**Healthy Eating Policy**

**Purpose of Policy**

Rainbow Nursery aims to implement a whole setting approach to healthy eating in order to improve the health of children, their families and staff. We will equip our children with the knowledge, understanding and skills that enable them to make the sort of choices that lead to a healthy lifestyle and develop to their full potential. In our setting children will be provided with a range of opportunities to learn about food and make healthier food and drink choices. We follow ‘Setting the Table (Nutritional Guidance and Food Standards for Early Years Childcare Providers in Scotland 2014)’ published by NHS Health Scotland alongside the ‘Food Matters Document’ published by the Care Inspectorate (2018).

**Mealtimes**

Mealtimes should be social, learning times when we can sit down with our friends quietly to enjoy our food. Good examples of table manners and behaviour is given by a member of staff sitting with small groups of children. Children are encouraged to try new things and learn about healthy eating. All food is freshly prepared daily on site in our kitchen. Fresh fruit and vegetables are always available. Salt, sugar, and additives are kept to a bare minimum. At least three portions of fruit and vegetables are on offer each day. All snacks/lunches are provided at Rainbow Nursery and are inclusive in the fees and dinner can be provided for a small charge.

Breakfast

Breakfast is an important meal that should provide 25% of a child’s energy requirement and contributes significantly to their vitamin and mineral requirements. The breakfast menu includes a selection of breakfast cereals (Rice Krispies, Cornflakes, Weetabix or Cheerios), toast and a choice of fresh fruit. This is usually served between 8.00am and 10.00am.

Lunch

Lunch consists of two courses either a starter and main course or main course and pudding and children will have to choice from two main course options. This is usually served at 11.30am for babies and toddlers and 12.00pm for 3-5 year olds. Children in the 3-5 room will often eat in two cohorts. Staff must ensure that where there are two sittings the dining area is appropriately cleaned, and welcoming for second sitting of children.

Parents, who wish to bring in a packed lunch from home due to dietary requirements, may do so in consultation with the child’s key worker, in order to ensure food is nutritious and well-balanced. This food will then be stored safely according to food hygiene regulations

Afternoon Snacks

We understand that snacks can be an important part of the diet of young children and can contribute positively towards a balanced diet and the daily energy and nutrient needs. Rainbow Nursery discourages parents from providing sugary snacks, instead we provide a range of fruit, a starchy snack such as crackers and a protein rich food such as cheese spread. This is usually served around 3.00pm.

Dinner

Dinner is a simple hot meal usually served around 4.30pm for those that have chosen this additional option.

All our menus are nutritionally balanced and designed in conjunction with “Setting the Table” Nutritional Guidelines for children and “Food Matters”. All dietary requirements are catered for and weaning programs are followed in line with parent’s wishes and Health Authority Guidelines.

**Fussy Eating**

Fussy eating is part of children’s development and affects 10-20% of all children under five. We recognise this and encourage children to try foods in a variety of ways:

* By involving the children in the preparation of healthy food.
* By sitting children around a table, so that fussy eaters are modelled good eating by their friends.
* By giving children a smaller portion of a new food to try.
* By regularly serving a new food for children to try.
* By praising children who try something new.
* By never forcing children to eat.
* By staff eating with the children to promote positive eating habits.

**Drinks**

We encourage children to drink water throughout the day. They have milk at snack times and water with meals. We also encourage them to bring a water bottle each day which they can access whenever they want to, we also have a water dispenser in rooms, which the children can access daily. Children under the age of one will have formula milk provided from home.

**Monitoring**

We will review menus regularly to ensure they meet current recommendations and guidance and that they meet the needs of each child and that suitable food and drink is available. Staff will observe children’s development at mealtimes regarding their self-help skills and social skills to determine the level of support and practical help required and highlight any changes to be made.

**Learning through Food**

Activities are offered regularly with the children such as food tasting, cooking, fruit kebab making and exploring textures of food through play. Encouragement to learn about growth and change of food through planting is explored with the children both indoors and out with planting and growing activities. As a nursery we value children’s learning and development across all aspects of the curriculum and learning about food ignites interests and development within many areas such as Health and Self-care and physical development. The setting feels that it is essential that good nutrition and learning opportunities around food is embedded in all aspects of food provision and learning over the day and there is consistency in approach across the whole day.

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 for older children 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.
* Children’s allergies will be visible to staff when placing out food play activities to ensure all needs are met.
* Any cooking activities will be checked prior to start to ensure all children are able use all the ingredients based on their individual needs.
* We will not use food in play unless it enhances the opportunities children are receiving from the activity. Many of the food will be reused in other activities, especially the dry materials.

**Baking & Cooking**

All the children are encouraged to participate in baking and cooking activities for snacks and for taking home. They experience foods from other cultures as part of the curriculum, which involves festivals and celebrations from other countries and religions. Baking activities also follow healthy eating guidelines.

**Rewards & Special Occasions**

Children will be rewarded with praise, stars and stickers. Food and sweets will not be used as a reward.

Birthdays will be celebrated in ways that take account of ethical, religious and medical dietary requirements of children and staff. Parents are welcome to supply a birthday cake for children to enjoy as a treat alongside healthy food options such as fruit. Ideas for culturally appropriate ways to celebrate cultural and religious occasions will be discussed with parents/carers.

**Eating Environments**

The nursery will provide a clean, calm, sociable environment for children to eat their meals. Children will be encouraged to develop good eating skills and table manners and will be given plenty of time to eat. Staff will feed infants and sit with older children while they eat and will provide a good role model for healthy eating. Staff are encouraged to eat with the children either what they are eating or a healthy alternative. Staff will help to ensure a safe, enjoyable experience at meal/snack times and will be able to encourage healthy eating. The use of praise and encouragement is used for children who are reluctant to try foods and working closely with parents is important to us as a setting.

**Date Completed: October 2023**

**Review Date: October 2024**

*This policy will be monitored in line with relevant legislation and good practice guidelines*