FOOD, NUTRITION, ALLERGENS & SAFER EATING POLICY

Applies to all children, employees, volunteers and anyone preparing, serving or supervising food at Dots & Tots Day Nursery.

Policy Statement

Dots & Tots Day Nursery promotes healthy, varied and enjoyable food experiences in a safe, inclusive and nurturing environment. We recognise that eating is a social and developmental experience as well as a nutritional need.

Food and drinks will be planned, prepared, stored and served safely, taking account of each child's age, developmental stage, allergies, medical needs, cultural and religious requirements and individual preferences. Children will never be pressured to eat or made to feel ashamed about food.

Food and Drink Provision

Menus will offer a balanced variety of foods, appropriate portions and opportunities to explore different tastes and textures. Water will be freely available throughout the day and offered regularly, particularly during active play and warm weather.

The nursery operates a two-week rolling menu. The main allergens present in each meal are clearly identified on the menu, and any ingredient changes or substitutions must be checked and communicated before food is prepared or served.

Meals and snacks will be organised to meet the needs of children attending each session. Parents will be informed about the nursery's food arrangements and menus, including how any food brought from home is managed.

Babies will be supported in line with their individual feeding plans. Breast milk, formula and weaning foods will be handled according to safe storage and preparation guidelines. Staff will not introduce new foods to babies without appropriate agreement with parents. All food intake is logged and sent to parents through our childcare Ovivio app

Oral Health

Dots & Tots Day Nursery recognises the importance of good oral health in supporting children's overall health, wellbeing and development. We promote healthy teeth and gums through balanced meals, nutritious snacks and encouraging children to drink water regularly, while limiting foods and drinks high in added sugar.

Children will be introduced to the importance of looking after their teeth through age-appropriate activities, stories, conversations and play-based learning. We will work in partnership with parents and carers to encourage positive oral hygiene routines at home, including regular toothbrushing with fluoride toothpaste and routine dental check-ups. Reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure children with SEND or additional needs can participate in oral health learning experiences.

Dietary Information and Individual Plans

Before a child starts, parents will be asked to provide up-to-date information about allergies, intolerances, medical conditions, dietary preferences, feeding support and any relevant emergency medication. This information will be

the parents' responsibility to review and update whenever circumstances change/ new allergies arise or when required to, unless a reaction is identified firsthand at nursery, in tat case we will respond and inform parents immediately.

Where a child has a diagnosed allergy or significant feeding need, the nursery management team will agree to an individual written risk-management plan with the family and, where appropriate, relevant healthcare professionals. The plan will identify triggers, symptoms, prevention measures, permitted foods, emergency actions, medication and staff responsibilities. Staff will be made aware and sign the same plan to ensure continuity across the care provided.

All dietary information will be shared confidentially with staff who prepare, serve or supervise food, including cover staff. No child will be excluded from ordinary nursery experiences solely because of a dietary requirement; reasonable adaptations will be planned.

Every child will have an individual mealtime place card featuring their photograph to support recognition and correct identification. Where a child has an allergy, intolerance or additional dietary requirement, their place card will be red and clearly state the relevant requirement. 2x members of staff must verify the child and their current dietary information rather than relying on the card alone before food is served.

Each child's allergies, intolerances and additional dietary requirements will be recorded on our Ovivio system and clearly identified on the relevant room whiteboard. Information will be kept up to date and shared during staff handovers and with any cover staff. Cover staff will not be permitted to take lead when serving food, this must be conducted by a permanent member of the room staff.

Allergen Management

The nursery will maintain accurate ingredients and allergen information for all foods supplied, including packaged ingredients, recipes, substitutions and food provided by external suppliers. Staff must check labels every time an ingredient or product changes.

The 14 regulated food allergens will be considered in menu planning and food information: celery, cereals containing gluten, crustaceans, eggs, fish, lupin, milk, molluscs, mustard, peanuts, sesame, soybeans, Sulphur dioxide/sulphites and tree nuts. These are clearly identified on the 2-week rolling menu available to parents/ carers on the website.

Before any food is served, the adult responsible will check the child's identity, the food provided and their current dietary plan. Staff must never guess whether food is safe or remove an allergen from a finished meal

A three-stage check will take place for each meal/ any food being consumed by the child: (1) the chef checks the child's recorded allergies, intolerances and dietary requirements against the ingredients, menu and prepared meal; (2) the Room Leader checks the meal and intended child against the current Ovivio record, room whiteboard and any individual plans; and (3) a second member of room staff independently confirms the correct child and meal before serving. Any discrepancy means the meal/ food item must not be served until resolved.

Children with allergies, intolerances or additional dietary requirements will be served first, using designated red plates/ bowls/cups to help staff identify their meals. Red plates and red place cards are visual safeguards only and do not replace individual checks, hygienic preparation or prevention of allergen cross-contact.

Cross contact will be reduced through handwashing, cleaned worktops, suitable utensils, separate preparation where required and careful storage and serving. Children will be supported not to share food, cups or utensils.

Any suspected allergic reaction will be treated promptly under the child's emergency plan and the nursery's first-aid procedures. For suspected anaphylaxis, staff will call 999 immediately and administer any prescribed adrenaline auto-injector medication where indicated by the emergency plan and staff training. Parents will be contacted as soon as it is safe to do so.

Safe Preparation, Storage and Food Hygiene

Anyone handling food must follow the nursery's food safety procedures, including effective handwashing, cleaning and disinfection, safe temperature control, prevention of cross-contamination, and correct storage, reheating and disposal of food.

Food preparation and service areas will be kept clean and organised. Staff will follow current food hygiene requirements and any relevant instructions from the local authority environmental health team.

Staff and children with symptoms of infectious illness must follow the nursery's sickness and exclusion procedures. Food handlers must report symptoms that could compromise food safety immediately.

Food brought from home must be clearly identified, stored appropriately and checked against nursery restrictions and the child's dietary needs. The nursery may refuse food that presents an identifiable safety risk and will discuss suitable alternatives with families. Food bought in from home must be authorised by a member of the management team.

Choking Prevention and Safer Eating

Children will be seated appropriately and actively supervised while eating. Staff must be able to see and respond to children; they will not leave children eating alone or allow eating while running, walking around or lying down.

Foods will be prepared in age- and developmentally appropriate sizes and textures. Small round foods will be cut lengthways into quarters; hard foods such as raw carrots and apples will be prepared safely for younger children. Other high-risk foods will not be offered where they present a choking hazard.

Staff will take particular care with children who have swallowing difficulties, oral-motor delays, additional needs or a history of choking. Individual guidance from parents and relevant professionals will be incorporated into the child's health care plan.

All staff supervising meals will be pediatric first aid trained and must know how to respond to choking, summon assistance and follow paediatric first-aid procedures. Any choking incident or near miss will be recorded, shared with parents and reviewed for learning. All staff will receive Pediatric first aid training within 3 months of starting employment at Dots and Tots Day Nursery.

Positive Mealtimes and Independence

Mealtimes will be calm, sociable and respectful. Staff will sit with children where practical, model positive attitudes to food and encourage conversation and age-appropriate self-help skills.

Children will be encouraged to serve themselves, pour drinks, use utensils and participate in setting up and clearing away when it is safe and developmentally appropriate. Adults will offer support without forcing a child to finish a meal and will never withhold food as a punishment.

Children's appetites and preferences will be respected. Where a child eats very little or there is an ongoing concern, staff will communicate sensitively with parents and agree with appropriate support. If a child has chosen not to eat or has refused food at mealtimes, they will be offered some later so not to go hungry.

Food Activities and Cooking with Children

Food preparation, gardening, cooking and tasting activities will be planned as learning opportunities. Before each activity, staff will consider allergies, food hygiene, supervision, suitable utensils, heat sources and children's developmental abilities.

Children may take part in real-life food experiences using age-appropriate equipment and carefully assessed risk. Any activity involving sharp utensils, hot equipment, open flames or campfire cooking requires a specific risk assessment, appropriate adult supervision and clear emergency arrangements.

Children with allergies or dietary restrictions will be offered safe, meaningful ways to participate. Ingredients and equipment must be checked before an activity begins.

Communication with Parents

Menus and significant changes to food provision will be shared with families. Parents must inform the nursery promptly of any new allergy, diagnosis, medication, feeding concern or dietary change.

Staff will communicate relevant information about children's food and drink intake via the Ovivio app and in person at handover. Any suspected food-related illness, allergic reaction or significant incident will be reported promptly to parents and documented.

Roles and Responsibilities

• Registered Provider/Nominated Individual – oversees resources, compliance and effective policy implementation.

• Nursery Manager – ensures food safety arrangements, staff training, individual care plans, allergen information and incident reviews are maintained.

• Chef and food preparers – check every relevant allergy, intolerance and dietary requirement against ingredients and each adapted meal; maintain accurate allergen information; prevent cross-contact; and flag substitutions before service.

• Room Leaders and practitioners – maintain accurate Ovivio information, room-whiteboard and photo place-card information; complete the Room Leader and second staff checks; serve adapted meals first on red plates; supervise meals safely; and report concerns immediately.

• Parents and carers – provide accurate, current dietary and medical information and necessary prescribed medication and guidance.

Monitoring and Review

The Nursery Manager will monitor food practices, incidents, menus and dietary plans. This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner if statutory guidance changes, an incident identifies a need for improvement or the nursery's food arrangements change.

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Signed

Christie Patton

Company Owner