

Food Policy 12 months and under

Aims

- Ensuring that all aspects of food and nutrition in the nursery work to promote the health and wellbeing of children, staff, and visitors to the setting
- Promoting healthy eating habits that will lead to lifelong health and well being
- A recognition of the fact that healthier children learn more effectively
- A desire to impact on health-related issues relating to children, for example childhood obesity
- Ensuring that adults are good role models to children about all aspects of healthy eating
- To promote healthy eating in conjunction with other areas of the curriculum for example physical development and understanding of the world

Little Footsteps sites are equipped with an onsite chef who prepares all their meals. Little Footsteps continue to provide breakfast, lunch, tea and morning snack. Milk is provided at every mealtime and snack for all children.

Please refer to 'Food Policy' if your child is between 12months – 4 years old.

Provision of food

At all mealtimes children sit at tables to eat the food provided. Depending on the setting, children either sit in their rooms or where the setting is open plan, then the children of mixed ages will sit together. The whole eating experience is seen as a very social occasion with the older children serving others and themselves and adults eating and talking with the children at the table, to learn about healthy food and to model good eating habits. Children help to set up the tables and help to clear away the tables at the end of the meal. Where it may be appropriate children can get involved with preparing the food and occasionally going out to buy some food from the shops. We are also a healthy eating company and do not provide juice for our children as milk and water are the best drinks to keep your children hydrated and support development.

The nurseries display posters of healthy and attractive foods to encourage eating healthy foods and for children to learn about food and nutrition. Tables are washed and wiped down with antibacterial spray before and after eating.

Children are encouraged to self-serve themselves and their peers with adult support where necessary. Servings are portion controlled by the kitchen.

Table manners are learnt but we respect cultural norms, children's experiences, and their developmental stage.

Meals

Providing healthy, balanced and nutritious food ensures that all children:

- Get the right amount of nutrients and energy they need while they are growing rapidly, which is especially important for children who might not have access to healthy food at home. This can help prevent children from becoming overweight or obese.
- Develop positive eating habits early on. Children's early experiences with food can shape future eating habits. This can impact children's long-term health including maintaining a healthy weight, and good oral health. The early years are a crucial time to reduce health inequalities and set the foundations for a lifetime of good health.

Babies aged 0-6 months

In the first year of life, babies follow individual feeding and sleeping patterns that can regularly change. During your settle session we will ask parents and/or carers about their baby's current pattern. These patterns should be kept consistent and should be part of the baby's care plan each day, wherever possible. Staff are aware of the signs (feeding cues) a baby will show when they are hungry (e.g. mouth opening, puckering, smacking lips, or turning of head towards the bottle) and when they are full (e.g. milk spilling out of the mouth, closing mouth, head turning away, splayed fingers and toes, or pushing the bottle away in an older baby). The children are fed responsively according to their needs. This means feeding children whenever they show signs that they are hungry, feeding at their own pace and using the cues that they are full. Staff never force a baby to finish a feed if they seem to be full. Overfeeding could upset their tummy, make them vomit or gain weight too quickly.

In the UK, exclusive breastfeeding is recommended for around the first 6 months of a baby's life with continued breastfeeding throughout the first year and beyond for as long as the parent or carer and baby wishes to continue.

At Little Footsteps we support parents or carers wishing to continue breastfeeding and encourage them to provide breastmilk for their baby while attending the setting.

Supporting parents and/or carers to continue breastfeeding could include:

- providing a comfortable place to breastfeed within the setting
- signposting to evidence-based and expert information and support
- encouraging parents and/or carers who wish to provide expressed breastmilk for their babies and children to do so.

Here at Little Footsteps, we can store and provide your child with your expressed breastmilk. To do this we follow the NHS provides information on safe storage of expressed breast milk - NHS. For further information on this please see our Breastmilk Q&A handout.

If a baby is not exclusively breastfed, then first infant formula (first milk) should be the addition, or alternative, to breastmilk for babies in the first year of life, unless an alternative milk has been prescribed by a doctor.

Good hygiene is very important when making up infant formula. All staff when preparing infant formula wash their hands thoroughly and all bottles, teats and other equipment are sterilised and drip-dried before use.

We ask that you provide the nursery with your Infant formula, in its original packaging and that is sealed. This will then be stored at the setting, and staff will send an update when they require more to be provided. All staff follow the instructions on how to prepare the formula carefully, as stated on the packaging. No alterations to this instruction can be made unless authorised by a doctor. 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. For any further information on how we prepare/sterilise formula/equipment. Please see out additional FAQ handout.

Babies aged 6-12 months

Introducing solid foods or weaning Introducing a baby to solid foods is sometimes called complementary feeding or weaning. This should start when a baby is around 6 months old in collaboration with parents and/or carers. At this stage we continue to give the baby breast or formula milk alongside solid foods. At Little Footsteps we support parents/carers with the introduction of solid foods. We will discuss with parents when we believe children are showing signs of being ready. For example once a baby can;

- stay in a sitting position and support their own head
- coordinate their eyes, hands and mouth so they can look at their food, pick it up and put it in their mouth
- swallow food (rather than spit it back out).

Introducing solid foods helps a baby learn new skills such as chewing and biting. It also introduces new foods, flavours and textures to them. Babies develop at different rates. At Little Footsteps we have ongoing discussions with parents and/or carers about the stage their child is at in regard to introducing solid foods and assumptions are not be made based on age. This includes reaching agreement with parents and/or carers about when and how they want to start introducing solid foods. At Little Footsteps we discuss with parents/carers what foods they have been exploring at home and where they are in the food introduction process. We go at the baby's pace and let them show us when they're hungry or full. For example, they may firmly close their mouth or turn their head away. The baby will show us if they are ready to move on to the next step, for example by chewing, moving food around their mouth and swallowing it.

babies should be introduced to a wide range of foods, flavours and textures, alongside their usual milk feeds. Wherever possible, you should prepare food yourself from scratch and not provide pre made foods from shops such as puree pouches. This helps introduce babies to a range of appropriate flavours and textures. Baby's first food could be a simple vegetable or fruit puree. To help your baby get used to different textures and tastes quickly, moving onto mashed and finger foods (from purées or smooth blended foods) as soon as they're ready can let them get used to moving food around their mouths and swallowing it. Start off with slightly bitter pureed or smooth blended vegetables (such as broccoli, cauliflower and spinach) This will help babies get used to a range of flavours (rather than just the

sweeter ones like carrots and sweet potato). Gradually increase the amount and variety of the different food groups. Further information on these can be found in the section on 'The 4 food groups'. It may take 10 tries or more for a baby to get used to new foods, flavours and textures. Be patient and keep offering a variety of foods, even the ones that they don't seem to like. Let them get used to the food in their own time. DfE's help for early years providers website has a solid food roadmap. You should have discussions with parents and/or carers about common food allergens that have been introduced at home. These foods need to be introduced one at a time and in very small amounts so that you can spot any reaction. DfE's help for early years providers website has a full list of common food allergens. Further information can be found in the section on 'Food allergies'.

Drinks to offer from 6 months

The only drinks that are recommended for babies aged 6-12 months are:

- breast milk
- first infant formula
- water

We avoid giving other milks that are labelled as being suitable for babies aged 6 months and over (for example 'follow on formula'). Research shows that switching to follow-on formula at 6 months has no benefits for the baby who can continue to have first infant formula as their main drink until they are 1 year old. Formula milks marketed for children aged 12 months and over (such as 'growing-up' milks and other 'toddler' milks) are also not necessary. We will discuss with parents and/or carers and recommend that these milks should only be used after consulting a qualified health professional for advice.

Babies are offered sips of water during meal times from an open or free-flow cup without a valve. Open cups help babies learn to sip and are better for their teeth.

The importance of different textures

Once babies are comfortable with eating solid foods, it is important to start introducing more mashed and lumpier foods. It's important to introduce different textures as it helps babies to:

- learn to chew and swallow properly, which encourages mouth and muscle development
- get used to different textures, which means they will be less likely to become fussy eaters or develop sensory needs.

Remember, babies take different amounts of time to get used to texture and lumps. Keep offering lumpy textures from around 6 to 7 months and always supervise them closely so you can be sure they are swallowing it safely.

Foods to avoid / Babies should not eat:

- much salt, as it is not good for their kidneys. Do not add salt to food prepared for babies or cooking water. Stock cubes and gravy shouldn't be used either
- any sugar. Avoiding sugary snacks and drinks including fruit juice can help prevent tooth decay
- foods that are high in saturated fat, salt and sugar like cakes, puddings, sweet and savoury pastries, biscuits, crisps, chocolate and other confectionery
- popcorn, raw jelly cubes, or whole nuts, which are all choking hazards
- honey (which should be avoided until 12 months) as it can contain bacteria that can make babies seriously unwell
- cheeses made from unpasteurised milk or mould-ripened soft cheeses, such as brie or camembert, or ripened goat's milk cheese and soft, blue-veined cheese, such as roquefort. There's a higher risk that these cheeses might carry a bacteria called listeria
- raw and lightly cooked eggs (including uncooked cake mixture, homemade ice creams, homemade mayonnaise, or desserts) if you do not see a red lion with the words "British Lion Quality" on the box
- rice drinks as a substitute for breast milk or infant formula as they may contain too much arsenic
- slush ice drinks, sometimes known as slushies, as they may contain too much glycerol
- raw or lightly cooked shellfish, such as mussels, clams and oysters, which can risk food poisoning.

Follow on milk is discouraged as it has no nutritional value. As a setting we do not administer/offer children follow on milk, even if provided by home.

The NHS has advice on foods to avoid giving babies and young children. NHS Start for Life has advice on Safe weaning - Start for Life - NHS. Always supervise babies closely when they are eating.



LITTLE FOOTSTEPS CHILDCARE

Here at Little Footsteps for children under the age of 12 months we offer the following;

Breakfast is provided every day. All children can choose from a variety of low sugar cereals or toast.

Please note – Breakfast is charged at an additional cost.

Children under 12 months old do not need any snacks. If we feel/think a child is hungry in between meals, we offer extra milk feeds instead.

For families who have opted into our consumable fee, snack is provided from 12 months. Families who have **opted out** of the consumable fee, are expected to provide a piece of fruit for snack their snack time. If this has not been provided, we will provide this snack at an additional cost. *Please see charge policy for further information*.

At lunch and teatime, children under 12 months are served food off the set weaning menu. Children are given a starter, main course and desert every day and a selection of tea items such as blanched fruit/vegetables (see menus). Tea is designed to be a smaller light meal, prior to children receiving their dinner at home. It is important to note that children are encouraged to eat small portions up to six times/meals a day.

Please note – Mattishall's site do not provide tea. All parents are to provide a packed tea.

Parents/carers are informed daily about how much food their child has eaten and staff advice parents/carers if they have any concerns about their child's eating habits.

All menus are monitored and designed in consultation with Government guidelines on healthy eating / Early Years Nutrition guidance to ensure that children receive a balanced meal and the correct proportions of nutrients.

Upon registration, parents/carers complete a form detailing their child's dietary requirements. They are also requested through newsfeed posts to update these requirements on a regular basis to the nursery manager in writing. Please refer to the food allergy policy for further information. At every setting, photos of the children with information of their special dietary requirement are displayed where the food is served in a variety of ways e.g., snack apples, posters ect. The chef is updated when new children join the nursery informing them of special diets or food allergies. The meals are then adapted accordingly to ensure that the meal is still balanced, and that the child does not miss out on any food group. Halal meat is not served.

Celebratory Occasions

We understand that birthdays are a very special occasion in a child's life and at Little Footsteps we like to celebrate this occasion with the children. We sing happy birthday, and the parents/carers are free to bring in a treat for their child/friends. Please note an allergen card must be provided and in its original packaging, and this will be served as a replacement for snack or lunch time/tea time desert. This also needs to be approved by the management team and deemed appropriate for children under 12months.

Curriculum

Healthy eating, personal, social, and emotional well-being is taught within the EYFS curriculum through all mealtimes, cooking sessions, circle time, trips to the shops and certain topics.

WE DO NOT USE FOOD AS A REWARD FOR GOOD BEHAVIOUR.

Provision for staff

All settings have staff rooms where staff can eat and prepare their own food. At least one member of staff eats with the children every mealtime and acts as a role model. Drinking water is accessible to children and staff continually throughout the day and staff act as role models to encourage the children to drink enough water.

Parents/carers

We share information to parents/carers through parent's evenings, newsletters, recipes, and menus being always made available and upon request. Parents/carers can interact and contact the company directly regarding menus and recipes. Parents/carers are informed of what their child has eaten throughout the day. At parents' evenings and open days, the refreshments can be supplied by our catering company, which is a combination of samples from the children's menu and healthy refreshments to reinforce our healthy eating message. Parents/carers are made aware of external agencies whom they can contact directly over any issues with our menu or regarding any difficulties they may have regarding their child's eating. Staff are also aware of how to refer families for one-on-one advice and support.

Managers regularly obtain the views of parents/carers with regards to the menus, and these are then passed onto the catering company.

Training

Staff attend courses regularly such as healthy eating study days. We also provide in house training on healthy eating.

What if my child doesn't eat at nursery?

It's natural for parents to worry about whether their child is getting enough food, especially if they refuse to eat sometimes.

The trick is not to worry about what your child eats in a day, or if they don't eat everything at mealtimes. It's more important to think about what they eat over a week.

If your child is active and gaining weight, and it's obvious they're not ill, then they're getting enough to eat, even if it may not seem like it to you.

It's perfectly normal for toddlers to refuse to eat or even taste new foods.

Providing your child eats some food from the four main food groups (milk and dairy products, starchy foods, fruit and vegetables, protein), even if it's always the same favorites, you don't need to worry. Gradually introduce other foods or go back to the foods your child didn't like before and try them again.

The best way for your child to learn to eat and enjoy new foods is to copy you. Try to eat with them as often as you can so that you can set a good example.

Encourage your child to participate in preparing the foods with you, exploring textures and new food items can open a child's interest to liking new food items.

Tips for parents/carers

- Give your child the same food as the rest of the family but remember not to add salt to your child's food.
- Check the label of any food product you use to make family meals.
- Do not talk about your child's lack of eating negatively in front of them. Do not label them as a fussy eater as they will see this as who they are.
- Eat your meals together if possible.
- Give small portions and praise your child for eating, even if they only manage a little.
- If your child rejects the food, don't force them to eat it. Just take the food away without comment. Try to stay calm even if it's very frustrating.
- Don't leave meals until your child is too hungry or tried to eat.
- Your child may be a slow eater so be patient.
- Don't give too many snacks between meals. Limit them to a milk drink and some fruit slices or a small cracker with a slice of cheese, for example.
- It's best not to use food as a reward. Your child may start to think of sweets as nice and vegetables as nasty. Instead, reward them with a trip to the park or promise to play a game with them.
- Children sometimes get thirst and hunger mixed up. They might say they're thirsty when really, they're hungry.
- Make mealtimes enjoyable and not just about eating. Sit down and chat about other things.
- If you know any other children of the same age who are good eaters, ask them round for tea. A good example can work well, if you don't talk too much about how good the other children are.
- Ask an adult that your child likes and looks up to eat with you. Sometimes a child will eat for someone else, such as a grandparent, without any fuss.
- Children's tastes change. One day they'll hate something, but a month later they may love it.
- Changing the form a food comes in may make it more acceptable. For example, a child might refuse cooked carrots but enjoy raw, grated carrot.
- Create a shopping trip where you and your child purchase food items for mealtimes together.



Packed Lunches for under 12 months

For all aged children we offer a choice of bringing in a packed lunch or tea from home. We have very strict guidelines on NO nuts to ensure we are safeguarding all our children. We are also a healthy eating nursery so packed lunches/teas need to follow the guidance.

Within our baby rooms (Pips, Caterpillars and Seeds) we have the facility to heat food from home, however this is not possible in Shoots, Butterflies Buds and Orchard. We encourage the use of thermal food flasks if you wish to provide a hot meal for your child.

Milk and water are served for drinking at all mealtimes and snack times for all children, even those having a home packed meal. Milk alternative (soya milk) is provided to those children with intolerances or allergies.

Due to legislation on food waste disposal and our aim for sustainability, all food and packaging waste for home packed meals will be sent home.

Please note – your child's packed lunch and snack will be checked before serving and must comply with this policy. If we deem the meal to not meet our policy (below guidance), we will return it to you uneaten with an explanation. Your child will then be served a nursery meal at an additional cost. This cost of £2.80 will then be added to your invoice.

These meals must be paid for in full before your child attends their next session.

Packed Lunch/Tea Mandatory Guidance



A healthier lunchbox should contain:

- be based on starchy carbohydrates (bread, potatoes, rice, pasta)
- include fresh fruit and vegetables/salad (Grapes, blueberries, and blackberries must be cut, see image).
- include a source of protein such as beans and pulses, eggs, fish, meat, cheese (or dairy alternative)
- include a side dish such as a low-fat and lower-sugar yoghurt (or dairy alternative), tea cake (similar to a hot cross bun), fruit bread, plain rice/corn cakes, sugar-free jelly

A range of weaning safe meals. Such as;

- Salmon, pasta, broccoli
- Lentils, cabbage, tomato sauce
- White fish, spinach, cous cous
- Fruit salad puree *melon slices
- Greek yog *strawberries

All pre-made meals can be stored and re-heated here at the setting. For children ages 3-12months.

Items which should **NOT** be in your child's packed lunches

- Chips/wedges
- sweets/lollypops
- High in sugar drink such as juice box
- Pouches/store bought puree jars
- Nuts. We are a nut free nursery



Please see website for more information on a healthier lifestyle - [What to feed young children - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)