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NURSERY SCHOOL & CHILDREN'S CENTRES

Healthy Living Policy:



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OVERVIEW

A healthy, balanced diet and regular physical activity are essential for children's health and wellbeing. Research confirms that healthy eating habits in the years before school are very important because they influence a range of health and development outcomes in later life. The early years is a crucial time to intervene to reduce health inequalities across the life course. Quality of early years experiences can have a fundamental impact on all aspects of human development, physically, emotionally and intellectually. Ensuring that children eat well in their early years is key to ensuring that they achieve their potential, and help prevent them becoming overweight and obese. This approach also helps to reduce the risk of serious diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, stroke and cancers in later life.

Good nutrition is important for children aged under five to:

- ensure that they get the right amount of energy (calories) and nutrients needed while they are growing rapidly
- ensure that they do not consume too much energy (calories), which may lead to children becoming overweight or obese
- encourage them to eat a wide variety of foods and develop good dietary habits to take with them into later childhood and beyond.

Young children are growing quickly and have high energy and nutrient requirements for their size. They also eat smaller amounts than older children and adults, so it is important for them to eat regular meals and snacks that contain sufficient energy and nutrients for their needs. Martenscroft takes seriously a responsibility to protect children's health, including helping children to maintain a healthy weight as they grow, and encouraging breastfeeding and good dental practices. Martenscroft promotes health and development in relation to diet and being active in relation to maintaining a healthy weight. We signpost to health professionals if there is a known concern that children are gaining weight too



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rapidly or are growing too slowly, or if there are concerns about a child's eating behaviour for dietary advice. We promote by giving leaflets about Healthy Start vitamin drops containing vitamins A, C and D for children aged 6 months until their fourth birthday, and for adults who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

AIMS

- This policy enables us, our staff, parents, carers and children to understand our approach to our healthy provision and learning about healthy food. This policy is an effective way of making sure that our children are receiving consistent messages about healthy eating. Our aim is to share information with parents about healthy living choices including the content of a healthy packed lunch and the balance of food groups that should be provided in a packed lunch.
- As a Centre we positively promote the health and wellbeing of every child. We aim to support our children to foster a healthy attitude to food and a healthy lifestyle. We work with parents and carers to ensure children benefit from a balanced diet. A child requires a balanced diet that includes daily intake of food groups; carbohydrates, fruit and vegetables, protein, dairy and good fats that is low in sugar, salt and excess fat.
- This policy is in place to inform parents and team members about nutrition and mealtimes at Martenscroft. It is in place to help identify and cater for individual food requirements and to promote healthy eating in a relaxed atmosphere.



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PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

Regular physical activity during the early years provides immediate and long-term benefits for physical and psychological wellbeing. Physical activity has very low risks for most under-fives, whereas the risk that childhood inactivity will lead to poor health in later life is high. All children aged under five years should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (being restrained or sitting) for extended periods (except time spent sleeping). Physical activity includes all forms of activity, such as walking, active play and active games. Children are more likely to maintain a healthy weight if they are physically active for at least 180 minutes (three hours) each day, as recommended for children aged under five years in the UK.

Regular physical activity during the early years provides immediate and long-term benefits for physical and psychological well-being. We actively promote that all children aged under five years should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (being restrained or sitting) for extended periods (except time spent sleeping).

We include physical activity in all sessions, e.g. walking, active play and games, and offer some purely physical activity sessions too. We encourage practitioners to use outdoors areas as much as weather permits by promoting a free flow between the room and outdoors.

SCHOOL MEALS:

We follow the food and drink guidelines that are underpinned by a nutrient framework, which includes energy and key nutrients: protein, fat, carbohydrate, dietary fibre, free sugars, vitamin A, vitamin C, iron, zinc, calcium and sodium. Providing the types and amounts of food and drink outlined by the guidelines ensures children receive appropriate amounts of energy and nutrients.



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We also offer the correct portions sizes for the age of the children, ensuring we include all key nutrients.

We offer a two-week menu to provide the children with a wide variety of meals. These menus are also changed every half term so our children are exposed to a range of seasonal meals over the year.

Our skilled catering team also ensure that all dietary requirements are catered for. Our children are only offered milk or water, unless it is a special occasion. Any alternatives provided to water or milk are always sugar free.

The Nursery menu is displayed in the children's rooms, main office, website and individual copies can be provided for parents on request.

Under the Food Safety Act, 1990, persons preparing food are holding a food hygiene certificates or have been given training in the food hygiene procedures of the Nursery.

EATING ENVIRONMENT:

Meal times provide opportunities for children to learn about and try new foods, and to develop their social skills. Areas used for eating should be clean, warm and bright, and are free from distractions. We use appropriately sized tables, chairs, plates, bowls, cups and cutlery to help children to eat independently, and we expect that children will make mess when learning to use cutlery. We encourage children to drink from an open cup or free-flow cup (without a valve), so that they learn to sip rather than suck drinks, which is better for their teeth.



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Children are encouraged to choose the food they are going to eat for themselves, and to try new foods. Children are not being expected to finish everything on their plate, and are able to eat their dessert, even if they have not finished their main course. If they are still hungry after their main course, they have the opportunity to have second helpings.

No child is left alone while eating. Meal times are a sociable occasions and provide a valuable time to talk to children about food, so they are an integral part of children's education. We encourage children to sit around tables to eat their meals and snacks, as this helps to develop social skills and good eating habits.

Children are involved in helping to set up and clear away tables before and after meals. We encourage them to serve themselves or to take part in family service by collecting meals for other children sitting at their table. All adults sit with the children whilst they eat their lunch, to act as a positive role model and encourage conversation. This also helps us to understand which meals are popular with the children, and to feedback to parents and carers about how well their child is eating.

Children sit together and are encouraged to pour their own drinks, serve, cut food as appropriate and then to clear away after they have finished. Cups, bowls and spoons are later washed by an adult in the kitchen to maintain hygiene standards. At Martenscroft we use meals and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink and feeding themselves.

Staff encourage children to try a bit of everything, but not make a fuss if they don't want to. If the child shows fussiness about the offered meal, staff prompts



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children to eat the 'healthy' components of their meal before any 'treats'. Children are praised when they try something new.

Water is available for children to help themselves to and additional water is provided (offered frequently) when the weather is hot.

PACKED LUNCHES

A packed lunch option is only available in Willow room unless there is significant dietary needs with younger children. Younger children do not understand when they have different food compared to their peers. Packed lunch options cause more problems with the younger children as they will often want the food the other children have. When all children have the same food option, it encourages children to try new foods and reduces upset and confusion amongst the young children.

When a packed lunch is an option, we enforce that children bring healthy packed lunches with a variety of foods. Practitioners and other staff on duty in the rooms are encouraged to express any concerns they may have regarding any children that consistently bring unsuitable options in their packed lunches. Senior leaders will then follow up with parents and monitor situations, as necessary. As fridge space is limited in the Nursery, parents are advised to bring packed lunches in insulated bags with freezer blocks, where possible, to stop the food spoiling.

Guidance for what to include:

Every day:

- At least one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetables
- Meat, fish or other source of non-dairy protein (e.g. lentils, kidney beans, hummus, falafel)



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- A starchy food (e.g. bread, pasta, rice, couscous, noodles, potatoes or other types of cereals)
- Dairy food (e.g. milk, yoghurt, cheese or custard)

It is recommended that an oily fish (e.g. salmon) should be included around once every three weeks.

Drinks: Only water (still), milk or yoghurt drinks.

Guidance for what **not** to include:

- Confectionery such as chocolate bars and especially sweets. Cakes and biscuits are allowed but encourage your child to eat these only as part of a balanced meal.
- Fizzy drinks or juice.

We are a nut free school, any products containing nuts will not be able to be consumed at Nursery.

SPECIAL EVENTS:

Celebrations are ideal for encouraging children to look for and to talk about kindness to others, sharing and to celebrate their family events and achievements. This could be done, for example, at birthdays, Mothers', Fathers' and Grandparents' Day and also at circle times.

We are asking parents to not bring in any food for birthdays or special occasions. Birthday cakes, sweets, crisps, etc are not allowed in the Nursery as part of our healthy eating policy. If any of those are brought in the food will not be given to children but sent back home at the end of the day.



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If there is an occasion (Family Celebration or leavers' day) when food has been brought in from home, then the food will be laid out and clearly signed (labels "brought in from home" with all ingredients listed) for parents to decide whether they would like their child to have it.

We always acknowledge children's birthdays at Nursery by providing a birthday card from the Martenscroft team. In addition, each room will decide on their room approach to collectively celebrate each child's birthday. Some examples of how we celebrate across the setting are:

Birthdays

- Sing 'Happy Birthday'
- Children get to wear the birthday hat
- Children bake a birthday cake
- Children use a toy birthday cake to role play blowing out the candles
- Sharing a book that a child has brought in from home
- Plan a special game or activity
- Have a dance party

CULTURAL REQUIREMENTS:

At our school, we strive to accommodate the diverse cultural needs of our children in the kitchen. While we are mindful of dietary preferences and traditions, please note that we are not a halal-certified kitchen. To ensure inclusivity, our meals are predominantly vegetarian or pescatarian, allowing us to offer balanced and nutritious options that respect a variety of cultural and dietary requirements. We remain committed to providing wholesome meals that cater to our diverse community.



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MANAGING DIETARY REQUIREMENTS:

A special diet is one which means a child cannot choose their foods freely. This might be due to an allergy, intolerance or medical need, or it might be associated with the child's ability to eat food, and requiring the consistency to be modified. All staff in our setting are aware of children's individual dietary requirements. We acknowledge that it is important that every child feels valued and included, and that they can have healthy food and drink choices appropriate for their needs.

A food allergy is an adverse immune response to specific proteins found in food, and even a tiny trace of a food can cause a reaction in someone who is allergic to it. An allergic reaction to food can produce symptoms such as tingling in the mouth, skin rashes, abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting, which can occur within seconds or minutes of coming into contact with the food. In the most extreme cases, swelling of the throat can occur. A life threatening allergic reaction is called anaphylaxis or an anaphylactic shock. If a child has a food allergy (as confirmed by a doctor or registered dietitian) we will put an allergy protocol in place which will be accessible to all staff, so that everyone caring for the child is aware of their allergies and symptoms.

Before a child starts at the Nursery, parents provide details about their child's dietary needs and preferences, including any allergies. Where appropriate we will work alongside parents to put into place an individual diet plan for their child in a way to define possible allergies, while at the same time encouraging parents to get the allergy source confirmed by the doctor.

Each child's dietary needs are recorded using a dietary care plan and is shared with all the relevant people who need to be aware. We also display dietary information in our kitchen and in the eating areas so this information can be easily retrieved and staff are fully informed. Parents are regularly consulted to ensure that the records



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of their children's dietary needs are up-to-date. Parents sign the updated record to confirm that dietary information is correct.

The whole team of management, practitioners, assistants and cooks must stay vigilant and continue to clearly communicate when taking food from the kitchen and delivering to children at the table. Senior leaders must keep "allergies", information in the kitchen and rooms up to date. In addition to the staff in the rooms, management should beware of the names of children with known allergies. When delivered to the rooms, meals must be served with extra care and awareness for allergies and intolerances.

The school implements systems to ensure that children only receive food and drink that is consistent with their dietary needs and preferences, as well as their parents' wishes.

The school takes care not to provide foods which contain nuts or nut products as we are a nut free school.

COOKING WITH CHILDREN:

Cooking with children is an enjoyable activity and an effective way to encourage all children to try and eat a wide range of foods. Practitioners are encouraged to do cooking activities at least once a week.

Recipes are chosen to promote and encourage healthy diets, and extend family experiences. All recipes involve mixing, combining and assembling activities such as dips, cupcakes and scones, layered fruit and yoghurt pots.



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Activities are well planned to be as safe as possible. Children may need help from their adult and the activity is carefully supervised by staff. In the event sweet foods such as cakes or biscuits are made these are eaten here as part of a meal, or taken home to do so, to best protect dental health.

By including cooking in the curriculum we are teaching children about healthy eating and equipping them with life skills that encourage healthy lifestyles and independence.

ORAL HEALTH:

Oral health is crucial during early childhood, as it lays the foundation for a child's overall well-being and development. Healthy teeth and gums are essential for proper chewing, speech development, and maintaining self-confidence as children grow. Establishing good oral hygiene habits early on helps prevent tooth decay, gum disease, and other dental issues that can affect a child's health later in life. Early dental care supports healthy permanent teeth and contributes to positive lifelong habits. By prioritising oral health from a young age, we can promote long-term physical health and well-being in children. At Martenscroft, we incorporate regular tooth brushing into the daily routine which encourages these healthy habits from a young age whilst helping children learn the importance of taking care of their teeth. This is a universal offer and if parents do not wish for their child to take part in our tooth brushing scheme at Nursery, they can opt out.

PROVIDING FOOD FOR CHILDREN UNDER 12 MONTHS:

At Martenscroft we acknowledge the research that states breastfeeding is the healthiest way for a woman to feed her baby and recognises the important health benefits known to exist for both, the mother, her child and society. We recognise the importance in helping parents develop close and loving relationships with their babies to optimise infant brain development.



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However, all mothers have the right to receive clear and impartial information to enable them to make a fully informed choice as to how they feed and care for their babies. Martenscroft staff will not discriminate against any woman in her chosen method of infant feeding and will fully support families with their choice.

Mothers will be enabled and supported to breastfeed their infants in all public areas of premises whilst acknowledging that some mothers may prefer to feed in private. For private breastfeeding we have a private room called 'The Hive' that families can request to use.

Breast Milk Procedures:

The following procedures are to be used by all staff, handling, storing or using breast milk to feed a baby:

Containers

- Breast milk should be brought to the Nursery in a sterilized bottle or in a sterile breast milk bag, suitable for the purpose of refrigerated storage and clearly marked with the infant's full name.
- Bottles will be returned to parents/carers at the end of each Nursery day. The containers will be washed, but not sterilized.
- Parents must ensure that the container is sterilized before reuse.

Storage

Breast milk should be provided on a daily basis and stored correctly in the fridge; unused milk will be discarded at the end of each feed.



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General Handling

Practitioners will ensure that the following Policy is strictly adhered to:

- Breast milk is to be kept sterile at all times
- DO NOT leave breast milk at room temperature for more than 1 hour
- DO NOT heat breast milk in the microwave
- Breast milk is to be warmed using hot water and a heat safe container

Breast milk is a bodily fluid, which carries with it a (small) risk of infection and/or disease. The Nursery Policy is to advise staff handling or carrying out the feeding of breast milk to protect themselves against the risks of infection by:

- Implementing good hygiene practices
- Using the PPE provided if staff request this
- Avoiding actual contact with the breast milk

Formula Milk Procedures

The following procedures are to be used by all staff, handling, storing or using formula milk to feed a baby:

On Delivery: Ensure that the parent has provided the formula powder in an unopened carton which is clearly labelled and bottle/s are clearly marked with the baby's name prior to feeding a baby with formula milk.

Before feeding a child with formula milk, ensure that;

A positive identification of the baby is made, and the correct formula milk is fed to the correct baby



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Preparing Formula Milk

To prepare a baby's formula milk staff must:

- Read thoroughly the parents instructions to indicate the amount of water that is to be boiled.
- Wash hands.
- Measure the correct quantity of water into the bottle.
- Use the Tommee Tippee Perfect Prep Machine to prepare the bottle at the right temperature.
- Mix into the water the correct measurement of formula powder from the pre-measured powder container.
- Attach the sterilised teat and shake the bottle vigorously.
- If the milk is still too warm to feed the baby with, hold the bottle under cool running water until it cools.

Feeding a baby with a bottle of milk

- Feed the baby as normal using their bottle and teat.
- Ensure that the baby is 'winded' correctly.

After feeding a baby with a bottle of milk

- Discard any milk that has not been used within 1 hour
- Record feed time and amount taken by the baby

Sterilization of bottles teats:

- Use Tommee Tippee Steam Microwave steriliser to clean bottles.



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Staff Responsibilities

- Staff will follow the correct procedures for handling either formula or breast milk and will adhere to both Food Hygiene standards and Health and Safety guidelines.
- Staff will adhere to this policy and its procedures.
- Staff should record the amount of formula or breast milk consumed by the baby in the Baby's Diary so that the parent can be informed of the child's intake for that day.

During a feed:

- Babies will never be left unsupervised. A member of staff (if possible their key person) should hold the baby and sit on the armchair in the baby-room.
- Staff are not required to wear gloves or aprons when feeding bottles to babies as it is important to make them feel comfortable and to feed them in a 'home like' environment.

Weaning babies and introducing solid foods:

We can support families by signposting to appropriate evidence-based advice where needed. Most infants are developmentally ready for complementary feeding – the addition of solid foods alongside breastmilk (or first infant formula) – at around six months of age. After about six months of age additional foods are needed to complement the nutrients in breastmilk (or infant formula) and to introduce infants to a range of tastes and textures as they start their journey to healthy family foods. Once food has been introduced, infants should continue to be given breastmilk or first infant formula, and shouldn't be given cows' milk as a drink until they are a year old (cows' milk can be used in cooking or in food from six months).



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The first aim of introducing solids is to familiarise infants with new tastes and textures and get them used to moving foods around their mouths and swallowing them. At about six months many infants will be able to manage a range of blended and mashed foods as well as being able to hold food and feed themselves. Some infants need a little longer to get used to new textures, so may prefer blended foods on a spoon at first. 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 try to move on from blended to mashed foods as soon as infants can manage them. We offer finger foods for infants to hold and feed themselves alongside any blended or mashed foods. From six months of age, infants can be encouraged to drink water from a cup (or beaker with a free-flowing valve). Once food has been introduced, infants can gradually move towards eating three meals a day, including a mixture of soft finger foods, and mashed or chopped foods. Including food from each of the main food groups (fruit and vegetables, starchy foods, sources of protein and dairy foods) will provide the energy and nutrients which infants of this age need. Infants and young children are never left alone while eating, and are closely supervised.

By about seven to nine months, infants should be offered three meals a day (breakfast, lunch and tea), in addition to their breastmilk (or first infant formula) feeds. Infants of this age may have about four feeds a day, but should still be fed responsively to meet their individual needs. Breastfed infants will adapt their milk intake as their food intake increases; bottle fed infants will probably need about 600ml of milk a day at this age. As infants become more confident eaters, food can be offered as mashed food with increasing texture and soft lumps. Providing finger foods as part of each meal helps to encourage infants to feed themselves, develop hand and eye co-ordination and learn to bite off, chew and swallow pieces of soft food.



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Eating should be a sociable occasion, and mealtimes provide a good opportunity to include infants in family and setting routines. During mealtimes, we ensure that infants are each given individual attention and interaction - making eye contact, and interacting with and talking to infants while helping them to eat. Mealtimes also help to develop infants' coordination and communication skills. Infants should be encouraged to explore, touch and try new foods. Giving infants finger foods to hold and feed themselves with, or a spoon to hold if being offered food on a spoon also helps encourage them to feed themselves. How much infants eat depends on their appetite, so we let infants guide us on how much food they need and we never force them to eat. We look out for signs that infants might be full, such as turning their head away from the food or clamping their mouth shut. We allow plenty of time for eating, especially in the beginning and allow infants to eat at their own pace and stop eating when they are full. Infants and children may not like new foods the first time they are offered, but after repeated tastes they often learn to like new foods offered.