

Nutrition and Mealtimes

At Coin Street Nursery 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 committed to offering children healthy, nutritious, and balanced meals and snacks which meet individual needs and requirements.

We follow the Department for Education's Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance. This guidance must be taken into account from September 2025 and should be followed unless there is a good reason not to.

This policy should be read alongside the nursery's Allergies and Allergic Reactions Policy and any policy or guidance covering food brought from home.

Breast/Bottle Feeding

At Coin Street, we believe that 'breast is best', but we recognise that some mothers are unable to, or do not wish to, breast feed. Starting nursery should not prevent a mother from breast feeding if they wish to and we will support mothers to continue with this.

Any parent/carer will:

- Be supported to either breastfeed or use expressed milk
- Be encouraged to continue breastfeeding for as long as they wish and come into the nursery if possible, during the day to breastfeed their child
- Take part in discussions which ensures feeding is family lead
- Not be judged about their chosen method of feeding their infant

Children and babies at Coin Street will:

- Have access to breastmilk for as long as their family wishes
- When developmentally appropriate, be introduced to solid foods
- Be encouraged to feed themselves, developing their independence
- Enjoy a healthy and varied diet which reduces the risk of obesity and heart disease that may begin in childhood.

Our staff will ensure that they:

- Know where the designated breastfeeding area is and direct parents there
- Support families who wish their child to have access to breast milk and will accommodate mothers to breastfeed or use expressed milk for as long as they wish. When it is developmentally appropriate, we will work with the family to introduce solid foods (around 6 months)

Our Policy in Practice

- For children starting nursery under the age of two parents will be advised to start introducing a bottle/cup to a child at least one month prior to their start date. *This is*

because it typically takes a breastfed baby 1 month to transition to a bottle/infant feeding cup

- The Parent link app will be used to record dietary information for all children under the age of 2
- A new starters food list form will be completed for **all** children at the home visit to record if there are any allergies or cultural requirements
- Breastfeeding/Formula milk preference will be discussed, and the staff will advise parents/carers of the best way to support a child who is breastfed to transition to the nursery

Bottle feeding

- Parents provide all expressed breast milk, formula feed and bottles, breast milk is stored in the fridge in a named container
- The nursery provides freshly prepared food for babies and does not use pre-made commercial baby food or drinks.
- Food or drink supplied by parents will only be accepted where this has been agreed in advance to meet an assessed medical or dietary need and can be stored, prepared and served safely.
- It is preferable to use ready-to-feed formula milk when feeding your baby away from home. Always using a sterilised feeding bottle and ensure your child's name is written on the carton, the date of opening will be added by the staff in the nursery
- Formula powder is stored in the original container and labelled with the child's name and date of opening. Formula tins will be checked for their expiry date and will follow the recommended expiry date once the product has been open. Staff will not use any formula milk after the expiry date
- Bottles will be sterilised if left at nursery otherwise they are sent home at the end of each day

We follow the responsive bottle-feeding approach, therefore:

- Staff will respond to cues that baby is hungry and invite the child to draw in the teat rather than forcing the teat into the baby's mouth
- Staff will pace the feed so that the baby is not forced to feed more than they want to and will recognise the child's cues that they have had enough milk as this can lead to overfeeding and should be discouraged
- Babies are generally fed breastmilk/formula exclusively for the first 6 months
- Babies will be introduced (weaned) to solid foods at around 6 months if the following signs of readiness are evident
 1. They can stay in a sitting position and hold their head steady
 2. They can coordinate their eyes, hand, and mouth so that they can look at the food, pick it up and put it in their mouth independently
 3. They can swallow their food (gag reflex is present from 6 months) Children who are not ready will push their food back out and have it all around their mouth
- At 8 months old, an infant feeding cup will be used at all mealtimes
- At 12 months, any bottle used will be replaced with an infant feeding cup for all children

- A bottle will not be propped up for child to drink out of. This is to ensure that they can stop eating when they feel full, to avoid choking and to avoid causing ear inflammation
- Whole milk will be given to children at 12 months and until they are 2 years old
- Semi skimmed milk will be given when your child is 2 years old and if they are eating well and enjoy a varied diet
- Skimmed milk will **not** be used as it does not contain enough calories

Further guidance

- A breastfed baby can have expressed milk from a cup or bottle once a day when they are 6 weeks old
- Children and babies can self-regulate their food intake. If they stop drinking from the cup or close their mouth, then feeding has stopped. They are full
- A child's stomach is the size of their own fist. So, their portion size will be relative to this
- Between:
 - 6-8 months a child should receive 75% of their energy from breastmilk/formula
 - Between 9-11 months this reduces to 55%
 - Between 12-23 months this reduces again to 40 %
- A child will typically need to try a new food around 15 times before they have decided that they like it
- We cannot use syringes or other implements to support a child to drink unless we have been provided with additional training by a healthcare professional
- We will seek advice from healthcare professionals if a child attends our nursery with specialist feeding apparatus such as tubes. A health care plan will be written with parents and healthcare professionals prior to the child starting

Introducing Solid Foods (Weaning, from 6 months)

- When a child shows the signs of readiness (as identified above) we will introduce soft finger foods such as banana, cooked carrots or potatoes and avocado as this encourages them to feed themselves, develop hand and eye co-ordination and learn to bite off, chew and swallow pieces of soft food
- To help infants progress to a range of textures and tastes quickly and encourage them to move lumps around their mouths and chew them, we move them on from blended to mashed foods as soon as they can manage them
- As infants become more confident eaters, food is offered as mashed food with increasing texture and soft lumps
- At around 10 months old we will be introducing chopped food at mealtimes
- Food that contains one of the 14 Allergens will only be given at nursery once it has been tried at home. This information should be logged on the new starter food list and continually updated
- Children under 1 will be offered cooled boiled water to drink from a cup throughout the day

Once children are weaned, we will ensure that:

- A balanced and healthy breakfast, midday meal, tea and daily snacks are provided for ALL children attending the nursery
- Menus are planned, rotated regularly and reflect cultural diversity and variation. These are displayed for children and parents to view and will display all allergens contained within the contents of each meal
- We provide nutritious food at all snack and mealtimes, adhering to the government guidelines for the ages and stages of the children, using healthy fats and sugars and an appropriate amount of salt
- Menus include at least 5 servings of fresh fruit and vegetables per day
- Parents and children and staff are involved in menu planning
- Quantities and portion sizes will take account of children's ages and developmental needs, in line with recommended portion sizes for babies and young children.
- Where practicable, menus will make use of seasonal produce, cost-effective staple ingredients, frozen or tinned fruit and vegetables without unnecessary added salt or sugar, homemade sauces and a varied range of meat, fish and vegetarian alternatives.
- Children will be offered opportunities to grow and use herbs or other suitable produce as part of learning about food.
- Fresh drinking water is always available and accessible and frequently offered and intake is monitored. In hot weather staff will encourage children to drink more water to keep them hydrated
- Milk and water are the principal drinks offered to children, supporting hydration, nutrition and oral health.
- A qualified paediatric first aider will be available during all meal and snack times.
- Babies and young children will be alert and seated safely upright in an appropriate chair while eating or drinking.
- Food will be prepared and served in ways that reduce choking risks, taking account of its size, shape and texture. Staff will avoid round shapes and hard or firm foods unless these have been made safe, for example by cutting food lengthways into narrow pieces or softening it through cooking.
- Children will be encouraged to chew food well and take their time.
- A child who becomes distressed by a meal will be supported calmly and without pressure. Children will not be forced to eat and refusing or not finishing one course will not prevent them from being offered the next course.
- Where appropriate and safe, a child who has eaten little at a scheduled mealtime will be offered a suitable alternative opportunity to eat later in the day.
- Individual dietary requirements are respected. We gather information from parents regarding their children's dietary needs at home visits, including any special dietary requirements, cultural preferences, and food allergies that a child has and any special health requirements and that this is regularly reviewed
- Where appropriate, we will carry out a risk assessment in the case of allergies and work alongside parents to put into place an individual dietary plan for their child. Parents will be required to inform the key person and nursery in writing of any changes to their child's dietary needs, including any allergic reactions immediately after they

are evident (*We are unable to accommodate any other specific individual parental choices in terms of food due to the high number of children with allergies that the chef is cooking for on a daily basis*)

- Information about a child's dietary needs, allergies and health requirements will be shared promptly with all staff responsible for preparing, handling, checking or serving food.
- Individual dietary or allergy plans and associated risk assessments will be reviewed regularly and whenever the child's needs change.
- Careful consideration will be given to seating arrangements and the serving of food to minimise cross-contamination and food sharing.
- At every meal and snack time, a nominated practitioner will check that each child receives food that meets their recorded dietary and allergy requirements.
- Staff will be trained to recognise the difference between food allergy and food intolerance, understand the signs of an allergic reaction or anaphylaxis, and follow the nursery's emergency procedures.
- Staff handling food will understand how to prevent allergen cross-contamination and ensure that the correct meal is served to the correct child.
- Dietary needs and allergies will be managed sensitively. Children will not be labelled, singled out or made to feel different because of their diet or allergy.
- Where developmentally appropriate, children will be helped to understand the importance of not sharing food and of keeping friends with allergies safe.
- All major food groups containing the 14 allergens are tried at home prior to the child starting nursery in case they have an allergic reaction so that the parent is present
- All meals whether they contain meat or not, or have no dairy etc. look as similar as possible to help children to feel part of the group and included
- Staff set a good example and eat with the children 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
- Staff use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices and feeding themselves
- Children over 2 years old are encouraged to serve their own food, enabling children to continue to self-regulate their portion size
- Children are encouraged to understand healthy eating and how to make healthy choices and that positive attitudes to healthy eating are promoted through play and discussion
- Cultural and religious differences in food and eating practices will be respected. Where practicable, menus will include familiar foods from children's backgrounds alongside opportunities to try new foods.
- Children will learn about food and healthy choices through play, discussion, growing, shopping and age-appropriate cooking activities.
- Children not on special diets are encouraged to try a small portion of everything
- Children are given time to eat at their own pace and not rushed

- For children under 2 we will provide parents with daily information about their child's feeding on the Famly app. For children over 2, staff will feedback to parents/carers at the end of the day
- No child is ever left alone when eating/drinking to minimise the risk of choking
- We will on occasion celebrate special occasions such as birthdays at teatime with food provided by the chef (We **do not** permit parents to bring cakes for special occasions)
- The nursery will consider non-food ways of celebrating special occasions, such as choosing a favourite story, being a special helper, playing a party game, dancing, singing, stickers, badges, bubbles or fruit platters.
- All staff who prepare and handle food are competent to do so and receive training in food hygiene (updated every three years)
- 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.

Fussy Eating

Most children will go through a phase of being picky about their food; this is normal. We will work with parents/carers to support the child to continue to eat a full range of healthy foods

- We are unable provide separate meals for a child; however, our chef develops menus with children's preferences in mind.
- We will monitor food intake if needed and discuss any concerns with parents.
- We do not permit parents/carers to bring food into the nursery due to allergies and intolerances of other children therefore external food is strictly forbidden from being bought into the nursery.

Food safety

- All food will be stored and prepared safely in a safe and hygienic environment
- All staff involved in preparing and handling food will undertake regular food hygiene training
- All children and staff will wash their hands before all mealtimes (including snack)
- Staff responsible for preparing or serving food will receive guidance on reducing choking risks and will follow current Food Standards Agency advice.
- All hot food will be served at the correct temperature

We have a colour coding system in place to ensure that we can easily identify children that have any allergies, intolerances or feeding preference.

The colour code for food & drink served, placemats, cups and plates etc. is:

- **RED - allergy/intolerance**
- **GREEN - vegetarian/cultural**
- **BLUE – allergen child has not tried**
- **WHITE - all others**

The policy will be developed and reviewed with input from parents, staff and, where appropriate, children.

This policy was adopted on	Signed on behalf of the nursery	Date for review
January 2021 Updated September 2025 Reviewed August 2026	Jane Christofi	September 2027