6.5 Food and drink

Policy statement

We regard snack and meal times as an important part of our day. Eating represents a social time for children and adults, and helps children to learn about healthy eating. At snack and meal times, we aim to provide a variety of food, which meets the children's individual dietary needs. We promote good oral health in young children by limiting the amount of foods containing free sugars we provide and encourage parents and carers to support this.

Procedures

We follow these procedures to promote healthy eating in our setting.

- Before a child starts to attend the setting, we ask their parents about their dietary needs and preferences, including any allergies or religious food preferences. (See the Managing Children who are Sick, Infectious or with Allergies Policy.)
- We record information about each child's dietary needs in the Registration Form and parents sign the form to signify that it is correct.
- We regularly consult with parents to ensure that our records of their children's dietary needs – including any allergies - are up-to-date. Parents sign the updated record to signify that it is correct.
- We display current information about individual children's dietary needs so that all our staff and volunteers are fully informed about them.
- We implement systems to ensure that children receive food and drink that is consistent with their dietary needs and preferences.
- We provide a variety of food for snacks including fruit, vegetables, crackers, bread and rice cakes (this list is not exhaustive).
- We sometimes have food tasting activities and provide children with both familiar and unfamiliar foods giving them the opportunity to explore a variety of foods.
- We take care not to provide food containing nuts or nut products and are especially vigilant where we have a child who has a known allergy to nuts.
- Through discussion with parents we obtain information about the dietary rules of the religious groups to which children and their parents belong, and of vegetarians and vegans, as well as about food allergies. We take account of this information in the provision of food and drinks.
- We show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. We do not use a child's diet or allergy as a label for the child, or make a child feel singled out because of her/his diet or allergy.
- We organise meal and snack times so that they are social occasions in which children and adults participate.
- We use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink and feeding themselves.
- We provide children with utensils that are appropriate for their ages and stages of development and that take account of the eating practices in their cultures.

- Children are required to have their own drinking bottle/cup during sessions which must contain water only. We have fresh drinking water constantly available for the children. We inform the children about how to obtain the water and that they can access water at any time during the day.
- If drinking bottles/cups/cartons etc contain juice/squash these will not be made available to children throughout sessions as they encourage sharing and cross contamination. Such drinks will only be served at lunchtimes as part of the child's packed lunch.
- We inform parents who provide food for their children about the storage facilities available in our setting.
- Children should be given breakfast before the start of the morning session as we are not able to provide this when they arrive.
- We inform parents that children are not permitted to enter the setting while they are eating foods due to the risk of allergy and choking.
- In order to protect children with food allergies, we discourage children from sharing and swapping their food with one another.
- For children who drink milk, we provide semi skimmed pasteurised milk.
- We will not distribute or provide children with food items brought in for birthdays (including sweets, chocolate or cakes) as part of our drive to promote good oral health and hygiene. The only exception to this is when we host our annual Christmas party.

Packed lunches

Children that stay for lunch are required to bring their own food to consume. We:

- encourage parents to add an ice pack to lunch bags/boxes to keep food cool;
- inform parents that we encourage healthy eating;
- inform parents that we are unable to reheat cooked food brought from home;
- discourage packed lunch contents that consist largely of crisps, processed foods, sweet drinks and sweet products such as cakes or biscuits. We reserve the right to return this food to the parent as a last resort;
- ensure that adults sit with children to eat their lunch so that the mealtime is a social occasion.
- encourage children to eat their packed lunch however we will not force a child to eat under duress.

This policy was adopted by	Springfield Bees Pre-School
On	05/12/24
Date to be reviewed	05/12/25
Signed on behalf of the provider	
Name of signatory	
Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner)	