



A Sure Start Children's Centre



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## Healthy Eating Policy

**Policy approved by: Oak Meadow and Strawberry Meadow Children's Centre Partnership Board**

**Date: May 2010**

**Due for review: May 2011**

**Members of staff responsible for implementation and review:** Diana Warburg/Debbie Simmons/ Claire Woollett

This document is freely available to the community and links closely with the *Hampshire Early Years Food, Nutrition and Physical Activity Policy Toolkit* produced by NHS Hampshire in partnership with Hampshire County Council's Children's Centre Services.

### Rationale

As a children's centre we take pride in a proactive approach to the wellbeing of children. Our belief is that a balanced healthy, nutritious diet is important for the development of a child's physical state, as well as for their intellectual abilities. Feeding the body with the proper nutrients helps fuel the mind to be more receptive to learning new skills, hence the motto: Feed the Body, Fuel the Mind.

We wish to extend this ethos by introducing a food and drink policy to our centre that covers the following:

- Food and drink provision throughout the centre
- Food and drink provision and consumption by users and visitors of the centre
- Snacking
- Lunch provision
- Education
- Health and safety

By promoting healthy eating patterns, healthier food choices and improving knowledge, Oak Meadow and Strawberry Meadow Children's Centres will be taking a more proactive approach to improving the health and wellbeing of local children and families.



**Hampshire**  
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## Food and drink provision throughout the centre

To ensure that all aspects of food and drink at the centre including Growing Places @ Oak Meadow promote the health and wellbeing of pupils, families, staff and visitors, the following standards will be promoted and undertaken:

- Breastfeeding will be promoted at all times and designated areas are available.
- Water and milk will be the drinks of choice and will be promoted throughout the centre.
  - Water will be available at all times.
    - Water comprises 70% of body weight and is an important component of the diet as it is essential for a number of bodily process. We can live for weeks without food but only a few days without water.
  - Milk will be made available and promoted.
    - Breast milk (or, where this is not possible, infant formula) should provide the main drink in the first year of life.
    - Pasteurised full fat milk should be used as a drink after the age of one. Semi skimmed milk can be used after two years of age unless there are concerns about a child's appetite or if underweight. ( The nursery offers full fat, apart from children in the After-School Club.) Skimmed milk should not be given to children under five years of age.
    - Access to the free milk scheme for under fives will be promoted.
- Diluted pure fruit juice is provided for parents in place of hot drinks where parents and children are in large groups.
  - One glass of pure fruit juice, such as apple, orange or pineapple, contributes towards a portion of the recommended five a day.
  - Consumption of vitamin C with meals assists in iron absorption.
  - Pure fruit juice is acidic and frequent consumption, such as between meals, may contribute towards dental erosion.
- A variety of food and drinks will be available and promoted from the four major food groups:
  - Bread, cereals and potatoes
  - Fruit and vegetables
  - Meat, fish and alternatives (The nursery offers alternatives only)
  - Milk and dairy foods
- Any snacks made available will be low in sugar, salt and fat (see paragraph below on snacking).
- Fresh food, as opposed to processed food/fast food will be made available and promoted.
- On special occasions and celebrations healthy options will be made available and balanced with less healthy options. Parties are about fun and food is appropriate to the occasion.
- Special dietary or cultural needs of any children will be met and these needs will be identified and made known to all relevant centre staff.
- A range of free flow cups (non valve) as opposed to non spill cups will be available for children to drink from. These will be promoted for use from six months of age; lidless cups will be promoted from one year of age.
- The use of sweets and chocolates as a reward will be discouraged. Rewards will be given in the form of smiles and praise, or items such as stars, stickers and badges.

- Sponsorship from fast food outlets or formula feeding companies will not be accepted.
- Bringing takeaway food to events/groups is not permitted and will be discouraged.
- Parents/carers and children are requested not to bring sweets, chocolates, crisps or any other confectionery to groups.

## Food and drink provision and consumption by users and visitors

Any users or visitors will be encouraged to adhere to the Healthy Eating Policy of the centre and made aware of acceptable provision.

- It is the responsibility of the course/session leader to ensure that any food and drink provision provided whilst at Oak Meadow and Strawberry Meadow Children's Centres adheres to the standards set above.
- Any food supplied from home should adhere to the standards above and it is the responsibility of visiting groups to make their clients aware and adhere.
- Families should be discouraged from bringing their own snacks and drinks into the centre for consumption whilst attending groups/courses. This is not only to support the Healthy Eating Policy and ethos of the centre but to safeguard against any food allergies and choking hazards. (Exceptions will be made where there is a known food intolerance, cultural or health issue). Children in the crèche are offered fruit and water or parents provide snacks.

## Snacking

Regular meals and set break time snacks are recommended instead of 'grazing' to reduce the risk of dental problems. Frequent snacking and grazing of foods and drinks high in sugar, fat and calories can contribute towards obesity and dental disease. Therefore any snacks made available throughout the centre will be low in sugar, salt and fat.

- A variety of foods may be offered as snacks, for example:
  - Fresh fruit and vegetables cut up into bite size pieces (apple, carrot, cucumber, celery, banana, satsuma, grapes).
  - Tinned fruit in own juices (as opposed to syrup).
  - Crackers, rice cakes, pitta bread, bread sticks, bagels and toast.
  - Spreads and fillings like ham, cheese spread, marmite.
  - Cubes of cheese.
  - Plain popcorn.
- Only plain milk and water will be offered between meals.
- The Nursery offers the above at teatime.
- On special occasions/celebrations healthy options will be available and balanced with less healthy options.

## Lunch provision

Oak Meadow and Strawberry Meadow Children's Centres will encourage parents to include in lunch boxes those foods which are known to have a positive impact on the child's physical development and ability to concentrate. Children will thus learn more

effectively and a healthier lifestyle and healthy food choices are promoted. (The Nursery also provides a health cooked lunch option – see menu plans)

The centre will aim to provide information for families on suitable foods that could be included in lunch boxes from home.

Any lunches provided by the centre will adhere to the food and drink provision standards within this Healthy Eating Policy and will follow recommended guidelines set out by the British Nutrition Foundation.

A packed lunch could include the following:

- A portion of starchy food, such as a wholegrain bap/bread, sesame seed pita bread, plain crackers, pasta or rice salad.
- Fresh fruit and vegetables, such as apple, orange, banana, cherry tomatoes, carrot sticks, mini fruit chunks.
- A portion of milk or dairy food, such as cheese, plain/fruit yoghurt.
- Small portion of lean meat, fish or alternative, such as ham, chicken, beef, Quorn, cheese, tuna, egg or hummus.
- A drink – pure fruit juice (not fizzy or diluted squash), water (not flavoured), milk (not flavoured).

Parents are advised to include an ice pack, as food products, prepared and stored in ambient temperatures, can after a period of between two to four hours, have increased levels of bacteria in them, which may be harmful to children. Although the children's centre provides storage facilities, the children's centre cannot take legal responsibility for foods prepared at home and then brought into the children's centre. (The nursery offers to refrigerate packed lunches if requested by the parents)

In addition, the centre will promote that parents do not include the following items in packed lunches:

- Sweets (including Winders and similar high sugar items), chocolate.
- Crisps or any packet savoury snacks high in salt and fat.
- Fizzy drinks/sugary drinks.
- Sweet, sugary cakes, doughnuts.
- Sweet nut bars.
- Foods containing salted nuts.
- Lunchables (pre-packed items).

Children are encouraged to eat all or at least try to eat most of the food provided, either by the children's centre or in their lunch box.

Breakfast is offered by the nursery and follows healthy guidelines:

- Healthy cereals with full fat milk/semi-skimmed (see above re. ages)
- Wholemeal toast, fruit loaf, crumpets, scotch pancakes with sunflower spread
- Marmite, marmalade, jam

## Education

The children's centre will continue to include work associated with healthy balanced diets in its curriculum and provide learning opportunities for adults and children around healthy eating through courses, visitors, groups and other methods. Examples of learning include:

- The components of a healthy diet.
- The importance of healthy eating both now and in the future.
- How to design and make healthy food options, such as fruit kebabs.
- Measuring and weighing recipe games and activities.
- About food around the world .
- Food on the plate games.
- How to prepare and cook simple recipes.
- Healthy eating days.
- Discussion of fruit and vegetables offered for snack - feeling, tasting, seasonal, where they are from, what the whole piece looks like and so on.
- The Nursery allows children to grow food on the premises and prepare and eat it.

The centre may also enlist the help of external agencies or professionals to help promote healthy eating habits and improve knowledge.

## Health and safety

The children's centre will provide a clean, sociable environment, indoors and out, for children, staff and visitors.

- Parents and carers will be encouraged to sit with children while they eat and to be a good role model for healthy eating. (The Nursery ensures staff sit with the children at mealtimes.)
- Children are encouraged to eat all or at least try to eat most of the food provided, either by the children's centre or in their lunch box.
- Hot drinks will be served in areas away from children.
- Microwave ovens will not be used to warm babies' bottles or food because hot spots can cause scalding.
- Packets of nuts are not allowed in the children's centre.
- When practical, children will be encouraged to play outside to promote active lifestyles and to help their bodies make vitamin D.
- All litter, from lunch boxes brought in from home, is generally taken home at the end of the day.
- All food handlers will have acquired the Basic Food Hygiene Certificate (updated every three years). All food will be prepared by handlers following food hygiene rules (hands washed thoroughly, clean apron and hair tied back). Kitchen safety guidelines will be followed at all times.