



NUTRITION, FOOD AND BEVERAGES POLICY

1. Purpose:

The purpose of this Policy is:

- To promote nutritional foods and physical health.
- To ensure mealtimes are pleasant occasions - provide a pleasant eating environment where children are given time, space, social contact to enjoy mealtime experiences.
- For staff to role model good nutritional behaviour and promote sound healthy eating habits.
- To provide adequate opportunities to learn about good food habits and respect cultural and religious diversity.
- To reflect cross-cultural perspectives in terms of the types and selection of food that is provided for the children to eat.
- To promote dental health care.
- To provide families, children and staff with nutritional information and food guidelines based on current Commonwealth recommendations on children's food requirements.
- To encourage staff in on-going professional development and training in, nutritional menu planning and healthy eating habits.
- To encourage self-help and independence at mealtimes.
- To provide a variety of cultural procedures for children to experience

2. Scope:

This policy applies to:

- Little Saints Early learning Centre (the Service) and
- St Andrew's After School & Vacation Care (the Service)

3. Background:

Children lead active lives. They need foods with good nutritional balance for the growth and development of their minds and bodies. Concentration and learning in all areas are improved when children receive adequate, well-balanced meals. Well-nourished and active children are more likely to be alert, vigorous, happy and interested in activities usual for their age.

The food provided by parents for their children should follow the 'Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia', which shows the amount of different foods to eat to get all the energy, vitamins, and minerals that children need. No one food provides all nutrients needed every day, so it is important to provide a variety of foods in the children's lunchboxes. The amount of food required each day varies with age, size and activity level of the child and a good diet is important for the normal growth and development of the child.

4. Policy Statement:

As child care professionals we have an important role in forming long term eating habits of children. We believe that it is important for staff and families to work co-operatively to ensure the centre plays a part in meeting each child's daily nutritional needs. We will continue to promote a varied diet that consists largely of fresh fruits, vegetables and whole-grain s. As many children spend a large amount of their day at childcare, we also believe that it is important that parents pack a lunch which meets the dietary requirements for the whole day.

5. Rationale:

Variety is important and we are fortunate in Australia that our availability of foods is extensive, compared to world food prices food is relatively inexpensive in Australia and our food supply reflects our cultural diversity.’ (www.nutritionaustralia.org)

This policy encompasses the following Healthy Eating Guidelines as found in the Get Up and Grow Guidelines:

- Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended, with positive support, for babies up to six months. Continued breastfeeding is recommended for at least 12 months – and longer if the mother and baby wish.
- If an infant is not breastfed, is partially breastfed, or if breastfeeding is discontinued, use an infant formula until 12 months of age.
- Introduce suitable solids at around six months.
- Make sure that food offered to children is appropriate to the child’s age and development, and includes a wide variety of nutritious foods consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia* (p. 3).
- Provide water in addition to age-appropriate milk drinks. Infants under the age of six months who are not exclusively breastfed can be offered cooled boiled water in addition to infant formula.
- Plan mealtimes to be positive, relaxed and social.
- Encourage children to try different food types and textures in a positive eating environment.
- Offer an appropriate amount of food, but allow children to decide themselves how much they will actually eat.
- Offer meals and snacks at regular and predictable intervals.
- Ensure that food is safely prepared for children to eat – from the preparation stages to consumption.

6. Details:

6.1 Parents will:

- Not provide meals which require heating in rooms from Toddlers and older. Babies milk and meals will be heated.
- Provide nutritionally based foods and drinks for their child when attending the Service in accordance with the Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia.
- Inform staff and management of their expectations of nutrition and their child’s dietary requirements.
- Receive information about food guidelines based on current Commonwealth recommendations on children’s food requirements through Facebook, lunchbox ideas pamphlets, resource library etc.
- Be encouraged to consult on the revision of the food and nutrition policy when required with staff and management.
- Be encouraged to provide ideas for cooking experiences and their expectations of these experiences.
- Provide meals in a safe lunch box – lunch boxes should not be insulated as cold air cannot circulate around the food.
- If breast feeding - bring breast milk in sterilised bottles, labelled with the child’s full name, and date that it must be used by.

6.2 Staff will:

- Inform parents of the food that has been eaten during the day.
- Positively encourage breastfeeding at the Service.
- Provide a comfortable area for mothers to breastfeed.
- Heat breast milk and formula in accordance with recommended guidelines.
- Store breast milk and formula in accordance with recommended guidelines.
- When giving breast milk to a baby, two staff members need to check the name on the bottle.
- Advise parents personally when children have not eaten well during the day.
- Ensure that water is available at all times through the day.
- Ensure children are allowed to eat when they feel hungry i.e. not only during scheduled meal times.
- Encourage food awareness and nutrition in programme activities and encourage discussion of foods, tastes, colour and textures.

- Sit with children at mealtimes and use this opportunity to discuss healthy eating habits and to promote mealtimes as a social occasion.
- Join in meal times with the children e.g. eating their own lunch/snack.
- Develop children's independence by encouraging them to open their own lunch boxes, pack them away, pour their own drinks, put scraps and rubbish in the bin within their own capabilities.
- Under no circumstances force feed or withhold food from children.
- Enforce food safety by sending home unsafe or unhealthy foods sent to the Service. These include:
 - Peanuts (due to children with allergies to nuts – anaphylaxis)
 - Dried fruits (under 2s)
 - Carrot sticks and celery sticks - under 2s. (Children over 2 will be informed of the importance of chewing these foods)
- 'Sometimes' foods
- Limit children's intake of 'sometimes' foods. See list below.
- Allow children to make choices themselves about what they would like to eat e.g. staff will not force children to eat only fruit at morning tea time.
- Heat babies' meals that require warming.
- Not eat or drink (except for water) in front of children other than at meal times. E.g. staff will not eat 'sometimes foods' where children will see this – all unhealthy foods must be eaten in the staffroom away from the children.
- Serve meals and snacks at regular times whilst allowing for flexibility according to children's needs.
- Seek detailed information from parents and health professionals for children with special dietary needs.
- Supplementary food will be provided for children (sandwich or fruit) if they have eaten everything in their lunch box and parents will be informed at the end of the day.
- Provide nutritious cooking experiences (in accordance with the food handling & storage policy) to discuss healthy food, provide cultural variety and to encourage children to try new foods.
- Be encouraged to evaluate the food and nutrition policy in consultation with management and parents.
- Provide the menu for After School Care in consultation with children.
- Display the After School Care menu.

6.3 Management will:

- Provide information to parents on children's nutrition in home languages if required.
- Revise the food and nutrition policy in consultation with staff and parents.
- Seek up to date information on nutrition from recognised health & nutrition authorities.

6.4 The Basic Food Groups

The basic food groups are:

- Breads, Cereals, rice, pasta, noodles, and other grains (Key component: carbohydrates)
- Vegetables and legumes (Key components: Vitamins and minerals)
- Fruit (Key components: Vitamins and minerals)
- Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives (Key components: Calcium and protein)
- Lean meat, fish, poultry, eggs, nuts and legumes (Key components: Protein, zinc and iron)

6.5 Sometimes foods

'Sometimes' foods are foods not included in the basic food groups. Sometimes foods are high in fat, sugar and salt, or a combination of these. They typically have very little nutritional value and are often processed and packaged. Eating sometimes foods too frequently can result in too much fat, sugar or salt in the diet and can lead to poor eating habits and poor health. Examples of 'sometimes' foods include:

- Chocolate and confectionary
- Sweet biscuits, chips and high-fat savoury biscuits
- Fried foods
- Pastry-based foods such as pies, sausage rolls or pasties
- Fast food and takeaway foods
- Cakes and ice cream

- Soft drinks, fruit juice, fruit drinks, cordial, sports drinks, energy drinks, flavoured milk and flavoured mineral water

Note. Sometimes foods will be sent home, therefore it is requested that families do not send 'sometimes' foods to the Service.

6.6 What's a Healthy School Lunch?

Start by choosing a variety of foods using the 'Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia'. This will ensure that your child is receiving adequate nutrition during the day.

- Don't forget to include mainly breads and cereals (bread, rice, pasta etc.), fruit and vegetables and moderate amounts of dairy and meat or meat and dairy alternatives.
- Bread is the most common lunch food for children. A range of breads such as sliced bread (white, white high fibre, whole meal, multigrain, rye); pita bread; kebab bread; bread rolls; and English muffins.
- Use a variety of fillings to keep children interested.
- Dairy products or alternatives are particularly important, watch that your children are not replacing milk with juice all the time.
- Encourage children to drink water throughout the day.
- Save sweet and fatty treats for special occasions. In most children's lives there are more than enough birthdays, holidays and other special occasions.
- Choose healthy snack food options including cheese sticks, canned or fresh fruit, rice cakes, pikelets etc.
- Don't forget water is an ideal drink for children.

(<http://www.nutritionaustralia.org/dynamic/doc-down.php?file=d7869358.pdf>)

7. Measuring Tools:

The following measuring tools will be used:

- Staff Meetings
- Leadership Team Meetings
- Surveys
- Monitoring children's food intake

8. Sources & Further Reading:

- National Quality Standard QA2
- National Law (2011)
- National Regulations (2012)
- The Australian Early Childhood Association
- Nutrition Australia
- Queensland Health
- Thompson, E. (2005). Healthy lifestyles for children. *Putting Children First*, 16, 8-11.
- Owens, A. (2008). Nutrition in Child care – a Factsheet for Families. *National Child Care Accreditation Council*.
- Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. *Get Up and Grow: Healthy eating and physical activity for early childhood* (2009)
- Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council: *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia* (2003)
- Early Years Learning Framework: Belonging Being and Becoming (2009)
- My Time, Our Place: A Framework for School Age Care in Australia (2011)

9. Related Documents:

- Food Handling, Safety and Storage Policy
- Dental Hygiene Policy
- Physical Activity Policy