



## Putting families at the centre

# Food Culture & Health Eating Policy

This policy was adopted by Honeycroft's Board of Trustees on December 2021

This policy is due for review by January 2023

### **Guiding principles**

Food plays a key part in young children's lives and eating should be a positive and enjoyable experience. Honeycroft encourages children to eat well and to make healthy food choices by preparing all food on site from scratch, ensuring no unwanted additives or processed foods. This food policy enables our staff, parents, carers and children to understand Honeycroft's approach to food provision and learning about food.

### **Why is a healthy, balanced and nutritious diet essential for young children?**

A healthy, balanced diet and regular physical activity are essential for children's health and wellbeing. Research confirms that healthy eating habits established in the early years influence a range of health and development outcomes in later life. Good nutrition is important for children aged under five to encourage them to eat a wide variety of foods and develop good dietary habits. A healthy balanced diet for children provides a range of essential nutrients that children need to grow and develop. At Honeycroft we plan meals and snacks to include a variety of food and drinks to provide children with the good balance of nutrients they need.

### **The food and drink Honeycroft provides for meals, snacks and drinks**

Honeycroft provides a balanced vegetarian menu including;

- A variety of different protein sources across each week for example pulses and beans, eggs and cheese
- We choose not to use processed meat alternatives
- Sufficient iron and zinc from good vegetarian sources such as peas, beans, lentils, nuts, wholegrain cereal foods, dried fruit, green leafy vegetables, and fortified breakfast cereals
- Water is available at all times and offered with all meals. Milk is offered at breakfast and with all snacks.

Menus for meals and snacks are planned for three weeks' rotation and include different tastes, colours and textures, are seasonal and ensure minimise waste.

- Meals and snacks are planned using evidence-based, age appropriate national best practice food and drink guidelines<sup>1</sup>
- Menus are shared to ensure parents/carers know what is provided
- Information about dietary requirements is collected for children before attending the setting
- Procedures are in place to support and manage children's dietary requirements

### **Food safety and hygiene & staff training**

- Policies and procedures are in place and are routinely monitored to demonstrate how responsibilities under the Food Safety Act 1990 are followed
- Honeycroft is registered with the Local Authority Environmental Health team to provide food and holds a 5 star rating certificate, approved by the Food Standards Agency
- All staff who prepare food have an up-to-date Food Handling Certificate

### **The eating environment and routine**

It is important that children eat and drink regularly throughout the day therefore;

- Meals and snacks are timed so children eat regularly. Between the hours of 8am and 6pm children receive three meals (breakfast, lunch and tea) and two snacks daily
- Children have enough time to eat their meals and snacks, those who eat more slowly do not miss out, either on food or other activities
- Children have access to drinking water throughout the session and are offered water regularly with each snack / meal
- Each group has colour coded beakers, plates and bowls long with child sized cutlery to support independence

Meal times provide opportunities for children to learn about and try new foods, and to develop their social skills. To achieve this, children sit around tables to eat their meals and snacks, in addition they sometimes;

- Set the table
- Serve themselves
- Prepare their own snack
- Pour their own drinks
- Make an occasion of eating together

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<sup>1</sup> [Eat-Better-Start-Better1.pdf \(foundationyears.org.uk\)](#)

No child is left alone while eating, instead staff sit with the children during meals and snacks to encourage conversation. This also helps to understand which meals are popular with the children, and to feedback to parents and carers about how well their child is eating via Tapestry.

### **Special dietary requirements Food allergies and food intolerances**

Honeycroft obtains information about children's special dietary requirements – including food allergies and intolerances – before they attend, via the registration form and a record about children's dietary needs is made visible to all staff. Understanding which allergens are present in every meal and snack is made possible by our Food Supervisors, who oversee all purchasing and menu planning, providing food and drink which is safe for children with food allergies and intolerances. We will speak to parents, carers, and health professionals where appropriate, to understand any individual dietary needs and plan for how these can be met.

Children with complex needs may have additional requirements (such as having their food prepared or served separately as a particular texture might be off putting) or need staff to feed them if they are unable to feed themselves.

### **Encouraging good eating habits**

Young children can be particular about what, or how they eat. If a family is worried about their child's food intake, we will make a plan together to encourage your child to eat well. Staff support all children to eat well by;

- **Being consistent** with everyone involved at mealtimes, agreeing to and following the same strategies
- **Modelling** - Children often adopt the food preferences of their peers if they eat together regularly
- **Encouragement** by staff talking enthusiastically about the taste and texture of food at meal times
- **Exposure** by giving children regular and repeated chances to taste new foods, as this increases their liking for and eating of new foods. If children are resistant to trying new foods, we will offer them small tastes and make sure the child maintains control of the situation
- **Rewards** by praising children for trying new foods. However, favourite foods should not be used as a reward to encourage children to eat foods they do not like. Food is not used as a reward or punishment.
- **Pressure to eat** - we do not force children to finish everything on their plate. Instead children have smaller servings at first, with the opportunity to have second helpings if they finish the first serving
- **No child goes hungry** or without. If after encouragement to try a child chooses not to eat the food on offer a simple alternative will be offered (plain pasta, rice

toast etc.) A child will still be offered dessert even if they have not eaten all of their lunch

- In addition, staff are aware of children's eating habits to help **support healthy portion sizes / portion control**

### **Communicating with children and families**

It is important that parents and carers are included in discussions around the food at Honeycroft. We do this by;

- Providing information about the routine for meals and snacks in our Parent Pack
- Sharing our food policy with parents / carers and wider community on the Honeycroft website
- Giving parents and carers regular feedback on how well, and what, their children are eating via the Tapestry Care Diary
- Including the lunch menu in the weekly newsletter for parents and carers
- Including the children when evaluating and planning future menus
- Including the Food Supervisor when planning and delivering activities involving food, and when talking to families about food.

### **Rewards, celebrations and special events and birthdays**

It is important that children are given the opportunity to celebrate special occasions. However, many foods and drinks served at celebrations can be high in saturated fat, sugar and salt, and therefore have limited nutritional value for young children. When there are a lot of children in the same setting, there can be so many special occasions, such as birthdays, that children could end up eating these foods too frequently. Therefore, at Honeycroft we celebrate these events in different ways to reduce the amount of high fat, sugar and salt foods children eat and we ask children not to bring food and drink in from home.

### **Promoting good oral health and helping reduce tooth decay in children**

We support good oral health by:

- Reducing the consumption of food and drinks containing sugars whilst at Honeycroft
- Supporting children to brush their teeth after lunch time at Honeycroft and understand the importance of cleaning their teeth regularly at home and eating healthily
- Working with parents to emphasise good oral health, and the importance of visiting the dentist on a regular basis.

## **Sustainability**

It is important that we reduce the impact we have on the environment by shopping and cooking in as sustainable a way as possible including;

- Reducing the amount of food we waste by buying and preparing only the amount of food we need
- Choosing seasonal and locally grown food wherever possible
- Buying cooking oils that are not made from palm oil or choosing those which use palm oil from sustainable sources
- Recycling packaging wherever possible.

## APPENDIX

A guide for staff. To be displayed in the children's kitchen area.

### Food and the curriculum

Learning about and through food is integrated into the seven areas of learning and development and is considered throughout Honeycroft's educational programme. Children should be given the opportunity to regularly grow, shop, prepare and cook food.

#### Learning about food fits with our curriculum offer

1. **Personal, social and emotional development** - Meal times offer children experiences to taste different foods, overcome dislikes and learn how to share.
2. **Physical development** - Fine and gross motor skills can be developed through activities such as gardening, using knives and forks, preparing food, and washing up.
3. **Literacy** - Many stories involve food, where food comes from and about food for special occasions and from different cultures.
4. **Mathematics** - Activities such as counting out spoons when setting the table or measuring ingredients when cooking support numeracy skills.
5. **Communication and language** - Sitting around a table eating food together is a good way to teach conversation and social skills.
6. **Understanding the world** - The seasons and where food comes from including food from different cultures – growing fruit and vegetables teaches children about where food comes from, about life cycles, about gardening and how to look after plants.
7. **Expressive arts and design** - Art activities can engage children with food and alert them to different colours and shapes.

### Cooking with children

Cooking with children is both an enjoyable activity in its own right and an effective way of encouraging all children to try and eat a wide range of foods. Before staff plan any cooking activity you should speak to the Food Supervisor who will advise and support you to make sure you select an appropriate recipe, gather the correct resources and order the ingredients required.

1. Plan carefully and make sure you have everything you need before you start.
2. Check the recipe carefully and make a list of everything you need, including equipment.
3. Avoid going into cupboards or leaving the room once you have started.
4. Make your cooking sessions as safe as possible by having clear, clean surfaces and removing hazards.
5. Before you start, tie back long hair, remove all jewellery, roll up long sleeves, wash hands thoroughly and put on an apron.
6. Allow plenty of time and be ready for a mess! Expect it to take twice as long as usual when cooking with children depending on how many are involved and how much supervision they need.
7. Several people can share the making of one dish. Make sure children all have a job to do to keep them engaged.
8. Look for all the learning opportunities in cooking together, see *Food and the curriculum* section above for further ideas.
9. Don't forget the tasting part of the learning to finish off the experience and evaluate how the activity went to ensure you learn any improvements for the future.