

HEALTHY EATING POLICY

Over the Rainbow Early Learning Centre Ltd believes that good health and good food in the early years helps to safeguard children's well-being throughout their lives. In our setting it is important that children develop healthy eating habits from a young age for both the pleasure of having a wide variety in their diets and gaining knowledge about nutrition. Healthy eating habits started in childhood will stay with your child forever. Children grow and develop fast, so they need a high quality, varied diet, with a good balance of energy, protein, vitamins and fibre.

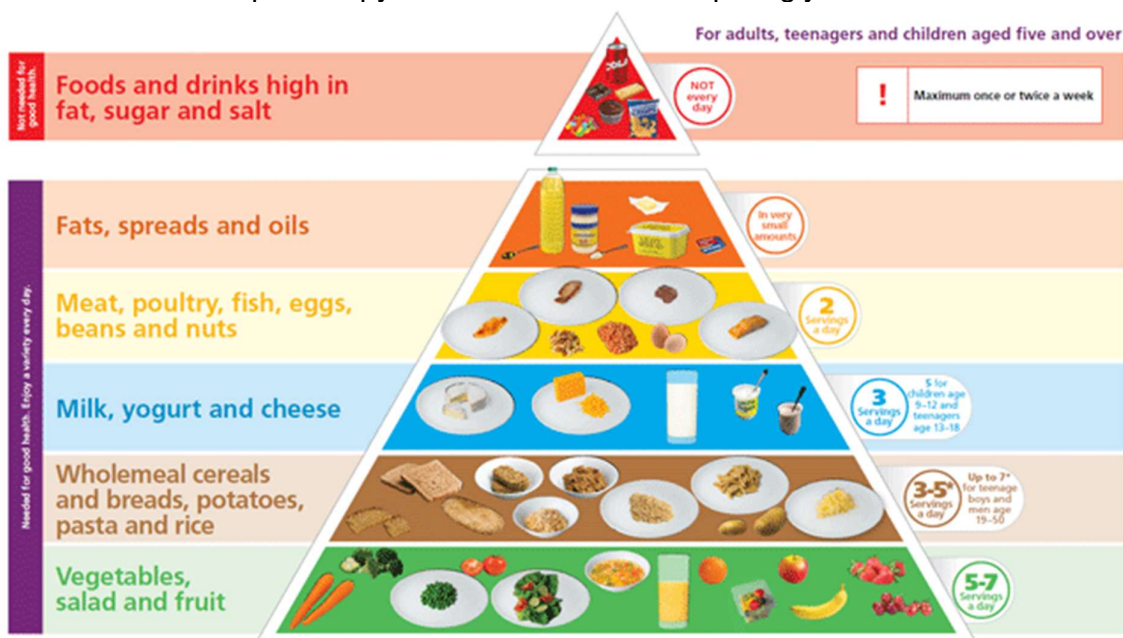
Our meal times are treated as an opportunity for social interaction as well as laying the foundations about making healthy choices.

Principle

This policy is underpinned by the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and the Department of Health, Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Pre-School Services 2006.

The Food Pyramid

We use a good working knowledge of the food pyramid to enhance children's understanding of healthy eating. The Healthy Food Pyramid is a fun way of teaching your children about the different food groups. The pyramid is divided into five shelves, each representing a different food group. Choosing a variety of foods from each shelf ensures that your children have a balanced and healthy diet. You should select most of your children's food from the bottom two shelves of the Healthy Food Pyramid. Smaller amounts of food should be chosen from the next two shelves, while food at the top of the pyramid should be eaten sparingly.



This pyramid is displayed in the playschool room. We have a Healthy Eating Theme during the year when the children discuss the food they like to eat and why eating

healthy food e.g. fruit and vegetables is good for them. They will also get a chance to sample a food they may not have tasted before.

Snacks

- Parents are asked to please send a small snack and water (no flavoured water) in with their child for break time (sos in Irish) e.g. small sandwich (no Nutella), fruit or yogurt. **No crisps, sweets, nuts or nut containing product or fizzy drinks please.**
- Please provide your child's snack in a lunch box/container so leftovers can be returned home for recycling or composting. We are proud to support the Green Flag policy in Barefield National School.
- Fresh drinking water is readily available and encouraged to all children at any time during the day.
- All reasonable measures will be taken to ensure that no child will be given access to a food to which they have a known allergy and that no child will be at risk of choking on any foods.

Snack time environment

- Snack time is treated as a social occasion and children are encouraged to practice a family style food service where adequate time is allowed for meal times.
- In accordance with our hygiene policy, children are encouraged to wash their hands or use non-alcoholic sanitizer before meal times.
- We encourage children according to their age and ability to be independent at snack times by:
 - ✓ having them set the table
 - ✓ choose their own snacks
 - ✓ pour their own drinks
 - ✓ feed themselves
 - ✓ help with the cleaning up afterwards
- Children and staff sit together in a homely style that provides encouragement and confidence to children, to experience new tastes and to feed themselves. Conversation flows, which gives a holistic experience to our environment.
- We recognise that, in addition to satisfying physical and social needs, food and the way it is experienced may also satisfy certain emotional needs. Therefore, food will not be used as a reward for behaviour or withheld as a punishment, but enjoyed as part of a positive social experience.
- Children will be encouraged to play outside every day, weather permitting, to ensure they receive sunlight which helps their bodies to make vitamin D.

Special Occasions

Birthday Parties

- Birthdays are celebrated on the Friday closest to the child's actual birthday and children who have a birthday during school holidays, will celebrate the last day before the holiday starts.
- We ask that parents please only provide 1 small swiss roll and 2 mixed fruit trays usually readily available from Dunnes. This is to ensure that no child feels left out and everyone is treated the same.
- If parents wish, the birthday child can also bring a non-edible treat such as

stickers for friends, if they choose.

- If a parent is unable to provide a swiss roll or the fruit trays, please inform either Ann-Marie or Jennifer in advance.

Halloween

- The last Friday before the Halloween break, children can come to class in fancy dress (if they so choose).
- We ask parents to each send in a small orange. We get the children to draw faces on it like they are mini pumpkins. We also make banana and raisin ghosts and apple and raisin scary teeth for the children to enjoy.

Christmas

- Santy and Mrs Claus pay us a visit just before Christmas. Mrs. Claus has a special surprise for everybody. She brings a copy of her recipe for her famous healthy Cookies for each child in the playschool. They get to bring it home and try it during the holidays. There has been very positive feedback from parents and children. Some children have even made the Cookies as a special Christmas present for their Granny and Grandad.

Easter

- At Easter instead of eating chocolate eggs we help the children to make an Easter Bunny from empty milk cartons which we wash out. The children paint them and when they are dry, they glue on ears and a tail. We then help them to fill them with potting compost. They then scatter water cress seeds on the compost. In a matter of days the cress will grow which look like the Bunny's fur. The children take their Bunnies home and the cress can be eaten by all the family for the following weeks.

Communicating with Parents

- Snacks sent in by the parents, which are not eaten, are sent back home at the end of each day so parents can see what their child has or has not eaten. Parents are verbally informed at the end of the day if their child has not eaten well during the day.
- Healthy eating suggestions will be given out to parents to support them to give their children healthy food options.
- Useful weblinks:

Health Service Executive: Babies and toddlers

www.mychild.ie

Safefood: START

www.makeastart.ie

Safefood: Little Bites (ROI)

[www.safefood.eu/Education/Pre-school/Little-Bites-\(ROI\).aspx](http://www.safefood.eu/Education/Pre-school/Little-Bites-(ROI).aspx)

Food Safety Authority of Ireland: Allergens

www.fsai.ie/allergens/

National Childhood Network: Healthy Ireland Smart Start – Nutrition

www.ncn.ie/index.php/2-ncn/201-healthy-ireland-smart-start-nutrition

Irish Food Allergy Network

ifan.ie/

Parental Responsibilities

- If a food allergy is suspected, parents should inform the managers as soon as possible. It is unwise to restrict children's food choices without professional assessment and individual information.
- Under the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, we are required to ensure the health and safety of all children attending the service. Therefore, the following foods are NOT permitted:
 - ✓ **Any nuts or products containing nuts including Nutella**
 - ✓ **Popcorn (choking hazard for very young children)**
- From a nutritional perspective we ask that you also please refrain from sending in:
 - ✓ **Juices or cordials, fizzy drinks or caffeinated/energy drinks**
 - ✓ **Sweets, biscuits or crisps**
 - ✓ **chocolate**

Food allergies and food intolerances (including coeliac disease):

- Staff will be made aware if any of the children in our setting have any allergies or intolerances including, but not limited to:
 - Peanuts and tree nuts
 - Wheat (gluten)
 - Sesame seeds
 - Fish and shellfish
 - Dairy products
 - Eggs
 - Soya
- Children with severe food allergies are advised to carry identification.
- It is recommended that children with a family history of asthma, eczema, hay fever or food allergy should avoid peanuts and peanut products until the age of 3 years.
- Whole nuts are not recommended for children under 5 because of the risk of choking.

Prevention measures

Care will be taken to prevent accidental consumption of foods to which a child may be allergic or intolerant.

- A child-specific written allergy/intolerance management plan will be available.
- A chart will be kept with the name of the child and the allergy type. Allergies are also clearly displayed on the child's individual placemat.
- Parents/guardians will be asked to provide up-to-date emergency (e.g. adrenaline auto injectors such as EpiPen/Anapen/Jext) and relieving medication that will be appropriately stored and always available.
- Staff will be trained in their use and what to do in the event of a severe allergic reaction.
- All care elements will apply when the allergic/intolerant child is taken on any excursion from the early childcare setting.

This policy was adopted by **Over the Rainbow Early Learning Centre Ltd** on:
Date: _____

Manager

co-Manager

Review Date: _____