

Bowerdean and Mapledean Nursery School



Food and Nutrition Policy

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Introduction

At Bowerdean and Mapledean Nursery School we recognise the importance of healthy eating in supporting children's growth, development, and long-term well-being; maintaining a healthy weight, and good oral health. This policy outlines our approach to food provision, mealtimes, and the promotion of healthy eating across the nursery. It supports our commitment to working in partnership with parents to maintain and improve where necessary the health and welfare of the young children in our care.

Aims

- To promote a positive attitude towards healthy eating.
- To provide a range of nutritious, balanced food and drink throughout the nursery week.
- To ensure that children's dietary needs (including allergies, intolerances, and cultural/religious preferences) are recognised and rigorously met.
- To encourage children to develop social skills and positive attitudes at mealtimes.
- To provide children with opportunities and support to enable them to use a variety of tools and equipment involved in the serving and preparation of a range of foods safely and effectively.
- To provide support and training necessary to ensure children's safety remains paramount during the preparation and consumption of food and drink during the nursery day.

Contents

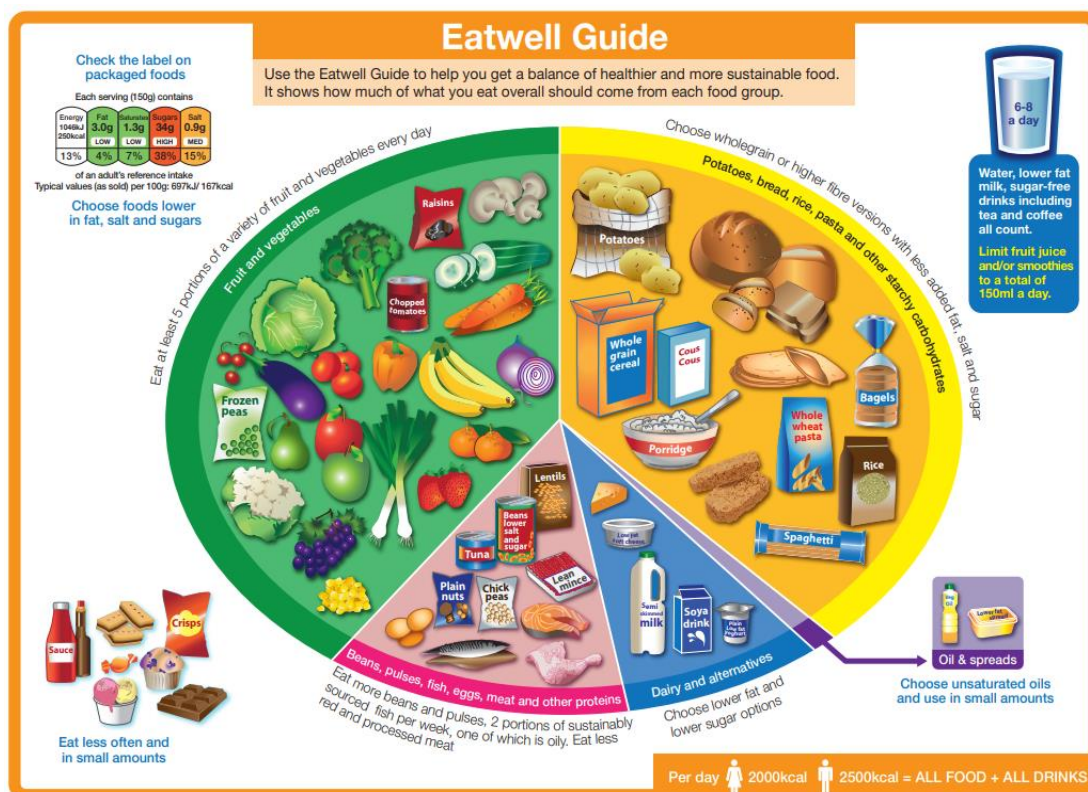
1. Promoting Healthy Eating in our curriculum
2. Snack Provision
3. Packed Lunches
4. Management of Allergies and Special Dietary Requirements
5. Celebrations and Special Occasions
6. Sustainability

1. Promoting Healthy Eating

Our curricular framework provides year-round opportunities to raise awareness among children of the importance keeping our minds and bodies healthy. Healthy eating is reinforced through play, stories, and focused circle time activities, and throughout our general provision. Food-related activities such as cooking, growing vegetables, and tasting new foods from different cultures are part of the curriculum. We teach children to choose healthier options, referencing the Eatwell Guide.

We work in partnership with parents/carers to support children's healthy eating habits at home and at nursery. The Eatwell Guide uses government advice to show what a balance of foods should look like in one day or over a whole week. The advice in the Eatwell Guide applies to children from the age of 2 years.

A healthy, balanced diet is based on the 4 main food groups (fruit and vegetables; potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates; dairy or dairy alternatives; and beans, pulses, fish, eggs,



meat and other proteins). These provide essential nutrients to help children grow and develop.

2. Snack Provision

- Children have daily opportunities to practice various self-help tasks associated with the serving of food and drinks such as pouring, slicing, spooning, mashing, spreading and picking up using serving tongs.
- Foods include a range of fruit and vegetables, breadsticks, and crackers.
- Children are offered milk or water to drink.
- Children bring in their own water bottles which they are encouraged to drink from at regular intervals throughout the sessions.
- Snack times are calm, social occasions where staff engage with children to model good eating habits and provide high-level supervision to prevent choking.
- Children always eat with their friends at a table, as this encourages attempts to try foods and textures that might not be available at home.

3. Packed Lunches

- Parents/carers are encouraged to provide a balanced, nutritious packed lunch.
- We advise parents strongly about inclusions of high sugar, high salt, or highly processed items such as sweets, chocolate bars, and fizzy drinks in their child's diet.
- We report back to parents where we believe a child has a dislike for any content of their packed lunch box and together make a plan to ensure children eat the correct amount of healthy food stuff to sustain them while they are at school.
- Mealtimes are used to promote independence, social interaction, and learning about food.
- Staff model positive attitudes to food and healthy choices.
- Ideas and guidance for healthy packed lunches are provided to families.

- Food safety and hygiene: All lunchboxes are stored safely and hygienically in a lunch box trolley. Where lunch boxes are seen to be neglected or unwashed, parents are gently made aware of the need for hygienic preparation and storage of food stuffs to keep children well
- We advise parents that we are unable to reheat food brought in from home.

Parents and carers receive the following advice:

- Ensure the food is suitable for their child's individual developmental needs, and prepared in a way to prevent choking
<https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/2021/09/food-safety-advice-on-choking-hazards-in-settings/>
 Choose foods that can safely be kept at room temperature as there is no refrigeration available for children's lunch boxes. The Food Standards Agency provides 27 advice on Listeria which has examples of ready-to-eat foods that should be eaten within 4 hours of removing them from the fridge: <https://www.food.gov.uk/listeria>
- Perishable items should be kept cool in insulated sealed bags. If ice packs are unavailable, the '4-hour rule' can be applied. This rule allows food to be stored outside of chilled conditions for up to 4 hours, but this should only be done once during the entire storage.
- Child's lunch bag and drinks containers should be clearly labelled.
- Please refer to the following websites for lunch-box ideas and other advice on food and nutrition
<https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes/>

4. Management of Allergies and Special Dietary Needs

- Information about children's dietary needs is collected on entry and updated regularly. A healthcare plan is developed with parents, shared with all staff and kept on the wall at each snack table. All medicines are kept in the locked room adjacent to the snack area, with easy access to epi-pens.
- A photographic chart of all the children with allergies and specific dietary requirements is on the wall at the snack area and on display in the staffroom kitchen where food is prepared.
- Our staff supervise children appropriately at mealtimes to avoid food sharing and cross contamination.
- Ongoing discussions about each child's cultural and dietary needs are crucial in creating a safe and inclusive environment for all children to eat. Each key person will have a central role in facilitating these conversations during home-visits and other early interactions with families.
- We are a nut-free setting and take all reasonable precautions to prevent exposure to allergens. We regularly inform all parents and/or carers of the potential risk of foods brought from home for other children.
- Staff receive training on allergy awareness and emergency procedures. All our staff have paediatric first aid training.
- We take special precautions where foods such as fruits or home-made items are brought into school from home for sharing with other adults or children in connections with celebrations (e.g. birthdays, festivals or holidays)

Our staff understand that:

Food allergies develop when the body's immune system reacts against food proteins which it sees as invaders. It then releases chemicals to attack.

Symptoms of an allergic reaction may include:

- **coughing, wheezing, breathlessness, noisy breathing or a hoarse voice**
- **a red raised rash (hives)**
- **tingly or itchy feeling in the mouth**
- **sneezing or an itchy, runny or blocked nose**
- **stomach pain**
- **feeling sick or vomiting**
- **swelling of face, lips, tongue or eyes**

- difficulty swallowing
- diarrhea
- feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- pale or floppy
- suddenly sleepy
- collapse or unconscious

It's possible to be allergic to anything, but there are **14 common allergens**:

Allergen	Often found in
Tree nuts (for example almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, pecan nuts, brazil nuts, pistachios, cashews, macadamias).	In sauces, desserts, crackers, bread, ice cream, marzipan, ground almonds, nut oils.
Peanuts	In sauces, cakes, desserts. Don't forget groundnut oil and peanut flour.
Eggs	In cakes, mousses, sauces, pasta, quiche, some meat products. Don't forget foods containing mayonnaise or brushed with egg.
Milk	In yoghurt, cream, cheese, butter, milk powders. Also check for foods glazed with milk.
Fish	In some salad dressings, pizzas, relishes, fish sauce.
Crustaceans	Such as prawns, lobster, scampi, crab, shrimp paste.
Molluscs	These include mussels, whelks, squid, land snails, oyster sauce.
Gluten (wheat such as spelt and khorasan wheat, barley, rye and oats)	Also check foods containing flour such as bread, pasta, cakes, pastry, meat products, sauces, soups, batter, stock cubes, soy and worcestershire sauces, breadcrumbs, foods dusted with flour.
Celery	This includes celery stalks, leaves and seeds and celeriac. Also look out for celery in salads, soups, celery salt, some meat products.
Lupin	Lupin seeds and flour in some types of bread and pastries.
Mustard	Including liquid mustard, mustard cress, mustard powder and mustard seeds in salad dressings, marinades, soups, sauces, curries, meat products.
Sesame seeds	In bread, bread sticks, tahini, hummus, sesame oil.
Soya	Such as tofu or beancurd, edamame, tempeh, soya flour and textured soya protein, in some ice cream, sauces, desserts, meat products, vegetarian products and vegan products.
Sulphur dioxide (when added and above 10mg/kg in the finished food and drink	In meat products, fruit juice drinks, dried fruit and vegetables.

Associated symptoms of an allergic reaction can happen on their own or they may be present in a more serious reaction called **anaphylaxis or anaphylactic shock**. This is a medical emergency that can be life threatening and needs urgent treatment. Any one or more of the following symptoms may be present:

- **swelling of throat, tongue or upper airways**
- **difficulty swallowing**
- **wheezing / noisy breathing**
- **breathing difficulty**
- **persistent cough**
- **dizziness**
- **feeling faint**
- **sudden sleepiness**
- **confusion**
- **pale clammy skin**
- **loss of consciousness**

Where symptoms of anaphylactic shock are recognised, staff will use the child's autoinjector if they have one, and then call 999. A second autoinjector will be deployed if the child's condition has not improved after 5 minutes having been carried to a suitable safe location away from any present allergen (for example, if a food item was spilt in their vicinity).

Food intolerances

Food intolerance is different to food allergy, and usually occurs when the body has difficulty digesting certain foods or ingredients in food. Intolerances do not involve the immune system and are not life threatening. Food intolerances cause unpleasant symptoms such as abdominal pain or discomfort, diarrhoea, bloating, constipation, red rash, itching or eczema flares.

Some common food intolerances include:

- lactose intolerance (lactose is the sugar found in animal milk, e.g. cow's milk, goat's milk and sheep's milk and can be found in foods or drinks containing animal milk, e.g. yoghurt)

- gluten intolerance or sensitivity (gluten is a protein found in wheat, barley and rye). It is important to note that gluten intolerance is different to coeliac disease
- intolerance to some food additives or chemicals.

If a food intolerance is suspected, we will work with parents and/or carers to keep a diary of foods eaten at the setting and at home and any symptoms experienced. This food diary can then be discussed with a health professional. This can be a useful way to highlight patterns between foods and symptoms. If an allergy is suspected, the food should be avoided while parents and/or carers seek input from an appropriate health professional. However, it is important not to exclude foods from a child's diet without a valid reason as this can result in an unnecessarily restricted diet, which could have a negative impact on nutrition.

Special Dietary Requirements

Children with special dietary requirements may need specific foods excluded or included. It is important not to exclude foods from a child's diet without a valid reason as this may lead to unnecessary restrictions in their diet. Where a food is excluded from a child's diet we will consider substitutions and replacement ingredients. We create a safe and inclusive environment for all children to eat, and children with special dietary requirements should be included in mealtimes with other children as far as possible. Only where a risk assessment concludes that a significant risk remains despite adequate training and supervision of meals and snacks times, would a child need to eat their meal separately to other children.

Special Dietary Requirements may include:

- **Vegetarianism:** A vegetarian won't eat meat of any kind, including fish. They also won't eat by-products of animal slaughter, such as gelatine. Most people who choose to be vegetarian do so for religious, health or moral reasons.
- **Veganism** or eating a plant-based diet: A vegan is someone who eats a diet based on plants (such as vegetables, grains, legumes, nuts, seeds and fruits) and foods made from plants. Vegans don't eat foods derived wholly or partially from animals (such as meat, fish, eggs and honey). Some people refer to this as eating a plant-based diet.

- **Pescatarianism:** A pescatarian avoids meat but eats fish and seafood. They may also consume dairy and eggs. People choose this diet for health, environmental, or ethical reasons, believing fish is a more sustainable or ethical option than other meats.
- **Religious preferences:** Some religions or faiths have strict dietary requirements. Although eating certain foods won't physically harm children, it is vital to respect their religious and cultural beliefs. Religious dietary requirements include (but are not limited to):
 - **only eating halal foods**
 - **avoiding pork or beef**
 - **keeping kosher**
 - **eating specific foods only on certain days.**

Coeliac disease

Coeliac disease is a common and serious autoimmune condition that can develop at any age. Children with coeliac disease have to strictly avoid foods containing gluten, e.g. ordinary wheat flour, bread, breakfast cereals, crackers, biscuits, pastry and pasta. Many packaged and processed foods contain gluten, e.g. some processed meats and fish, sausages and soups, and these need to be avoided. Traces of gluten may also be found in foods where gluten is not an ingredient but where there has been cross contact of gluten containing foods. An example of this is oats. Oats do not contain gluten but can be contaminated by other cereals during production.

Additional support needs

Some children may have specific dietary needs because of physical or developmental issues, which may affect their ability to eat independently, for example difficulty with swallowing. These children may need to have their food prepared in a way to make it easier to eat. We might need to provide one to one support at each meal and snack time if a child is unable to feed themselves.

We know that It is also important to consider children who may experience sensory needs in relation to foods, for example, sensitivity to textures, tastes or smells, which can lead to limited preferences or aversions towards specific foods. As well as modifying the foods offered, some adaptations to the eating environment will be made, wherever possible, to support the

child at mealtimes, e.g. limiting noise and other distractions, having a cloth to wipe hands if required and not pressuring the child to eat.

If a child requires a special diet for a medical reason not discussed above, it is important to have written confirmation from their qualified health professional about the nature of their specific needs so that their nutritional requirements can be achieved. This information should be recorded, updated regularly and communicated to all staff involved in the preparing and handling of food. For children on a special diet, the parents and/or carers, or registered dietitian should supply the early years setting and food service provider with details of the child's dietary needs. This will include suitable food choices for meals and snacks, foods that should be excluded or specifically included, or supplements that may be required.

5. Celebrations and Special Occasions

As we are aiming for all our children to be healthy, our recommendations for special events is to ensure any food brought in from home is balanced and meets the setting's food guidelines (for example recommending fruit platters to share or non-edible options to celebrate with such as bubbles or stickers). Any food shared in the setting should be checked for potential allergens.

6. Sustainability

As a school we promote sustainability in the following ways:

- We provide a snack that is healthy, minimally packaged, and sourced with environmental impact in mind.
- Only milk or water is offered, to reduce the use of single-use packaging. We ask that children have their own named water bottle in school.
- We encourage families to pack lunches in reusable containers and minimise the use of disposable packaging such as cling film, foil, or single-use plastics.
- Food waste is kept to a minimum, and leftovers from snacks are composted where possible.
- Children are helped to understand basic principles of sustainability such as reusing and recycling
- We help children understand the process by which food and other organic matter decomposes over time and provides rich nutrients to sustain the natural cycles of plant and animal life

- We ask parents to consider the environmental impact of packaging waste when preparing packed lunches

Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed annually or when there are significant changes to national guidelines. Feedback from staff and families is welcomed to inform improvements to our guidelines and practice.