

## Food, Mealtimes and Dietary Needs Policy

### Policy statement

At Little Elms we believe that mealtimes should be happy, social occasions for children and staff alike. We promote shared, enjoyable positive interactions at these times. We are fully committed to offering children healthy, nutritious and balanced meals and snacks.

We recognise that some children may have specific requirements that result in the full menu not being suitable for them. This may include:

- Allergies
- Serious medical conditions
- Intolerance
- Religious or cultural preference

### Nutrition

Nutrition is vital to overall health and wellbeing of us all. For young children, this is particularly vital to good learning and development and so we commit to ensuring:

- A balanced and healthy breakfast, midday meal, tea and two daily snacks are provided for children attending a full day at the nursery
- Menus are planned in advance, rotated regularly and reflect cultural diversity and variation. These are displayed for children and parents to view
- We provide nutritious food at all snack and meal times, avoiding large quantities of fat, sugar, salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings
- Fresh drinking water is always available and accessible. It is frequently offered to children and babies and intake is monitored. In hot weather staff will encourage children to drink more water to keep them hydrated
- Menus include at least 5 servings of fresh fruit and vegetables per day

### Learning and Development at Mealtimes

Mealtimes are a fantastic opportunity to promote a range of learning and development opportunities to children covered a broad range of areas with the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum.

To make the most of these learning opportunities, our staff ensure:

- They set a good example and show good table manners.
- Meal and snack times are organised so that they are social occasions in which children and staff participate in small groups.
- During meals and snack times children are encouraged to use their manners and say 'please' and 'thank you' and conversation is encouraged
- Use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink, and feeding themselves
- Staff support children to make healthy choices and understand the need for healthy eating
- They promote positive attitudes to healthy eating through play opportunities and discussions

## Key Principles of Food and Mealtimes

- Cultural differences in eating habits are respected
- 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 helping of dessert
- Children not on special diets are encouraged to eat a small piece of everything
- Children who refuse to eat at the mealtime are offered food later in the day
- Children are given time to eat at their own pace and not rushed
- Quantities offered take account the ages of the children being catered for in line with recommended portion sizes for babies and young children
- No child is ever left alone when eating/drinking to minimise the risk of choking
- Where there is a celebration and parent wants to bring in food from home (for example, a birthday cake), this is permitted where we have a full list of ingredients. These items will never be consumed at the nursery and will be given out the families at the end of the day where parents can choose to take if they choose to.
- All staff who prepare and handle food are required to read and sign off the 'Safer Food, Better Business' handbook.
- Those responsible for cooking food are required to have completed a minimum of Level 2 Food Hygiene Awareness course, as well as reading and signing off the 'Safer Food, Better Business' handbook.
- In the very unlikely event of any food poisoning affecting two or more children on the premises, whether or not this may arise from food offered at the nursery, we will inform Ofsted as soon as reasonably practical and in all cases within 14 days. We will also inform the relevant health agencies and follow any advice given.

## Food Play

At Little elms we ensure any food we use for play with the children is carefully supervised. We will also use the following procedures to ensure children are kept safe:

- Choking hazards are checked and avoided
- We will not use whole jelly cubes for play. If we do use jelly to enhance our play then all jelly will be prepared with water as per the instructions and then used
- Small objects such as dried pasta and pulses will only be used with children over 3 years of age and under supervision
- All allergies and intolerances will be checked and activities will be adapted to suit all children's needs so no child is excluded
- All activities including food will be risk assessed
- Any cooking activities will be checked prior to the activity taking place to ensure all children are able use all the ingredients based on their individual needs

## Menus

Little Elms employs a Head Chef who is responsible for compiling the nursery menus which are set as standard across all of the nurseries. These are amended and rolled out twice yearly as follows:

- Spring/Summer Menu (March – September)
- Autumn/Winter Menu (October – February)

The menus are developed based on up to date research and providing a nutritious and balanced diet for children between the ages of 0-5 years.

All nurseries follow the menu set out by the Head Chef, and if for any unforeseen circumstance the nursery menu cannot be followed on any given day, the Head Chef must be informed and will agree an alternative supplement.

## High Risk Foods (Choking)

Children

There are some items of food which are commonly known to be a high choking hazard for young children. These items are detailed below and are never included on our menus, and therefore, are not provided to any child at nursery:

- Grapes
- Marshmallows
- Raisins
- Sultanas
- Popcorn

## Preparation

Other foods which are considered to be a choking hazard are prepared at Little Elms in a way to significantly reduce the risk of choking. Food is never presented to children where it is round in shape as this poses a risk of becoming lodged in a child's throat, causing choking.

Below are some examples of these types of food with specification of how they are prepared at Little Elms (this is not an exhaustive list and kitchen staff and nursery practitioners needs to apply judgement as to whether food being presented to a child is safe based on the age and stage of each child):

- Sausages – are cut lengthways, and then diced.
- Cherry tomatoes – are cut into quarters
- Raw vegetables (for example, carrot, cucumber, celery) – are cut into narrow batons
- Fruits and Vegetables with pips/stones – any pips and/or stones are removed
- Hard food skins (for example, apples and pears) – skins are removed as these are difficult to chew/swallow.
- For children Under 2 years old – hard fruits and vegetable are peeled and then poached to soften

## High Risk Foods (Allergic Reaction)

There are foods which are deemed to be a high risk due to common and severe risk of allergic reaction, as detailed by the Food Standards Agency UK.



To reduce the risk of severe allergic reaction as far as is reasonably practical, Little Elms will not include the following allergens on our menus:

- **crustaceans** (such as prawns, crabs and lobsters)
- **molluscs** (such as mussels and oysters)
- **nuts** (Little Elms operates a 'No Nut Policy' and nuts are not permitted on the nursery premises)

We do not use items within the nursery that contain the above allergens as an ingredient, however, we do use items where product packaging details 'May Contain'. The only exception is where a child has a known allergy.

If a child has a known allergy, Little Elms will not give any product where their allergen is detailed as 'May Contain' on the product packaging.

## Dietary Needs

Little Elms is committed to catering for children with dietary needs where there is a medical and/or cultural/religious need for adaptation to a child’s diet. This includes catering for children with allergies, intolerances and preferences (for example, vegetarian, vegan, pescatarian).

Our skilled in-house catering team at each setting cater for every child’s needs, to ensure that all children can enjoy mealtimes whilst their individual needs are being met.

Little Elms operates clear procedure to ensure awareness of dietary requirements is paramount at all times for all members of staff involved with meal and snack times:

## Dietary Needs Procedures

### *Dietary Needs Form*

Upon joining the nursery, where a child has an allergy, intolerance or dietary preference, the parent will be required to complete a Dietary Needs Form. This form is checked by the Nursery manager and where there is a severe allergy, a Child Care Plan will be completed alongside the parent (see Child Care Plan Policy).

A letter of confirmation from a medical professional will be required for all children requiring a red plate. If in doubt a manager or deputy may request confirmation of other allergies and intolerances.

If the child has a severe and potentially life-threatening condition or allergy, the Nursery will require written confirmation from a medical practitioner regarding the diagnosis, so we can risk assess the environment and our procedures to safeguard the child effectively.

The nursery will communicate regularly with parents/guardians to re-complete the Dietary Needs Form and ensure the information is up to date **every three months**.

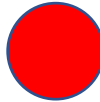
A copy of the Dietary Needs Form is kept in the relevant nursery playroom and a separate copy in the nursery office.


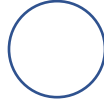
### *Dietary Information Sheet*

The Dietary Information Sheet will be updated by the nursery management team and shared with the appropriate kitchen, and nursery playrooms as and when any changes occur.

Where there are no changes, as a minimum these will be reviewed by the nursery management team by the last Friday of every month. This review must be comprehensive and satisfy the manager or deputy of whether any changes have taken place since the previous month and then shared with the relevant catering staff and playroom.

### *Coloured Bowl System*

Little Elms Colour Code for Dietary Needs	
<p><b>Red Plates</b></p> <p>Severe and potentially life-threatening medical needs or allergies</p> <p>Child will have been diagnosed with a medical condition or allergy and must have written confirmation or prescription medication from a medical practitioner confirming the diagnosis.</p> <p>Child will have a Little Elms Care Plan in place (i.e. epi-pen) and are likely to require urgent hospital treatment if they came into contact with ingredients they shouldn’t.</p>	

<p><b>Green Plates</b>          Allergies and Intolerances, which may cause reactions such as hives, bloating, vomiting, diarrhoea, but is unlikely to require treatment at hospital to treat the reaction.          Vegetarian or vegan          Religious &amp; Cultural Requirements</p>	
<p><b>White Plates</b>          No specific dietary requirements.          No allergies, intolerances, medical needs, religious, cultural requirements</p>	

**Place Mats**

We use coloured place mats for all children which include the child’s full name, photograph and product(s) child cannot be given. These are used **at every meal and snack time**, following the same colour system as above.

**Coloured Aprons**

Staff responsible for serving food must wear a blue apron. Staff supervising a child on a one to one ratio due to a severe and potentially life-threatening medical need or allergy (when a child has a red bowl), must wear a red apron. This member of staff must remain with the child until **all** food is cleared away.

**Food Labels / Stickers**

All food prepared in accordance with the Dietary Information For will be detailed on a sticker written by a room practitioner and sent to the nursery office for sending to the kitchen. All food prepared in the kitchen is clearly labelled with this sticker by the person who has prepared the food. The sticker must detail:

- Child’s Full Name
- Date
- Child’s Room
- Child’s dietary requirements

**Serving & Supervision**

It is the Person in Charge’s responsibility to ensure the following, at every meal/snack time:

- Agency staff are never permitted to serve food or drink.
- Bank staff must have had a full induction to include this policy before they are permitted to serve food.
- Staff lunch breaks will be scheduled to ensure that meal times are a safe and sociable occasion.
- Children with red bowls will be supervised on a one-to-one basis.

**Red Plate Sign Off**

A ‘Red Plate Sign Off Sheet’ form is completed every day, for each child who requires a red plate. This form details:

- The name of the child
- Room child is in
- The child’s dietary requirements
- The date
- Each meal time

- The food provided
- Signature of person preparing the food.
- Signature or person taking the food to the child
- A Red Plate Sign Off Sheet needs to be signed by two Practitioners at Breakfast if Chef/Cook is not present.
- For each meal/snack the nursery cook will wrap the colour coded plate in kitchen foil and a sticker giving the child's name/reason for dietary requirement will be adhered to the foil.

### ***Transportation between Nurseries***

- When main meal is prepared at a different Nursery, the Chef preparing the meal and the Chef receiving the meal must both sign the Red Plate Sign Off Sheet.
- A Red Plate Sign Off Sheet for the same meal must again be signed by the Chef releasing the meal and the Practitioner receiving the meal at the nursery setting the child is based.

### **Additional Dietary Needs Measures**

- All allergens are displayed alongside the menus to show the contents of each meal
- Where appropriate, age/stage discussions will also take place with all children about allergies and potential risks to make them aware of the dangers of sharing certain foods
- Staff show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. They do not use a child's diet or allergy as a label for the child, or make a child feel singled out because of her/his diet or allergy

### ***Associated Documents:***

- *Dietary Needs Form*
- *Dietary Information Sheet*
- *Red Plate Sign Off Sheet*