FOOD AND DRINK / HEALTHY EATING POLICY

Policy Statement

Ladybird Childcare Services is committed to promoting the health, wellbeing and development of all children through the provision of nutritious food, healthy drinks and positive mealtime experiences. We recognise that good nutrition during the early years is important for children's growth, development, learning and long-term health. We aim to provide children with a varied, balanced diet and to develop positive attitudes towards food, eating and mealtimes.

Our food and drink provision will be guided by:

- The current **Public Health Agency (PHA) Nutrition Matters for the Early Years: Guidance for feeding under fives in the childcare setting**;
- The **Minimum Standards for Childminding and Day Care for Children Under Age 12**;
- Guidance from the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust Early Years Team;
- Environmental Health food safety requirements;
- Relevant allergy, food safety, infant feeding and safeguarding procedures.

Aims and Objectives

Ladybird Childcare Services aims to:

- provide children with nutritious, varied and balanced food and drinks;
- provide foods from the four main food groups;
- ensure fresh drinking water is available throughout the day;
- promote healthy eating and good dental health;
- support children's individual dietary, cultural, religious and medical requirements;
- promote positive and relaxed mealtimes;
- respect children's individual appetites and hunger and fullness cues;
- encourage children to explore and enjoy a wide variety of foods without pressure;
- support children to develop independence and age-appropriate self-feeding skills;
- provide appropriate nutrition and feeding support for babies and young children;
- involve children in age-appropriate food preparation and healthy eating activities;
- work in partnership with parents/carers regarding children's nutrition and dietary needs.

The Four Main Food Groups

Menus will provide children with a variety of foods from the four main food groups:

1. **Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods**
2. **Fruit and vegetables**
3. **Meat, fish, eggs, beans, pulses and other non-dairy sources of protein**
4. **Milk and dairy foods and suitable alternatives**

Menus will be planned to provide a varied and balanced diet over the course of the week.

A meal will not necessarily contain every food group at every sitting, but children's overall provision throughout the day will be planned to meet their nutritional needs.

Menu Planning

Menus will be planned in accordance with the current PHA *Nutrition Matters for the Early Years* guidance.

The nursery will provide a varied menu which includes:

- a variety of fruit and vegetables;
- starchy foods such as bread, potatoes, rice, pasta and cereals;
- meat, fish, eggs, beans, lentils, pulses and other suitable protein sources;
- milk, cheese, yoghurt and suitable dairy alternatives;
- a variety of textures, tastes and foods appropriate to children's ages and developmental stages.

The nursery will aim to provide a variety of foods across the week and will avoid unnecessary repetition. Where appropriate, seasonal, cultural and diverse foods will be included within the menu. The weekly menu will be made available to parents/carers via Tapestry MEMOS. Menus will be reviewed regularly to ensure they continue to meet current nutritional guidance.

Breakfast

Children attending during breakfast time may be offered breakfast between approximately 7.30am and 8.30am.

Morning Snack

Morning snack will normally be provided between approximately 10.00am and 10.30am.

A typical snack may include:

- bread, toast or another suitable starchy food;
- fresh fruit and/or vegetables;

Snacks will be varied and will contribute to children's overall nutritional needs.

Lunch

Lunch will normally be provided between approximately 12.00pm and 12.30pm. Lunches will be freshly prepared on site by the nursery cook.

Meals will provide a balanced combination of:

- a starchy carbohydrate;
- vegetables and/or fruit;
- a source of protein such as meat, fish, eggs, beans, lentils or pulses;
- dairy or another suitable source of nutrients where appropriate.

Children will normally be offered the same main meal, with suitable alternatives provided where required because of allergies, medical requirements, religious or cultural requirements or other agreed dietary needs. Children may be offered additional portions according to their appetite. Children will not be expected or required to finish all the food on their plate.

Afternoon Snack

Afternoon snack will normally be provided between approximately 3.00pm and 3.30pm.

Snacks may include:

- bread or toast;
- cheese;
- plain yoghurt;
- fresh fruit;
- vegetables;
- other suitable nutritious foods.

Processed meat products will not be routinely provided and, where included on the menu, will be limited in accordance with current *Nutrition Matters* guidance.

Drinks and Hydration

Fresh drinking water will always be available to children throughout the day. Water will be encouraged as the main drink between meals. Milk will be provided where appropriate and in accordance with the child's age and individual dietary requirements.

The nursery will not routinely provide:

- fizzy drinks;
- squash or cordial;
- energy drinks;
- sweetened drinks;
- drinks with added sugar.

Sugary drinks and sweets should not be sent into the nursery. The nursery will follow current guidance regarding milk and infant formula for babies and young children.

Healthy Eating and Dental Health

The nursery recognises the importance of good nutrition in promoting healthy teeth as well as general health.

We will promote good dental health by:

- limiting foods and drinks containing free sugars;
- avoiding frequent sugary snacks and drinks;
- providing water as the main drink between meals;
- encouraging healthy snacks;
- discussing healthy eating and dental health through age-appropriate activities.

Babies and Infant Feeding

The nursery recognises that babies have individual feeding requirements and routines.

Parents/carers will be consulted regarding each baby's:

- feeding routine;
- breast milk requirements;
- infant formula;
- introduction of solid foods;
- allergies or intolerances;

Breast milk and/or appropriate infant formula will be provided according to the child's individual care plan and parental instructions. The nursery will follow current PHA guidance regarding the safe preparation, storage and handling of infant formula. When solid foods are introduced, the nursery will work in partnership with parents/carers and follow current guidance on weaning, appropriate textures, suitable foods and responsive feeding. Babies will be supported to develop age-appropriate self-feeding skills.

Portion Sizes and Children's Choice

Food will be provided in age-appropriate portions. Children will be encouraged to listen to their own hunger and fullness cues. Children may request additional portions where food is available. Children will be encouraged to make appropriate choices from the foods provided. Staff will support children to develop independence, including appropriate use of cups, cutlery and self-serving where developmentally suitable.

Special Dietary Requirements

Ladybird Childcare Services will respect children's:

- medical dietary requirements;
- food allergies;
- food intolerances;
- vegetarian or vegan diets;
- religious dietary requirements;
- cultural dietary requirements.

Parents/carers must provide the nursery with accurate and up-to-date information about their child's dietary requirements.

Dietary requirements will be recorded within the child's individual records and communicated to relevant staff. Where a child requires a medically prescribed diet, advice from an appropriate health professional will be sought where necessary. Suitable nutritionally balanced alternatives will be provided where a child cannot safely eat the standard menu.

Food Allergies and Allergen Management

The nursery takes food allergies seriously and will follow its separate Allergy and Anaphylaxis procedures. All staff involved in food preparation and service will be made aware of children's known allergies and dietary restrictions.

Appropriate measures will be taken to reduce the risk of:

- accidental exposure;
- cross-contamination;
- incorrect food being served;
- food being shared between children.

Allergen information relating to food provided will be available to relevant staff.

Nut-Free Environment

Ladybird Childcare Services operates a nut-free environment.

Food Hygiene and Safety

All food will be stored, prepared, cooked and served in accordance with current Environmental Health food safety requirements. Staff involved in the preparation and handling of food will hold, as a minimum, an appropriate **Level 2 Food Hygiene Certificate**. Food preparation areas and equipment will be maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.

The nursery will follow its Food Safety and Hygiene procedures regarding:

- food storage;
- temperature control;
- preparation and cooking;
- cleaning and sanitising;
- hand hygiene;
- cross-contamination;
- allergen management;
- food waste;

Age-Appropriate Food and Choking Prevention

Food will be prepared and served in a form and texture appropriate to the child's age and developmental stage. Particular care will be taken when preparing food for babies and younger children. Staff will follow the nursery's choking prevention, food safety and infant feeding procedures. Children will always be appropriately supervised when eating and drinking.

Mealtimes

Mealtimes are an important part of the nursery day.

They provide opportunities for:

- social interaction;

- communication;
- independence;
- developing table manners;
- learning about food;
- developing positive relationships with eating.

Children will normally eat together within their rooms.

Where possible, staff will sit with children during meals and snacks and act as positive role models by demonstrating healthy eating and positive mealtime behaviour. Children will be encouraged to eat in a relaxed and sociable environment. The nursery recognises that babies and children may have individual feeding routines and these will be accommodated wherever reasonably possible.

Meal Times and Nursery Routine

The nursery's meal and snack times form part of the daily routine and support children's social interaction and learning. Parents/carers are asked, where possible, to ensure children have eaten before arriving if they are arriving after a scheduled meal. However, individual feeding needs will always be considered, particularly for babies, children with medical conditions and children with additional needs. The nursery will not refuse food to a child because they have missed a scheduled meal time.

Food as a Reward

The nursery does not use sweets, chocolate, fizzy drinks or other sugary foods as rewards.

Staff will use:

- praise;
- encouragement;
- positive attention;
- recognition of effort;
- appropriate non-food rewards.

Food will not be withheld as a punishment.

Celebrations and Special Occasions

The nursery recognises that birthdays, cultural celebrations and special occasions are important experiences for children. Celebrations will focus primarily on the shared experience rather than sugary foods.

Where food is included as part of a celebration:

- healthy options will be encouraged;
- allergen and dietary requirements will be considered;
- sugary treats will be occasional rather than routine;
- parents/carers will be informed where appropriate;

- food brought into the nursery must comply with nursery food safety and allergy procedures.

The nursery will also encourage non-food ways of celebrating birthdays and special occasions.

Food Brought into the Nursery

Parents/carers should not send sweets, fizzy drinks, energy drinks or other unsuitable sugary foods into the nursery. Food brought into the nursery for celebrations must be agreed in accordance with nursery procedures and must take account of known allergies and dietary requirements. The nursery reserves the right not to provide or distribute food where there is a safety, allergy or dietary concern.

Healthy Eating Activities

Healthy eating will be promoted through a range of age-appropriate activities, including:

- stories;
- role play;
- songs and music;
- food-related discussions;
- gardening and growing activities;
- cookery;
- tasting and exploring foods;
- visits and outings;
- discussions about where food comes from.

Children will be encouraged to participate, where appropriate, in preparing their own snacks. Activities will be inclusive and will take account of children's ages, abilities, cultures and dietary requirements. The nursery may participate in appropriate healthy eating campaigns and initiatives.

Staff Responsibilities

All staff are responsible for supporting this policy.

Staff will:

- model positive eating and drinking behaviours;
- follow children's dietary and allergy information;
- supervise children appropriately during meals;
- never force or pressure a child to eat;
- promote healthy choices;
- maintain good food hygiene;
- report concerns about food, allergies or children's eating to the appropriate person;
- maintain confidentiality regarding children's medical and dietary information.