

Beechwood Childcare Limited

Healthy Eating Policy

All information should reflect guidance given in EYFS Nutrition guidance document, and the affiliated documents and links shared within.

Beechwood Childcare Limited (Beechwood) regards snack and meal times as an important part of our day. Meal time represents a social time where children can learn about healthy eating. We recognise that healthier children develop and learn more effectively and we strive to have an impact on health related issues such as obesity or poor dental hygiene, the latter of which is a particular issue near our setting in Leamington Spa.

As well as using meal times as a social opportunity, it is used as an opportunity to discuss our health, and healthy / unhealthy food types. We discuss how we grow, and how different foods can impact our bodies. We understand that early food experiences have an important effect on adult eating patterns and may influence attitudes to eating, so Beechwood are committed to ensure that the provided food supports the development of healthy eating practices in future.

Aim of Policy

This policy is in place to inform parents and practitioners about nutrition and mealtimes at Beechwood. It is in place to help identify and cater for individual food requirements and to promote healthy eating in a relaxed atmosphere, whilst also making expectations from parent's/carers clear. The policy was developed in partnership with staff to take into account our procedures and experiences within the settings, and to include the new documentation, Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance.

Information about setting

Beechwood Childcare Limited is a chain of six private nurseries offering full time and part time places for children aged between 6 weeks to 5 year olds; and before and after school clubs, and holiday clubs which care for children until 11 years of age. The families who attend our settings are from a large number of countries, cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Beechwood promotes healthy eating and oral health using resources within the settings, activities with the children, informative displays, leaflets, printed Start for Life booklets and items shared on individual setting Facebook pages and Newsletters. Our settings have also had access to Oral Health training led by the NHS for us to help support families with caring for their child's dental health.

Practitioners preparing and handling food complete their food hygiene certificate, and renew these every 3 years.

Settings are registered with and inspected by Food Standards Agency for "Scores on the Doors" food hygiene ratings. The rating is based on a review of our procedures and setting, as well as the actual practice the inspector see on the day of their 'no notice inspection'.

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Food menus are planned in advance, with consideration to any children with allergies or special dietary requirements. All food is prepared either by an outside caterer who deliver hot food daily, or on site from scratch by experienced persons. The food menu's are on display in the setting and individual copies can be provided on request. All food provided by the setting and eaten by the children are included in the Care Diary on the Tapestry app. (where applicable) If snacks / packed lunches are provided from home, these are not added to Tapestry as uneaten food is sent home for parents to see.

The provider of the main meal in each setting may change depending on feedback from the practitioners, parents and children. If it appears that the majority of the children are not eating much of the food provided, then an alternative may be found or the menu changed.

As a source, we use ASDA, Morrisons, Tesco or Sainsburys (depending on setting location and availability). Shops are done at least once a week to ensure fresh food and fruit/vegetables supply. Milk deliveries are from Cool Milk.

The policy will be reviewed annually and the impact will also be assessed.

Information about eating environment

Meals are served for every group of children in their room. Tables and chairs are appropriately sized, with high chairs available for babies. Older children's independence is encouraged by letting them either help themselves to cutlery, or take turns to hand out plates, cups, cutlery etc (depending on setting location) if appropriate to their age and development.

Before sitting at the table, children are encouraged to wash their hands using hand soap and water. Babies have bibs/aprons put on to protect clothing, and older children are given the choice of whether they want to wear an apron or not. Children sit together and are encouraged to either get their own water bottles, or at snack times, pour their own milk (depending on age group). Cups, bowls, plates and cutlery are washed in a sink with washing up liquid in hot water and then rinsed before being left to dry, or washed in the dish washer with dishwasher tablets.

If children are slow eaters, they are not rushed to finish their meal. If children stop eating their packed lunch, they will be encouraged to pack it away.

Beechwood uses meals and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink, and feeding themselves. Practitioners encourage children to try a bit of everything, praise them when they try something new, and never force them to eat. No food or drink is every withheld as punishment.

At the table, children are either served with or asked to take a small portion initially and then they can have more later, if they wish. If a child regularly eats little or disposes of large amounts of food, the practitioners are advised to share their concerns with parents.

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Staff are encouraged to sit at the table with the children to more closely observe them for signs of choking or unexpected allergic reaction. Practitioners may initiate conversation, and model table manners, and use of words such as 'please' and 'thank you'.

All tables are cleaned before every meal with disinfectant. Any children who are not eating are encouraged to play in different areas to minimise distractions for those who are eating.

Once children have finished their meals, their faces are washed with flannels (wash cloths) which have been soaked in warm water containing appropriate children's soap. Older children are encouraged to attempt to clean their own faces in the mirror, and practitioners will support them by ensuring they're clean afterwards. Flannels and bibs are placed into wash basket to be washed in washing machine at the end of the day.

Tables and chairs are cleaned with disinfectant after meals to remove all food and drink residue. Floors are swept, and waste put into bin, before floors are mopped with boiling water and appropriate floor cleaner (check colour coding in each setting to ensure using the correct mop for the main room).

Information on meals, snacks and drinks provided

Meals/snacks

Beechwood provides three meals and two snacks in between them. The timings of each of the following may differ depending on the setting.

- Breakfast - between 7:30am
- Morning snack - 10am
- Lunch - 11:30pm
- Afternoon snack – 2:00pm
- Tea - 3:30pm

We offer fresh fruit and vegetables every day for a snack along with a form of carbohydrate.

The Nursery menu includes a variety of foods from the four main food groups:

- Meat, fish and protein alternatives
- Dairy foods
- Grains, cereals and starch vegetables
- Fruit and vegetables

Beechwood takes care not to provide foods which contain kiwi or nuts or products that contain either, and is especially vigilant where we have a child or adult who has a known allergy.

We provide nutritious food at all snack and meal times, aiming to avoid large quantities of fat, sugar and salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings. Low salt and sugar

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varieties are purchased and any tinned vegetables and fish are in spring water rather than oil or salted water.

Beechwood try to include foods from the diet of each of the children's cultural backgrounds, providing children with familiar foods and introducing them to new ones.

Beechwood provides a meat or vegetarian option daily.

Individual dietary requirements for medical or cultural reasons will be respected and, where possible, catered for. Parents are encouraged to discuss dietary requirements with the team, as in certain situations it may be necessary for them to provide food from home.

All eating problems will be discussed in a supportive and sensitive manner, with potential signposting to strategies or support offered by health visiting team. These are closely monitored and daily feedback is provided to parents. Any additional actions should be discussed and agreed prior to beginning them.

Drinks

Water is available to all children throughout the day, with drink bottles available at all times. These are refilled as often as necessary and children are encouraged to drink from them regularly, with more encouragement taking place during hot days or when the children are doing a lot of physical activities.

The children are also offered milk or a milk alternative at snack time.

Food Allergies and special dietary requirements

Beechwood understands the importance of maintaining high standards of safety to ensure that children with special requirements remain safe in our care.

Included on our registration form is a section for information about allergies and special dietary requirements. Where indicated that there are dietary requirements or allergies, these are discussed with parents/carers in more detail. Information is added to our visual dietary requirements posters on the walls in the room and in the kitchen – this includes a photo of the child, their name, and their allergy or dietary requirement. **If a child has an allergy, an allergy action plan must be completed before a child can start at the setting, and if an allergy is severe, the child must not be accepted into the setting until medication for managing the allergy is on site.** Any medication must have an accompanying "continuous medication form" completed, and all medication should be checked against it to check the child's name, the name of the medication, the date of the prescription, and the correct dosage. If a child sees a specialist for the allergy management, or special dietary requirement, any special plans should be brought in to nursery for us to take a copy to keep in the child's file.

Foods bought for a child with allergies are be stored separately to the normal items, to ensure that they are not mixed up and also reduce the risk of cross contamination.

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Nursery staff will show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. Where possible, alternatives provided should be as similar to the normal items as possible to reduce the chance of the child feeling singled out. Food is handed to the children by practitioners who are aware of any children with allergies or special dietary requirements. Practitioners change their gloves between handling foods that contain the allergens and going back to those that don't.

In case of any incident following dietary requirements, we would inform parents immediately and if in the case of a child being exposed to something they are allergic to, follow parents' advice provided on Allergy Action Forms.

If a child has diabetes that is managed with insulin, a specialist nurse must attend the setting prior to the child starting. The nurse will show the staff team how to use the equipment, talk through the procedures, and answer any concerns. They provide a specialist care plan that the team can refer back to if needed. The parent will then need to complete a "continuous medication form", and ensure that whatever sugary substance (whether sweets, glucose pouches etc) they use to manage low blood sugar levels is provided to the setting.

Parents are regularly consulted to ensure that the records of their children's dietary needs are up-to-date. Parents sign the updated record to confirm that dietary information is correct **TERMLY**. Medicines are checked at the same time to ensure that they are still up to date.

On our registration form is a Parental Agreement box, that parents must tick if they provide food from home. This states that they take full responsibility for any adverse effects to their own or other children caused by the food they send into the setting, and are liable for any repercussions. If this box is not ticked, they are not able to send food into the setting from home.

Packed Lunches

Children with packed lunches sit alongside their peers who also have packed lunches. They sit at a table and are encouraged to eat what has been provided for them. Any items that are not eaten will be returned to the lunch box so that parents are aware of what their child has consumed at nursery.

As fridge space is limited in the Nursery, parents are advised about safe food storage. They are advised to: pack items that do not need to remain refrigerated, include an ice pack inside an insulated lunch box, and ensure that items provided will be eaten within 4 hours of arrival.

If parent's/carers choose to bring their own food to the setting, they are urged to be responsible in ensuring that packed lunches are as healthy as possible, and **MUST FOLLOW** our guides for Food Safety and Hygiene included in this section. Practitioners in the rooms check packed lunches when the children arrive, to ensure that items included are suitable. If unsuitable, parent will be given the option of either bringing in more suitable items. If the parents cannot be contacted, or more suitable items are not brought to the setting before 11:30am, the child will be given nursery food and **parents invoiced** for the items.

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All food provided in a packed lunch must be fully prepared and ready to consume. All food must be prepared in a way to prevent choking, for example, remove bones from any meat and cut into thin strips; remove hard pips or stones from fruits; cut small round/oval fruits lengthways. All food preparation should be done at home and the food should be ready to eat when brought to nursery. A poster from Food Standards Agency providing more details on food choking hazards is available (https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/Early%20Years%20Choking%20Hazards%20Table_English.pdf.) Beechwood are not responsible for reheating any lunches and therefore items must be provided at the correct temperature for eating. A visual guide is attached for what to include in a lunch box.

Snacks and lunches should be labelled with the child's name and date, whether it is for snack or lunch, and if items are taken out of their original packaging, a list of ingredients must be included.

Celebration of birthdays and special occasions

Parents are not encouraged to bring in any food for birthdays or special occasions. However, if they feel it is necessary to bring in a birthday cake for their child, the children will sing Happy Birthday and blow out a candle, before the cake is cut up, wrapped in food safe wrapping e.g. tin foil, and then sent home with children at the end of their sessions.

If parents wish to bring in food items for a special occasion or cultural celebration, they must provide a list of all ingredients used, and the date the products were made (if homemade). Parents will need to have ticked the parental agreement on the back of the registration form regarding responsibility for foods from home, before they are able to bring in any foods.

All information will be shared with parents during their setting show around, and the Healthy Eating Policy is available to view on the Beechwood Childcare website and in the settings.

Food preparation, storage and food safety

Beechwood Childcare Limited are committed to ensure that safe and healthy practices around the storage, preparation and service of food are maintained throughout the setting.

It is the responsibility of the Officer-in-Charge, and Deputy Officer-in-Charge to ensure that all members of staff involved in food preparation or handling, are fully trained in Food Hygiene and that all members of staff understand and implement the policy.

It is the responsibility of all members of staff to ensure that safe practices are maintained in the preparation and storage of food and that all food hygiene practices comply with relevant legislation, training and policy.

Personal Hygiene

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The setting has set high standards of personal hygiene for all members of staff involved in the handling and preparation of food, all set out in the Personal Hygiene policy, and the Safer Food Better Business guidance.

For example: long hair tied back; hair nets worn; aprons worn; gloves worn. If staff are showing signs of ill health, they are not permitted to handle food. There is a 48 hour exclusion period following any sickness/diarrhoea.

Members of staff will be responsible for ensuring that any children involved with preparation of snack follow strict hygiene procedures (e.g. hand washing before handling food). In addition, any children showing signs of ill health will not be permitted to handle food.

Food deliveries

Food for Beechwood is ordered and delivered at minimum once a week to ensure food is fresh.

For main suppliers we are chosen ASDA, Morrisons, Tesco and Sainsburys (dependent on location).

Responsibilities:

- Shopping list is done throughout the week, with all staff responsible for adding items to the list as they start to run out.
- Officer-in-Charge or Deputy Officer-in-Charge are responsible for doing the online food shopping or collecting the shopping in person.
- Practitioners who are available to answer the door for food deliveries must check the dates and quality of items before they accept them and put them away appropriately.

Temperature Control

All food must be stored appropriately at the correct temperature in order to prevent the growth of food poisoning organisms, to reduce the rate of food spoilage and to ensure that food quality is maintained.

Staff at Beechwood check and record fridge and freezer temperatures on a daily basis to ensure that the correct temperatures are maintained (below +5°C in fridge and -18°C in freezer.) This is done at the start of the day by whoever is on the earliest shift. If fridge / freezer temperature is higher than it should be, foods should be discarded and the settings altered to try to rectify the issue. Officer-in-Charge or Deputy Officer-in-Charge should be informed as they will need to replace lost food, and potentially fix and/or replace the fridge/freezer if necessary.

Food storage

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The kitchen has an under counter fridge for fresh fruit, and dairy items. There is a separate fridge and freezer for any other cold foods to be stored. There are several cupboards in the kitchen for storage of dry or tinned foods. Breakfast cereals are kept in self-serve containers, with a label attached with the name of cereal, allergens, and the date the cereal was added to the storage container.

Food preparation areas

All meals and snacks are prepared by trained members of staff.

All surfaces are cleaned before and after any food preparation.

The kitchen is cleaned following our kitchen check guides, which have been developed with consideration to the Safer Food Better Business documents. Cleanliness in the kitchen is maintained to a high standard to ensure no pests and reduce chance of bacteria growth and food waste.

Birth to 1 year

“Providers should be aware of the signs (feeding cues) a baby will show when they are hungry (e.g. mouth opening, puckering, smacking lips, or turning of head towards the bottle) and when they are full (e.g. milk spilling out of the mouth, closing mouth, head turning away, splayed fingers and toes, or pushing the bottle away in an older baby). Children should be fed responsively according to their needs. This means feeding children whenever they show signs that they are hungry, feeding at their own pace and using the cues that they are full. Never force a baby to finish a feed if they seem to be full. Overfeeding could upset their tummy, make them vomit or gain weight too quickly” (Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance, 2025)

Beechwood staff will not discriminate against any parents in their chosen method of infant bottle feeding and will fully support them with the choice they make.

The children’s individual needs will be discussed with parents to ensure that they are met. Feeds will be prepared when they are required by the babies and not as part of the nursery routine.

Breastfeeding

Mothers will be enabled and supported to breastfeed their infants whilst on site if necessary. Parents will be supported to continue breastfeeding by signposting to support and advice from NHS in regards to things like safe storage of expressed milk.

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Employees of Beechwood who return to work whilst breastfeeding, will be supported in the continuation and maintenance of their lactation via expression of breast milk within a safe environment.

Breast Milk Procedure

Containers

- Breast milk should be brought to the setting in a sterilised bottle or in a sterile breast milk bag, suitable for the purpose of refrigerated storage and clearly marked with the infant's full name and the date it was expressed.
- Bottles will be returned to parents/carers at the end of each day. The bottles will be rinsed, but not sterilised.
- Parents must ensure bottles are sterilised before reuse.

Storage

Breast milk should be provided on a daily basis, and unused milk will be discarded at the end of each feed. It is to be placed at the back of the fridge where it is coolest prior to feeding.

Before feeding an infant with breast milk, ensure that:

- A positive identification of the child is made, the date is checked and the correct breast milk is fed to the correct child.
- Staff to ensure that they put on gloves and an apron when feeding a child breast milk.

Warming Breast Milk

- Breast milk is to be warmed to a suitable body temperature by placing it in a bowl with hot water.
- The milk is then to be checked for temperature to ensure that the milk is not too hot for the baby to drink, using a temperature probe (should be around 37°C).
- DO NOT HEAT breast milk in the microwave.
- Breast milk can also be given cold if a parent requests this.

Feeding an Infant with Breast Milk

- Feeds are given as normal using the bottle provided by parents/carers.
- Babies are 'winded' correctly.

During a feed:

Babies will never be left unsupervised. A member of staff (if possible their key person) should hold the baby and sit to feed them.

Hygiene

Breast milk is a bodily fluid, which inherently means it can carry a risk of infection and/or disease.

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The Nursery Policy is to advise staff handling or carrying out the feeding of breast milk to protect themselves against the risks of infection by:

- Implementing good hygiene practices
- Using the PPE provided (advisable but not mandatory)
- Avoiding actual contact with the breast milk
- Only employees that have completed their Food Hygiene training will undertake feed preparation duties.

After feeding an infant with Breast Milk

- All bottles to be kept out of reach of children to ensure they are not drunk by another child.
- DO NOT leave breast milk at room temperature for more than 1 hour
- Record feed time and amount taken by the infant on Tapestry Care Diary
- Rinse bottles and return to child's bag.
- When parents collect, all unused milk and any containers and bottles are returned to the parents/carers.

Infant Formula Procedure

On Delivery: Ensure that the parent has provided the powder in an airtight container /or a carton of formula milk and bottle's clearly marked with the baby's name prior to feeding a baby with formula milk. Containers and bottles stored in the kitchen.

Containers

- Formula should be brought to the setting in a sterile container, premeasured to contain enough formula for 1 feed in each container. The container should be clearly labelled with child's name and date.
- Sterilised bottles should be provided which contain premeasured, boiled water. Each bottle should contain enough water for 1 feed. The bottle should be clearly labelled with child's name and date.
- Sealed individual cartons of premade formula can also be a provided. These should be clearly labelled with the child's name.
- Bottles and any unused formula powder or cartons will be returned to parents/carers at the end of each day. The bottles will be rinsed, but not sterilised.
- Parents must ensure bottles are sterilised before reuse.

Storage

Bottles and formula will be kept in the kitchen until used and then rinsed and returned to child's bag.

Before feeding an infant with formula, ensure that:

- A positive identification of the child is made, the date is checked and the correct milk is be fed to the correct child.

Warming Formula

- Practitioner to put on hair net, apron and gloves before preparing bottles.
- The formula should be tipped into the bottle of water and shaken to mix together.

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- Bottle can either be given at room temperature, or heated to a warmer temperature.
- If bottle is heated, it should be warmed to a near body temperature by placing it in a bowl with hot water.
- The temperature should be checked to ensure that the milk is not too hot for the baby to drink, using a temperature probe (should be around 37°C).

Feeding a baby with Formula Milk

- Babies are fed using the bottle provided by parents/carers.
- Babies are 'winded' correctly.

During a feed:

- Babies will never be left unsupervised. A member of staff (if possible their key person) should hold the baby and sit to feed them.
- Staff are not required to wear gloves or aprons when feeding bottles to babies as it is important to make them feel comfortable and to feed them in a 'home like' environment.

After feeding a baby with Formula Milk

- All bottles are kept out of reach of children to ensure they are not drunk by another child.
- Any milk that has not been used within 2 hours will be discarded.
- A record of feed time and amount taken by the baby is kept.
- All containers are rinsed and return to child's bag.

If parents have been advised by a paediatrician to put additives into their child's milk (e.g. Carobel), these must be premeasured and added into the container used for the premeasured formula.

Introducing solid food

All information and resources about the introduction of solid foods should reflect guidance given by the Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance and the NHS Start for Life.

All parents, during their induction to Beechwood, will have a discussion about when and how to introduce solid food including:

- that solid food should be started at around six months
- babies' signs of developmental readiness for solid food
- how to introduce solid food to babies
- appropriate foods for babies
- where to access additional information about the introduction of solids

When your child is ready to start weaning, the team will allow them to experiment with different flavours and textures, based on their nutritional needs

Premade baby foods and snacks are discouraged, in favour of homecooked nutritional foods as premade baby foods and snacks can contain a high number of preservatives and unfavourable ingredients.

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Babies under the age of 1 year should continue to have breast or formula milk alongside solid foods. The introduction of solid foods should only start once a baby can:

- stay in a sitting position and support their own head
- co-ordinate their eyes, hands and mouth so they can look at their food, pick it up and put it in their mouth
- swallow food (rather than spit it back out).

Weaning before a baby is able to do the above should only happen in the setting if the child is under the care of and received the advice from a paediatrician, and there is written evidence to confirm this is the case.

Parents should inform practitioners of the stage of weaning their child is at when they begin at the setting, and ongoing discussions between the key person and parent's should be had throughout the weaning process to share any changes.

Discussions should include foods they have tried, how smoothly pureed the foods are and whether they are having any lumps in their foods yet, whether they are doing baby led weaning, and whether they have introduced any allergens yet. Parents should be advised that the common allergens need to be introduced one at a time and in very small amounts so that you can spot any reaction.

Foods are given to children is prepared appropriately for their stage of weaning and children are supervised closely to monitor for signs of choking.

Finger foods are prepared appropriately, with advice for the way to prepare items taken from EYFS Nutrition Guidance and NHS Start For Life website (<https://www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/baby/weaning/safe-weaning/preparing-food-safely/>)

Whilst at Beechwood, children under the age of 1 will not be given; sugary food or juices; popcorn; high quantities of salt; foods high in saturated fats; honey; mould-ripened cheeses or cheese made from unpasteurised milk; raw or lightly cooked eggs; rice drinks; shellfish.

Cooking with children

Cooking is a great experience for young children and helps to create a positive relationship with food. Some children have limited opportunities to cook or learn about food at home. Cooking with children is an enjoyable activity and an effective way to encourage all children to try and eat a wide range of foods. Practitioners are encouraged to do cooking activities at least once a month.

Activities are planned in advance to ensure that all ingredients are as safe as possible, and cater to children with any allergies attending on the day of the activity. All cooking activities are highly supervised and led by a practitioner, who ensures hygiene practices are followed. All children are encouraged to wash hands with soap and water, and wear a child's apron to

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take part in cooking. Children are advised not to touch their faces whilst cooking, and if they cough or sneeze, to do it into the crook of their elbow. Any child/ren showing signs of ill health will not be permitted to handle food. In the event sweet foods such as cakes or biscuits being made, they are either eaten in the setting as part of a meal, or taken home.

Food items may also sometimes be used as a resource in activities. When food items are being used, practitioners are responsible for researching each new item prior to use, to ensure it is suitable. All items are risk assessed, and practitioners are present to supervise the activities. Children are discouraged from putting the items into their mouths, and the food items are swapped at the end of each session to reduce risk of bacteria growth.

Sustainability

When doing shopping, we try to find the best value shop to order from, and to minimise waste by checking the number of children and only ordering for the food needed based on the menus. We opt for value/own brands for things like pasta, rice and tinned tomatoes. Seasonal produce and tinned fruits and vegetables can be more affordable and nutritious. Frozen fruits also last longer and are a nice sensory alternative due to the difference in temperature and texture to fresh ones. If ordering for home delivery, we try to do shopping only once per week to reduce the delivery costs.