

STAGHILLS NURSERY SCHOOL

Food and Meal Time Policy

STAGHILLS



Nursery School

General Welfare Requirements

Food /Mealtime Policy

Mealtimes should be an enjoyable, social occasion for children and staff, and an opportunity to share positive interactions and promote learning across the curriculum.

We are committed to offering children healthy, nutritious and balanced meals and snacks which meet individual needs and requirements and which follow national nutritional guidelines for under 5s. Our cook uses the standards defined in Healthy School meals guidance to devise the menus. The EYFS framework states that early years providers must promote good oral health of children who attend their setting. This is part of the Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements of the EYFS. The Department for Education document 'Oral Health' sets out the requirement that early years settings must do all they can to help to prevent tooth decay (April 2024). We follow the EYFS Nutrition Guidance (May 2025).

School meals - healthy eating standards - GOV.UK and uses recipes from the school food plan website.

Responsibilities of the Cook

Our Cook ensures that:

- Efficient management of the kitchen environment, including stock control
- Possession of the required Food Hygiene and Health & Safety certificates
- Knowledge of current nutritional guidelines
- Liaising with staff and parents over individual needs and menu ideas
- Interacting with children to encourage healthy eating and promote learning
- Sourcing local fresh produce and varying menus seasonally to take account of this
- Children are provided with a balanced diet covering the 4 main food groups
- Portion sizes are appropriate for a child's body, size and appetite.
- Responding to feedback from children, staff and parents on menu choices
- Using their own expertise in healthy eating
- Preparing dishes which celebrate cultural diversity and festive traditions

Nursery Policy on Nutrition and Food Provision

- Early session children who do not have breakfast at home will be offered this when they arrive: limited sugar and salt content cereals (Green), toast, milk or water provided by the Nursery
- A balanced and healthy morning snack, 2 course lunch (main course and sugar free dessert) and substantial afternoon tea are provided for children attending a full day at the nursery.
- Menus will be planned in advance, rotated regularly and reflect cultural diversity and season. These will be displayed for children and parents to view in each room.
- Parents will be provided with information linked to our school policy about foods and drinks so that they can be supported in providing these in packed lunches, as part of our statutory Oral Hygiene requirement and focus on preventing tooth decay in under fives. Drinks will be sugar-free. Nursery children will only be offered milk or water in nursery. Cakes, biscuits, sweets, fizzy drinks and chocolate are not permitted. Birthday cakes and treats sent in from home will be sent home with children so that parents can brush their child's teeth after eating, or they may choose not to give these items to their child.
- We provide nutritious food at all snack and meal times, avoiding large quantities of fat, sugar and salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings. Desserts will not include foods which are high in saturated fat, salt and sugar.
- Menus will include servings of fresh fruit and vegetables per day.
- Fresh drinking water will always be available and frequently offered to children and babies.
- Milk or water will be served with morning and afternoon snacks.

Dietary Requirements and Allergy Management

- Individual dietary requirements will be respected using information gathered from parents regarding their children's dietary needs including any allergies. 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 plan for their child.
- A photograph and dietary notes for all children will be supplied to the Nursery Cooks and any children with special dietary needs or allergies will be highlighted.
- Staff will show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies; they will not allow other children to make the child feel singled out because of her/his diet or allergy.

Mealtime Environment and Social Development

- Staff will set a good example and eat with the children and show good table manners. Meal and snack times will be organised so that they are social occasions in which children and staff participate in small groups. During meals and snack times children will be encouraged to use their manners and say 'please' and 'thank you' and conversation will be encouraged.
- Staff will use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, self-serving food and drink, and clearing tables after meals. Staff will support children to make healthy choices and understand the need for healthy eating.

Food Restrictions and Parent Communication

- Sweets, sugary snacks such as birthday cake, baking will be sent home with children to allow parents to choose if their child can have them, and to brush teeth immediately after, at home.
- The following items provided for packed lunches will not be given to children and sent home: Cakes, biscuits, chocolate bars, chocolate biscuits, sweets and sugary drinks.
- We provide 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 will be respected.

Mealtime Sensitivity and Child Wellbeing

- Any child who shows signs of distress at being faced with a meal he/she does not like will have his/her food removed without any fuss. If a child does not finish his/her first course, he/she will still be given a small helping of dessert (sugar-free).
- Withholding food will not be used as a form of punishment.
- Children who refuse to eat at the mealtime will be offered food later in the day.
- Parents or guardians will be advised if their child is not eating well.
- Children will be given time to eat at their own pace and not rushed.
- Children will not be offered rewards for finishing everything on their plate/ in their lunchbox e.g. stickers or dessert).
- Quantities offered will take account of the ages of the children being catered for.
- We will promote positive attitudes to healthy eating through play opportunities and discussions.

Safety and Record Keeping

- The nursery will provide parents with daily written records of feeding routines for all children under the age of 2 years.
- No child is ever left alone when eating/drinking to ensure that there is no risk of choking.
- When preparing foods for under 2's, round shapes will be avoided as these are a choking hazard. Small fruits will be cut lengthways and then halved again (Quarters). These fruits include: grapes, raspberries and cherry tomatoes.
- Sample menus will be displayed on our website, sent out to parents on request, and included as part of the registration pack for enquiring parents.

Reviewed: Sept 2025