



Food and Healthy Eating Policy

Children's early years provide an important foundation for their future health and strongly influence many aspects of well-being. Children's food preferences and eating habits are also formed early in life with consequences for a range of health and development outcomes in later life. It is therefore important that the food provided in early years settings provides appropriate amounts of energy and nutrients and supports development of healthy eating habits in young children, both to support individual children's growth and development, and as part of national priorities to reduce childhood obesity and ensure every child has the best start in life.

At Walmer Bridge Day Nursery, we provide the children with 3 balanced and nutritious meals a day. All meals are cooked fresh daily, in our nursery kitchen, by our cook. Our meals are designed by our nursery PANco (Physical Activity and Nutrition Co-Ordinator), ensuring that the children are receiving the vital nutrients that they need to grow. At Walmer Bridge Day Nursery, we encourage children to develop a positive attitude towards food and lead healthy lifestyles. We recognise that the early years is an important time to shape food preferences and habits. By allowing children to make their own selection through guided choice, this can have a positive impact on their health later in their life.

The statutory framework for early years states: "Where children are provided with meals, snacks, and drinks, these must be healthy, balanced and nutritious." At Walmer Bridge Day Nursery, we recognise that children under the age of five years have different nutritional needs to those of older children and adults. Children in this age group are growing quickly and are very active so they need foods that provide plenty of calories and nutrients. Some of the guidance for healthy eating for adults is not appropriate for young children. Young children and babies have small tummies and therefore need small amounts of food frequently to ensure they get all the nutrients they need for growth and development. To achieve this, they require 3 small meals and 2-3 nourishing snacks daily. Children between the ages of 1-5 years are able to regulate their own energy intake and should be allowed to decide when they have eaten enough. Their appetite will vary day to day.

A healthy, balanced diet and regular physical activity are essential for children's health and wellbeing. Good nutrition is important for children to:

- Ensure they get the right amount of energy and nutrients needed to support growth, development, health, and well-being.
- Ensure they do not consume too many calories, which may lead to overweight or obesity.
- Encourage children to eat a wide range of foods and develop healthy eating habits to take with them into later childhood and beyond.

Between the ages of 2 and 5 years, children should make a gradual transition to follow the balance shown in the Eatwell Guide. The Eatwell Guide does not apply to children under the age of 2 because they have different nutritional needs. Between the ages of 2 and 5, children should gradually move to eating the same foods as the rest of the family. Eating foods from all the groups in the proportions shown in the Eatwell Guide will help children to get all the essential nutrients that they need.



The Eatwell Guide shows the different types of foods and drinks we should consume – and in what proportions – to have a healthy, balanced diet. The Eatwell Guide shows the proportions of the main food groups that form a healthy, balanced diet:

- Eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day.
- Base meals on potatoes, bread, rice, pasta or other starchy carbohydrates; choosing wholegrain versions where possible.
- Have some dairy or dairy alternatives (such as soya drinks); choosing lower fat and lower sugar options.
- Eat some beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins (including 2 portions of fish every week, one of which should be oily).
- Choose unsaturated oils and spreads and eat in small amounts.
- Drink 6-8 cups/glasses of fluid a day.
- If consuming foods and drinks high in fat, salt or sugar have these less often and in small amounts.

The full Eatwell Guide is available on the gov.uk website*.

Our menu at Walmer Bridge Day Nursery has been created with care to ensure that meals and snacks are “healthy, balanced, and nutritious”. Our meals and snacks are planned to include a variety of foods from the food groups within the Eatwell Guide, to provide the children with a good balance of nutrients and help ensure their nutritional needs are met. Our menu is regularly reviewed, as one of the basic principles of healthy eating is variety - eating a wider range of different foods provides a better balance of nutrients. Offering a variety of foods also encourages children to try new and different food choices. Example menus for early years settings are available on the gov.uk website**.

As part of the enrolment and induction process at Walmer Bridge Day Nursery, we obtain information about any special dietary requirements, preferences, food allergies, intolerances, and special health requirements that the child may have (see food allergies and intolerances policy).

Fresh drinking water is always available and accessible to children, as per the statutory framework for early years. Whole milk is also available to drink at breakfast and snack times. As well as the main kitchen, there is a designated area within each nursery room, which is adequately equipped to hygienically prepare and provide healthy meals and snacks. Within the baby room, there is also suitable facilities for sterilising equipment for babies’ food and preparation of milk bottles. All staff involved in preparing and handling food are trained in food hygiene and food safety.

*For the Eatwell Guide see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide>

**For example menus and guidance see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/example-menus-for-early-years-settings-in-england>

This policy was adopted on	Signed on behalf of the nursery	Date for review
5 th January 2024	Katy-Leigh Eastham (Nursery Manager) <i>KLEastham</i>	January 2025
This policy was reviewed on	Signed on behalf of the nursery	Changes made?
11 th March 2025	Katy-Leigh Eastham (Nursery Manager) <i>KLEastham</i>	Addition of designated PANco