



## **FAMILY TREE DAY NURSERY**

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## **Nutrition and Mealtimes Policy**

At Family Tree Day Nursery we believe that mealtimes should be happy, social occasions for children and staff alike. We promote shared, enjoyable positive interactions at these times.

We are committed to offering children healthy, nutritious and balanced meals and snacks, which meet individual needs and requirements, following the Department for Education nutrition guidance.

We ensure that children's food is prepared and provided in line with children's individual needs, developmental stage and any agreed care or allergy plans and that staff are able to understand and consistently apply arrangements for managing allergies, food intolerances, dietary requirements and choking risks.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Allergies and Allergic Reactions policy.

### **Our approach to food and healthy eating**

- A balanced and healthy breakfast, midday meal, afternoon light tea and two daily snacks are provided for children attending a full day at the nursery
- Menus are planned in advance and in line with example menu and guidance produced by the Department for Education (copies can be provided on request). These are rotated termly (Autumn, Spring, Summer), reflect cultural diversity and variation and are displayed for children and parents to view; parents and children are involved in menu planning
- Menus include at least **4** servings of fresh fruit and vegetables per day
- We provide nutritious food at all snack and mealtimes, avoiding large quantities of fat, sugar, salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings
- Quantities offered take account of the ages of the children being catered for, in line with recommended portion sizes for babies and young children.

### **Sustainability**

- To provide cost-effective foods, we purchase staple long-life ingredients in bulk, use frozen or tinned fruit and vegetables if appropriate, prepare home-made sauces using raw ingredients, and use left-over foods where possible
- We try to plan menus to ensure that fruits and vegetables are seasonal and at their cheapest, we use a variety of meat, fish and vegetable alternatives

### **Mealtime environment**

- Children are supervised appropriately while eating, including being within sight and hearing of staff at all times, and supported to eat safely
- No child is ever left alone when eating or drinking to minimise the risk of choking, and a qualified paediatric first aider is always present during meal and snack times. All staff are first aid trained at Family Tree Day Nursery

- Staff set a good example, eat with the children, and demonstrate good table manners. Meal and snack times are organised so that they are social occasions in which children and staff participate in small groups. During meal and snack times children are encouraged to use appropriate table manners and staff promote conversation to support social development
- Staff use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drinks, and feeding themselves
- 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 helping of any second dish
- Children not on special diets are encouraged to eat a small piece of everything
- 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 are not rushed.

### **Drinks**

- Only milk and water are provided as drinks to promote oral health
- Fresh drinking water is always available and accessible to all. It is frequently offered to children and babies, and intake is monitored
- In hot weather staff will encourage children to drink more water to keep them hydrated.

### **Baby feeding and weaning**

- We follow babies' individual feeding patterns following conversations with parents. We regularly review these to ensure they continue to meet the baby's needs
- We feed babies responsively according to their needs and support mothers with breastfeeding, through providing suitable places to breastfeed in the setting and making provision for expressed breastmilk
- We prepare infant formula milk if required, following NHS guidelines
- Weaning is introduced in collaboration with parents, including discussions about the stage their baby is at, the types of foods and textures their baby is eating at home and how these are presented to the baby; no assumptions are made based on the age of the baby. We follow the NHS Best Start in Life weaning guidance<sup>1</sup>
- The nursery provides parents with daily written records of feeding routines for all children using the Tapestry App, which parents register on to when joining the setting.

### **Commercial baby food and drink**

- We provide fresh food for babies and do not use pre-made commercial baby food or drinks
- We permit parents to provide commercial baby food or drinks only under extenuating circumstances. These are on a case by case basis.

### **Management of food allergies and dietary needs**

- All allergens are displayed alongside the menus to show the ingredients of each meal
- Individual dietary requirements are respected. Before a child joins the nursery, we gather information from parents regarding their children's dietary needs, including any special dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies that a child has, and any special health requirements. All information is shared with staff involved in preparing and handling food

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nhs.uk/best-start-in-life/baby/weaning/>

- Where appropriate, we will carry out a risk assessment in the case of allergies and work alongside parents to put into place an individual dietary/allergy plan for their child. This will be regularly reviewed and any changes shared with all staff
- We give careful consideration to seating to avoid cross contamination of food from child to child. Where appropriate, an adult will sit with children during meals to ensure safety and minimise risks
- At each meal and snack time, the caterer is responsible for preparing all foods and ensuring that all dietary requirements for that room have been catered for. Once food and drink has been taken to the relevant rooms, all staff are responsible for checking what has been provided before serving to the children.
- Where appropriate, discussions will also take place with children about allergies and potential risks to make them aware of the dangers of sharing certain foods
- Staff 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.

#### **Provision for cultural and dietary preferences**

- Where possible, we provide a range of foods from the diet of each of the children's cultural backgrounds, providing children with familiar foods and introducing them to new ones
- Cultural differences in eating habits are respected.

#### **Learning about food and cooking with children**

- Staff support children to make healthy choices and understand the need for healthy eating
- We promote positive attitudes to healthy eating through play, growing, shopping and cooking opportunities and discussions.

#### **Celebrations and special occasions**

- We will sometimes celebrate special occasions with treats such as cake, sweets or biscuits. These are individually wrapped for the children to take home at the end of the day so as to not spoil their meals.
- We do allow parents to bring in cakes on special occasions, but these are cut and wrapped individually to be taken home by children instead of eaten whilst at Family Tree.
- We consider celebrating with alternatives such as stickers and badges, bubbles, fruit platters, choosing a favourite story, becoming a special helper, playing a party game, dancing and/or singing their favourite song, and so on
- We ensure that food brought in by parents meet health and safety requirements and that ingredients are listed, following the Food Information for Consumers (FIR) 2014.

#### **Food safety and hygiene**

- All staff who prepare and handle food are competent to do so and receive training in Level 2 food hygiene which is updated every three years
- All staff are trained in preparing foods safely to avoid the risk of choking, following the Foods Standards Agency guidelines
- All staff are aware of the symptoms and treatments for allergies and anaphylaxis
- All staff are aware of the differences between allergies and intolerances, including that they need to maintain vigilance as children can develop allergies at any time

- In the very unlikely event of any food poisoning affecting two or more children on the premises, whether or not this may arise from food offered at the nursery, we will inform Ofsted as soon as reasonably practical and in all cases within 14 days. We will also inform the relevant health agencies and follow any advice given.

### **Food brought from home**

- We do allow children to bring packed lunches into the setting if they are in receipt of government funding and do not wish to pay the optional fee for essentials and consumables. We provide parents with guidelines for nutritious content and signpost to the NHS packed lunch guidance: <https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes/>
- We share the Food Standards Agency choking hazards guidance to support parents to prepare foods to reduce choking hazards
- We request parents use ice packs to correctly maintain the integrity of their child's food from home
- We do not provide reheating services for children's packed lunches
- Children's lunch boxes are checked prior to giving the contents to the children to ensure any risks from potential allergens or choking hazards are managed.

### **Funded Children and Meals**

Parents of funded children who opted out of paying the non-mandatory Essentials and Extra's Fee (See Funding Policy), must provide snacks and meals for the duration of their child's nursery day. These snacks and meals must comply with the Nutrition Guidance produced by the Government which are also followed by the setting. The Early Years Nutrition Guidance information can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6839b752210698b3364e86fc/Early\\_years\\_foundation\\_stage\\_nutrition\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6839b752210698b3364e86fc/Early_years_foundation_stage_nutrition_guidance.pdf).

In accordance with this nutrition guidance, parents must ensure they are following the guidance closely when preparing meals for their child's full day at nursery. Some of these include:

- Provide at least 1 portion of vegetables and/or fruit as part at each main meal (breakfast, lunch, dinner) and as part of some snacks (not including dried fruit).
- Avoid dried fruit as a snack. It should only be provided as part of a meal.
- Provide 1 portion of starchy food as part of each main meal (breakfast, lunch and tea) each day.
- Provide plain starchy food such as plain savoury crackers, or unsalted unsweetened rice or corn cakes as part of at least 1 snack each day.
- Avoid cereals labelled as 'high' (red) in sugar such as sugar-coated or chocolate-flavoured cereals.
- Provide 3 portions of milk and unsweetened dairy foods each day (which includes those provided at home).
- Provide full fat dairy foods (such as cheese and unsweetened yoghurt and fromage frais) for children under the age of 2 and gradually introduce lower-fat dairy options after this age.
- Avoid sweetened yoghurts and fromage frais (including non-dairy alternatives) and choose plain unsweetened options.
- Provide at least 1 lunch and 1 tea for children each week which uses beans, lentils, pulses or a meat alternative as the protein source.

- Provide a portion of protein as part of lunch and tea each day.
- Avoid foods high in saturated fat, salt, and/or sugars like cakes, sweet and savoury pastries, biscuits, crisps, chocolate and other confectionary.
- Provide children with access to water throughout the day.
- Provide only fresh tap water and plain milk to drink.
- Avoid sugary drinks (including fruit juices, squash and smoothies).

In accordance with this Nutrition and Mealtimes Policy, children who attend a full nursery day will have at least one hot meal per day of attendance. This also applies to meals provided by parents.

It is important that any food provided from home aligns with the healthy options offered by the setting to ensure children are receiving consistent messages about nutrition. More detailed information and more elements of the guidance can be found at the link above.

### **Food Safety**

ALL foods brought in from home will be checked for potential allergies. In line with our Allergies and Allergic Reactions Policy, parents must label each meal and snack with any known allergens it may contain, inclusive of those where there are traces or if the item was prepared in an environment where an allergen exists. This is to ensure that the risk of cross-contamination is reduced.

All foods provided must be prepared in a way that is suitable to the age and development of that child in order to prevent choking. Advice on the safe preparation of food can be found here: [Early Years Choking Hazards Food Safety Advice](#) and also here: [Early Years Food Choking Hazards](#).

Perishable food items that should be kept cool must be packed in an insulated, sealed bag. If ice packs are not available to use, the “4 hour rule” can be used, which allows food to be stored outside of chilled conditions for up to 4 hours. However, this can only be done once during the food item's entire storage i.e. it cannot be left out for 4 hours on more than one occasion. This advice comes directly from the Nutrition Guidance document, the link for which is in this policy.

Family Tree Day Nursery does not have the facilities to offer refrigeration of packed lunches. Parents should consider this when selecting items to be placed in their child's bags/boxes for the day, and particularly for those children who are here for more than 4 hours (as per the “4 hour rule”).

Hot meals can sit below 63 degrees for no more than 2 hours once removed from heat (Food Standards Agency). Parents should consider this, and how to store any hot meals, carefully when preparing food for their child's nursery meals. The nursery does not have the facilities to re-heat individual meals for large numbers of children, therefore parents should find alternative ways to keep their child's food warm until meal times.

Lunch/meal bags or boxes must be clearly labelled with the child's name, along with all ingredients listed (including all allergens). Parents should also note that any foods prepared in an allergen exposed environment should include this information in lunch boxes e.g. sandwiches prepared on a chopping board where dairy/fish had previously been should include “may contain dairy/fish”

## Allergens

The 14 allergens are: **celery**, **cereals containing gluten** (such as wheat, rye, barley, and oats), **crustaceans** (such as prawns, crabs and lobsters), **eggs**, **fish**, **lupin**, **milk**, **molluscs** (such as mussels and oysters), **mustard**, **peanuts**, **sesame**, **soybeans**, **sulphur dioxide and sulphites** (if the sulphur dioxide and sulphites are at a concentration of more than ten parts per million) and **tree nuts** (such as almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, brazil nuts, cashews, pecans, pistachios and macadamia nuts).

Foods containing any of the aforementioned allergens must be labelled every time they are brought into the nursery.

Family Tree Day Nursery is a NUT FREE setting and therefore no foods containing nuts will be allowed to stay on site.

## Compliance

If a snack or meal does not comply with the set out nutrition guidance, the nursery reserves the right to ask parents to take it away from the nursery. If a child's meal/s do not meet the required nutrition standards that the setting also follows, Family Tree Day Nursery will provide meals for that child on the first occurrence. The same applies for any child who arrives at nursery without any snacks or food.

On the first occurrence, parents will be billed for the meals provided that day for their child. Any further occurrences of unacceptable meals will result in either of the following:

- parents will need to replace the unaccepted meal/foods with those that comply with nutrition guidance or:
- parents will need to take their child out of nursery to have their meals and return at the end of their meal (this includes snacks).

Foods or meals will be deemed non-compliant for one or more of the following reasons:

- NUTS are present
- allergens have **not** been clearly identified or labelled
- foods do not adhere to the Nutritional Guidance
- food/meals have not been stored correctly i.e. perishable foods are not chilled, hot foods are not in a thermal container

## Registering for meals

When completing your funding declaration forms each term (See Funding Policy), you will need to inform us if you intend to pay the non-mandatory Essentials and Extras Fee for your child to have meals prepared by the nursery, or whether you intend to provide all meals and snacks yourself for the upcoming term. This is to ensure that the nursery can plan meals and be sure of the number of children the nursery will be providing for.

If you indicate that you DO NOT require nursery provided meals, you are expected to prepare your own meals for your child, according to Nutrition Guidance and advice available within this policy. If you indicate that you DO require nursery provided meals, the non-mandatory fee will be added to your invoice childcare invoice for the entirety of that term.

Once you have made your choice on the declaration form, it will not be possible to alter your decision until the following term, when you will again be asked to complete your declaration form.

Our policy is developed in partnership with parents, staff and children and reviewed on a regular basis.

| <b>This policy was adopted on</b> | <b>Signed on behalf of the nursery</b> | <b>Date for review</b> |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <i>06/07/2026</i>                 | Stefanie Purdy                         | <i>June 2027</i>       |