Sticky Fish Preschool Healthy Eating Policy

Aims

Our aim is to ensure all children are provided with healthy food and drink while they are in preschool. We know that an unhealthy diet in childhood can contribute to a range of health conditions, poor oral health and behavioural problems which can impact on learning. We also know that a poor diet during childhood can lead to poor health throughout adulthood. Therefore, healthy eating habits formed in the early years can have a positive impact on health throughout life. By giving clear guidance to parents/carers that is consistent with national guidelines for healthy eating for the under 5s \*, we hope to contribute towards lifelong healthy eating habits being established for all children.

**Before children start at preschool, parents/carers will be asked if their child has any allergies/intolerances or requires a special diet for any other reason. The preschool will work with parents to ensure all children’s needs are met.**

Snacks and drinks

* Each family is asked to bring in a piece of fruit several times each week which will be cut up and shared amongst the children at snack-time. Other snack food such as small slices of cheese and breadsticks will be provided by the preschool.
* Snack times are important social routines which can help promote attitudes towards eating a range of food in a group situation. We use snack times as learning opportunities where staff model appropriate mealtime behaviour, such as washing our hands, sitting together, having child-focused discussions and passing items carefully and respectfully to each other. During the Covid 19 pandemic, adults will place fruit into children’s bowls instead of children helping themselves, to minimise the risk of cross contamination.
* Milk or milk alternative is provided for all children who would like it at snack times. Drinking water is also available at all times throughout the preschool day. Children will be reminded to drink frequently and will be encouraged to pour water for themselves to promote their self-help skills. It is preferable that families do not bring in additional drinks for their children as water and milk are the recommended drinks for children under 5. During the Covid 19 pandemic, adults will pour out drinks for children to minimise risk of cross contamination.

Packed lunches

Lunches should contain a variety of foods in line with national guidance:

* at least one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetables every day.
* meat, fish or other source of non-dairy protein (e.g. lentils, kidney beans,

chickpeas, hummus or falafel) every day.

* oily fish, such as salmon, at least once every three weeks.
* a starchy food such as any type of bread, pasta, rice, couscous, noodles,

 potatoes or other type of grain or cereals every day.

* dairy food such as milk, cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais or custard everyday

**Please do not include sweets or chocolate in your child’s lunchbox.**

Foods that are high in sugar or salt (such as those in packets) are not necessary for children’s health and should be kept to a minimum.

Processed products such as sausage rolls, corned meat and sausages should only be included occasionally.

**Whole nuts** should not be given to children under 5 years of age.

Water is the best choice for a lunchtime drink and we provide this. Squash or fizzy drinks should always be avoided, even if they are labelled as sugar free. If parents/carers have a reason for wanting to send in a drink other than water or milk, such as a pure fruit juice, this should be well diluted (half juice, half water) in line with current recommendations for children under 5 years.

We ask that parents/carers provide a packed lunch container where food items can be stored securely on our lunch trolley until lunch-time. An insulated lunch bag containing an ice pack or frozen bottle of water can help to keep food fresh, especially in warmer weather. Lunch containers **must be named.**

Any uneaten food will be returned home in the lunch container so that parents/carers can monitor what their child is eating.

To reduce the risk of choking please cut round foods such as small tomatoes, grapes, large blueberries, strawberries etc. into quarters. Other fruit and vegetables (such as carrots or melon) should be cut into strips and **not chunks.** Popcorn should be avoided as it is a choking risk.

**If parents/carers have any concerns about their child’s diet or are worried that their child is not eating a range of healthy food, we ask that they speak to a member of the Sticky Fish team as soon as possible so that we can work together to find a positive solution to this.**

Oral Health

Tooth decay is now a serious problem for young children that can usually be prevented through good oral health. Ways to support good oral health in children include:

* Reducing sugary food and drinks so that they are only given occasionally and only at mealtimes.
* Brushing teeth at least twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste as soon as children’s first teeth appear.
* Visiting the dentist regularly.

Birthday celebrations

In line with our healthy eating policy we ask that cakes and sweets are not brought into preschool on children’s birthdays. This also ensures each child’s birthday is celebrated in the same way during preschool time. Children who are in preschool on their birthday will be made to feel special as we light the birthday candle for them and sing them the ‘Happy Birthday’ song. The birthday girl/boy will also be able to wear the birthday hat if they wish, and we will give them a birthday card to take home.

\* Information in this policy is based on guidance from:

* ‘The Eatwell Guide’ published by Public Health England.
* ‘Eat Better, Start Better: Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings in England – A Practical Guide’ published by the Children’s Food Trust and the School Food Trust.
* ‘Healthy eating guidance published for the early years sector’ published by the Department for Education.
* ‘Health matters: child dental health’ published by Public Health England

Date agreed: May 2024 Review date: May 2025

Signed: Liz Tomlinson Position: Pre-school Manager