

Healthy Eating and Well-being Policy

The Playcentre recognises that children's health is an integral part of their emotional, mental, social, environmental and spiritual well-being and is supported by attention to these aspects. We promote health, safety and well-being through our practices, policies and procedures.

Physical Well-being

All children are different and develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Every area of development - physical, cognitive, spiritual, social, and emotional, is equally important. Staff are aware of the different stages of child development and how the effects diet, exercise, environment, sleep, emotion can affect their development. Our setting provides a safe, secure, stimulating, supportive environment for all children. The importance of hygiene is promoted, and children are supported to maintain their own hygiene by such things as washing hands and covering mouths to reduce spreading germs to others.

Healthy Eating

At the Playcentre we believe 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 and nutritiously balanced food and drink which meet individual needs and requirements. Menus are prepared in line with government guidelines* using low/or no salt and reduced sugar recipes and seasonally available ingredients.

We ensure that:

- Provide balanced and healthy snacks with either water or milk.
- Food is prepared and served in accordance with HSE guidelines and is age/stage appropriate.
- Parents are encouraged to provide their children with healthy eating lunch boxes for those not eating our cooked lunchtime meals.
- Menus are planned in advance, rotated regularly and reflect cultural diversity and variation. These are available to parents upon request.
- Fresh drinking water is always available and accessible. It is frequently offered to children and intake is monitored. In hot weather staff will encourage children to drink more water to keep them hydrated.
- Staff set a good example, sometimes eating with the children and demonstrating good table manners. Meal and snack times are organised so that they are social occasions. During meals and snack times children are encouraged to use their manners and say 'please' and 'thank you' and conversation is encouraged.
- Two first aiders are present at all mealtimes.
- Staff use meals and snack times to help children develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink, and feeding themselves.
- Children may be involved in planning and preparing food and snacks.

- We support children to make healthy choices and understand the need for healthy eating.
- We provide foods from the diet of each of the children's cultural backgrounds, providing children with familiar foods and introducing them to new ones.
- Cultural differences in eating habits are respected.
- Children are encouraged to think about their bodies, healthy practices with regard to hygiene, how their bodies work and what they need to function effectively, what foods are good for them and what will keep them happy and healthy now and in the future.
- Children not on special diets are encouraged to eat a small piece of everything.
- Any child who shows signs of distress at being faced with a meal he/she does not like will be given support to try a little before it is taken away. They will not be forced to eat anything against their will.
- Children who refuse to eat at the mealtime are offered food later in the day. Withholding food will not be used as a form of punishment.
- Children are given time to eat at their own pace and not rushed.
- Any concerns regarding a child's eating or appetite are reported back to the child's parents.
- Quantities offered take account of the ages of the children being catered for in line with recommended portion sizes for young children.
- We promote positive attitudes to healthy eating through play opportunities and discussions.
- No child is ever left alone when eating/drinking to minimise the risk of choking. Staff are required to sit at a table of children, ensuring that they can see them all.

Special occasions

We will sometimes celebrate special occasions such as birthdays or cultural festivals (Diwali, Chinese New Year or Easter) with the occasional treat of foods such as cake, sweets or biscuits.

We do allow parents to bring in nut free, shop brought cakes on special occasions. We ensure that all food brought in by parents meets health and safety requirements and ingredients that are listed.

Special dietary requirements

Individual dietary requirements are respected. We gather information from parents before a child starts at the Playcentre including:

- Any special dietary requirements.
- Food allergies.
- Any special health requirements.
- Usual food routines and preferences.

Where appropriate the following procedures may be put in place:

- 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
- Give careful consideration to seating to avoid cross contamination of food from child to child.
- An adult will sit with the child during meals to ensure safety and minimise risks
- Age/stage discussions will also take place with all children about allergies and potential risks to make them aware of the dangers of sharing certain foods
- Staff show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. They will not use a child's diet or allergy as a label for the child, or make a child feel singled out because of her/his diet or allergy.

All staff who prepare and handle food are competent to do so and receive training in food hygiene, which is 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.

The Playcentre will provide specific guidelines/advice around weaning to parents, age related specifics and healthy packed lunches.

Exercise

The Playcentre is aware of the importance of exercise and the benefits it has to child as a whole. We recognise not only the benefits it has on their health but also promotes stamina and endurance and allows an opportunity to socialise with their peers.

We ensure that:

- We provide a range of opportunities to take part in physical exercise.
- We encourage the children to move in a variety of ways to develop co-ordination, balance and gross motor skills.
- We encourage and support children until they feel confident to try activities without adult support.
- We discuss and promote the importance of exercise and the impact and effects it has on their bodies, and the importance of rest.
- Staff promote exercise by participating and taking the lead for children to follow.
- We access the outside play area daily and promote the importance of physical activity and the stimulation exploring the outdoor environment can provide.

Supporting parents and families

We ensure that:

- Staff support parents and families by offering advice on areas of concern.
- Provide emotional support to those that are emotionally vulnerable and experiencing difficulties such as separation, financial concerns and housing problems.
- Liaise with health visitors and local services in order to provide information and support required

- Inform parents where they can access medical treatment, dentist, and Health Centre etc.
- We provide information on healthy practices such as immunisation and advice on health matters such as chicken pox and head lice.
- Support parents during changing transitions at home, including potty training, sleep routines, reduction of dummy use etc.

Emotional well-being

We ensure that:

- Staff are made aware during induction to the setting of all the settings policies and procedures and ensure they are followed.
- Children's individual needs and requirements are met and their feelings accepted and respected. Friendships and team building are encouraged and promoted through daily activities.
- Children can feel safe and secure.
- Children gain a sense of well-being when they are encouraged to take responsibility and join in with activities that interest them.
- Children have a key person allocated to them on induction to provide support and guidance throughout their time in the setting. The key person will help guide them through transition to school, providing emotional support for the parent and child.

Legal framework and guidance

Office of Health Improvement and Disparities: Guidance and example menus for early years settings in England, 2017

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/example-menus-for-early-years-settings-in-england>

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), 2017

<https://foundationyears.org.uk/files/2017/11/Eat-Better-Start-Better1.pdf>

Physical activity guidelines for Early Years (2022)

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-children-under-five-years/>

This policy was adopted by: Community Playcentre @ Walberton	Date: 1 st March 2025
To be reviewed: by March 2027	Signed:  Chair Trustees CP@W

This policy is not contractual.

Written in accordance with the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2014): Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements: Complaints [3.73-3.74]*.