



Healthy Eating Policy

Statement of intent

Playhouse Pre-School recognises that food and drink are an important part of children's health, wellbeing, development and learning. Mealtimes and snack times provide opportunities for children to develop healthy eating habits, independence, social skills and positive relationships with food.

As we provide care for children from 9 months to 4 years, we recognise that children's nutritional needs and abilities vary according to their age and stage of development. We follow the Department for Education's Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance and ensure that food, snacks and drinks provided by the setting are healthy, balanced and nutritious, unless there is a good reason not to.

Aims

We aim to:

- provide healthy, balanced and nutritious food and drinks;
- support children to develop positive and healthy attitudes towards food;
- provide appropriate food and drinks according to children's age, development and individual needs;
- provide a relaxed and enjoyable social experience at mealtimes;
- support children to develop independence and self-help skills;
- accommodate allergies, intolerances, medical, cultural, religious, vegetarian and vegan dietary requirements;
- promote safe eating and reduce the risk of choking;
- work in partnership with parents and carers regarding children's nutrition and dietary needs.

Dietary requirements and allergies

Before a child starts at Playhouse, parents/carers provide information about:

- allergies and food intolerances;
- special dietary requirements and preferences;
- medical conditions affecting food or drink;
- cultural or religious dietary requirements;
- vegetarian or vegan diets;
- feeding, weaning or milk requirements for younger children.

This information is recorded in the child's registration information and/or individual healthcare or care plan where appropriate. Parents/carers are responsible for keeping us informed of any changes.

Dietary information must be accessible to staff who need it. Staff check the food being provided to each child before it is given to them and follow the child's individual dietary requirements.

Children will never be singled out, embarrassed or made to feel different because of their dietary needs.

Food allergies and medical dietary requirements are managed in accordance with our Allergy and Anaphylaxis Management Policy, Medicines Policy and any individual healthcare plan.

Safe eating and food hygiene

Playhouse follows appropriate food hygiene and food safety procedures. Staff involved in preparing or handling food receive appropriate food hygiene training.

- Children wash their hands before eating.
- Staff supervise children during meals and snacks.
- A member of staff remains with children while they are eating.
- Staff are aware of children's individual dietary requirements and allergies before food is served.
- Food is prepared and served in a way that is appropriate for the child's age and developmental stage.
- Children are seated safely while eating and are not permitted to walk around while eating.
- Children are encouraged to eat calmly and at their own pace.
- Staff follow appropriate hygiene procedures when preparing, serving and clearing food.

A member of staff with a valid paediatric first aid certificate will be present in the room when children are eating, in accordance with EYFS requirements.

Preventing choking

Playhouse takes particular care when preparing food for babies and young children.

Staff follow current early years food safety guidance, including:

- grapes are cut lengthways and then into quarters before being served;
- hard fruit and vegetables are prepared in an age-appropriate way, such as being cut into suitable strips;
- stones and pips are removed from fruit;
- whole nuts and whole seeds are not provided to children under five;
- food is cut and prepared according to the child's age and developmental stage;
- staff are familiar with the choking risks associated with foods commonly provided to young children.

Parents/carers are asked to prepare food in the same safe way when providing packed lunches.

Drinks and milk

Fresh drinking water is available and accessible to children throughout the session.

Children may bring a named water bottle from home containing water only.

For children under 12 months, milk and feeding arrangements will be discussed with parents/carers and recorded as part of the child's individual care arrangements. Breast milk and/or infant formula will be provided or administered according to the child's individual needs and parental instructions.

Cow's milk is not provided as a main drink to children under 12 months.

Children over 12 months may be offered milk as appropriate.

Bottles are not routinely provided during preschool sessions for children over 12 months. Where a younger child requires a bottle or other individual feeding arrangement, this will be agreed with parents/carers and recorded in the child's care plan.

Breakfast Club

Healthy Eating Policy

Children attending breakfast club may be offered:

- low-sugar, lower-salt cereal;
- wholemeal or other suitable bread/toast;
- fresh fruit;
- milk or other age-appropriate drinks.

Food and drinks provided will be appropriate to the child's age and individual dietary requirements.

Younger children will have their individual feeding needs considered in accordance with their care plan.

Snack

Playhouse provides a range of healthy snacks, which may include fresh fruit and vegetables and other suitable foods.

Children are encouraged to develop independence during snack time, for example by:

- choosing from appropriate foods;
- pouring their own drinks with support;
- sharing out cups/plates
- using suitable utensils;
- helping to prepare food;
- cutting suitable soft foods using child-safe equipment under close supervision.

Children are never forced to eat or finish food.

Packed lunches

Children therefore bring a packed lunch from home.

We provide parents/carers with information about healthy packed lunches and encourage lunches to include a variety of nutritious foods, such as:

- vegetables and/or fruit;
- starchy foods, preferably higher-fibre or wholegrain options;
- protein foods;
- dairy or suitable alternatives.

Parents/carers are encouraged to provide an ice pack where necessary to help keep food at a safe temperature.

Water is the preferred drink. Sugary drinks and foods high in sugar, salt and saturated fat should be avoided or kept to a minimum.

We ask parents/carers not to include whole nuts or other foods which present a choking risk.

Grapes must be cut lengthways before being placed in a child's lunchbox.

Playhouse is a nut-free setting and nuts and nut-containing products must not be included in packed lunches.

Parents/carers must inform us of any allergy or dietary requirement.

Healthy Eating Policy

Staff sit with children during lunch to provide supervision and make mealtimes a positive social experience.

Staff model healthy eating behaviours.

We will work with parents/carers where a packed lunch does not meet a child's nutritional or safety needs. Where there is an ongoing concern, the manager will discuss this with the parent/carer and agree an appropriate approach.

Food from home and food sharing

Children should not share or swap food with other children. This is particularly important for children with food allergies and dietary requirements.

Children should only eat food provided for them by their parent/carer or Playhouse.

Celebrations and special occasions

We recognise that families may wish to celebrate birthdays and special occasions.

We encourage families to consider non-food alternatives such as bubbles, stickers, books or small activities rather than sweets or cakes.

Food brought from home for celebrations will not normally be shared among the children during the session and will be sent home with the parent/carer.

Cooking and food activities

Cooking and food preparation activities are used to support children's learning and development. Children may prepare simple foods such as pizza, cakes or other individual items under appropriate adult supervision. Ingredients are checked for allergies and dietary requirements before the activity.

Food prepared by children is normally sent home to be eaten at home, together with information about the ingredients used.

Children are supported to learn about healthy foods, hygiene, safe food preparation and where food comes from.

Working with parents and carers

We recognise that parents/carers know their child best. We work closely with families to ensure that children's individual nutritional needs are understood and met.

Parents/carers should inform Playhouse of any changes to their child's dietary requirements, allergies, feeding arrangements or medical needs.

Where appropriate, we will seek advice from health professionals or other relevant professionals to ensure that individual nutritional needs are safely supported.

This policy was agreed by the staff of Playhouse Pre-School Broadwater.

Adapted on 23rd April 2015 and will be reviewed annually.

Reviewed on 30th September 2026 by Z. Munford