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Diet Policy and Practice

At Penhill Playgroup, we recognise that some children and their families follow strict religious, vegan/vegetarian, medical or cultural diets. We also want to promote healthy eating, through a balanced diet, to all children so that they grow up with a good understanding of healthy nutrition.

Investigating different foods such as fruit, vegetables, bread, pasta and oats take place throughout the curriculum at Playgroup. We may try foods to do with cultural festivals we are looking at or we may link food to stories such as Goldilocks or the Hungry Caterpillar. All children will have the opportunity to grow, cut up, bake, make and/or play with, as well as eat some of these different foods during their time here, engaging all their senses in a safe, but exploratory way.

In order to ensure the children's dietary requirements are met in appropriate ways, we ask parents/carers to inform us of their children's personal dietary requirements. Initially this is during admission through the completion of the Registration Form and "Getting to Know You and Your Child" document.

- Any special dietary requirement changes should be brought to the attention of the Playgroup as soon as possible.
- Details of any food or drink allergies or special dietary requirements of the children are displayed in the snack area and kept in the food preparation area, alongside a photo of the child, so that any member of staff preparing or monitoring snack time can ensure all children receive the appropriate food and drink requested by the parent/carer.
- If necessary, training for staff regarding allergies can be arranged, and a Care Plan put into place.
- Any questions or concerns about special diets are noted and discussed with the parents/carers as soon as possible.
- At special occasions, such as parties, where additional food and drink may be provided, appropriate dietary advice will be sought from the parents/carers in advance of the occasion.
- If a child attending has a severe specific food allergy or intolerance, it may be necessary to ban the food substance, e.g. nuts for the whole of playgroup. This will take place as and when the need arises and communicated to all parents/carers.
- Staff will make opportunities to discuss healthy and unhealthy food choices throughout Playgroup, in a variety of ways, including through role play, at snack time, singing, stories and games, in order to promote healthy eating.

Snack time

Penhill Playgroup operates a rolling snack time during the morning session and all children will be asked by an adult if they would like some.

- We will endeavour to ensure that snack time consists of healthy options, including raw fruit and vegetables, bread sticks, toast etc. and encourage reluctant eaters to try new foods.
- Children are asked to bring in a piece of fruit/vegetable each week, which is then cut up and shared amongst themselves at snack time.
- Milk and water, which the children help themselves to are both available at snack time.
- Snack time is a social time when children are encouraged to talk with each other, under the supervision of an adult.
- Occasionally, we have a group snack time, where we all sit down together. This usually occurs when we celebrate a special occasion such as a Royal Wedding, Christmas or Leaver's Party. It may also occur when we have hot food to try, which it would not be appropriate to re-heat e.g. curry and rice.

Drinks

- Children have access to their own drinks bottle, brought in daily from home, throughout the session. These bottles should only contain water and if empty will be refilled with water. If a child forgets their bottle, they will be provided with a named cup filled with water.
- In warm or hot weather, children will be encouraged to drink regularly throughout the session, whether from their own water bottle, or pouring themselves a drink at the snack bar. Water will be made available both inside and outside, and replenished regularly.
- Children under 5 are eligible for a third of a pint of full cream or semi-skimmed milk at Playgroup, for free, though the Nursery Milk Scheme. This is stored in the fridge and poured into jugs for the children to help themselves to at snack time. The cost of the milk is claimed back by the Playgroup through the Nursery Milk Reimbursement Unit on behalf of the Department of Health.
- On occasions, other drinks such as hot chocolate or fruit smoothies which the children have made themselves may be available in small quantities. To help with dental hygiene, we will encourage the use of straws when drinking liquids which can be sugary, such as fruit smoothies.

Cooking

- Cooking activities offer the opportunity to explore new foods and textures that the children have helped to make, such as pancakes, bread or soup.
- Occasionally, these may be sweet treat type foods such as cakes or biscuits, but where possible, we will endeavour to make these as healthy as possible.

Packed Lunches

Where children bring in a packed lunch, we will send home a hints and tips sheet, beforehand giving details about healthy food and portion control, along with a copy of the Government's Eatwell guide. In addition, when children stay for lunch:

- They will sit at a table with some of their peers and at least one adult. They will be encouraged to eat savoury food first, before any sweet snacks and the lunch times will be used, amongst other things, to talk about healthy eating and healthy food choices.
- As good practice, children are not allowed to share any of the food in their lunches, due to allergies, intolerances and special diets.
- Children will be encouraged to be as independent as possible, opening any containers, yoghurt lids or pouches and wrappings etc. by themselves.
- If a child does not bring in a drink from home, they will offered milk or water.

Birthdays/Special occasions

When it is a child's birthday, some children like to bring in sweets or cakes for the other children as a way of sharing their celebration. When this occurs:

- Where possible, ingredients used will be noted, in order to establish whether they are suitable for children with special diets. If no ingredients list is available, parents/carers will be informed and make the decision on behalf of the child, as to whether the item is suitable for consumption.
- Sweets or treats will only be given out at the end of the session, when parents/carers are available to monitor and supervise their consumption.

Food Hygiene

- All staff involved with preparing food must complete a recognised food hygiene qualification and update it every 3 years as recommended by the Food standards Agency.
- The Playgroup is registered with the local Council as a food service provider and is regularly inspected by them.
- All staff preparing food must complete the daily checklist/sheet and ensure they follow food hygiene rules.
- A copy of Safer Food Better Business, which contains detailed information about food storage, preparation, serving and cleanliness is available for reference in the kitchen.

This Policy will be reviewed at least annually.