

The nurseries follow the Early Years Nutrition Guidance 2025 when making baby formula and follows the following steps: "Good hygiene is very important when making up infant formula. Anyone preparing infant formula should wash their hands thoroughly and all bottles, teats and other equipment should be sterilised and drip-dried before use. Follow the instructions on how to prepare the formula carefully. Adding too much powder to a feed can make a baby constipated and dehydrated; adding too little will mean insufficient energy and nutrients are provided. Powdered infant formula is not sterile and therefore needs to be made up with water which is boiled and left to cool for no more than 30 minutes so that it stays at a temperature of at least 70°C to kill any harmful bacteria. You then need to let the made formula cool before it is given to a baby."

What choice do children have?

Menus display the variety of choices offered to all children e.g. there are choices of sandwich toppings and a variety vegetable sticks at tea time. At least two main dishes and specially prepared food for younger babies. Children are gently encouraged to try new foods. Deserts are offered to children who do not eat all their savoury meal. There is always plenty of food and children are offered second helpings and are only ever offered one dessert unless fresh fruit or unsweetened yoghurt. Fresh water is always available at all mealtimes. Children who are sleeping or not in attendance when a meal is served, are fed individually when they require. Children are encouraged to drink water as appropriate.

Why is some organic food ordered for Independent Place Nursery?

Wherever possible organic food for snacks and meals are chosen at Independent Place on our online supermarket order. Variations from organic items ordered may be due to stock, season, or lack of choice for the Nursery Chef when placing the order. These changes were as a result of parent wishes and consultation and are factored into Nursery fees for children who are not in receipt of the FEEE 15 or 30 hours grant. Meals and food are charged as consumables for all children in receipt of the FEEE at both Nurseries.

Section 6:

How do we support babies weaning?

The nursery works with parent and carers to support babies weaning. The nursery will discuss with parents if they feel children are ready for weaning or to move up a stage of weaning. The nursery will follow the Early Years Nutrition Guidance on the first foods to introduce for weaning children and add them to the menu. The nursery chef is responsible for preparing food in line with children's weaning. The nursery team are responsible for alerting the chef to the weaning stage needed.

Section 7:

What happens when the chef is not available and there is not a supernumerary team member who can cook?

When a chef is on leave for any reason, there is often a supernumerary team member who has food hygiene training who can step in and cook for the children. This means that the team member knows our menu and can provide for individual, preferences, requirements, allergies and religious or cultural requirements. Parents, and carers are aware, we are passionate about providing children with outstanding food and nutrition. There are occasional, and unusual circumstances when we will use a high quality, specialist catering company, www.zebedees.co.uk. Managers sampled the food and allergy options before deciding on this company. Having catering ensures that the children will have staffing levels required, outstanding childcare, learning and nutrition they deserve. Zebedees have an outstanding reputation and employ their own children's nutritionist who visits the kitchen daily checking allergy, requirements, preferences, kitchen areas and other aspects of the preparation and presentation of the meals. All meals are carefully marked with the individual, preferences, requirements, allergies and religious or cultural requirements without disclosing any data on a child, due to their ordering platform. Further information about Zebedees can be seen below. If Zebedees is not available another nursery meal company may be used. Parents and carers can ask the nursery manager or the company directly about any aspects of the nutrition or food via these platforms:

Facebook

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Instagram

Twitter

www.zebedees.co.uk

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Child's Name	Dietary Need	Meal	Substitutions	Break fast			AM snack			Lunch			PM snack			Tea			Supper		
				1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
				1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
				1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
				1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
				1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3

First check must be completed by the chef, followed by the trolley runner and most senior in room. Please initial clearly.