

Saracens Bell Lane Children's Centre

Food and Drink Statement

Aims

As a Healthy Early Years London setting we want to ensure that we promote the health and well-being of the whole setting community through all aspects of food and nutrition and provide consistent messages to children, parents and staff.

Our food meets the 'Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines' for Early Years settings in England

<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/media/9750/eat-well-practical-guide-final-check.pdf>

We consider sustainability when choosing foods to serve:

<https://www.firststepsnutrition.org/eating-sustainably/>

Within our Early Years provision our meals and snacks are scheduled at regular times

Either a meal or a snack is offered to children at least every 1½ – 3 hours. Each of the nursery rooms include a 'snack

time' consisting of either fruit or vegetables provided by the parents. Those children that attend over the lunch period, they either provide their own packed lunch or serve themselves food provided by the school main kitchen. This is because children have small stomachs and high nutrient needs as they grow and develop, to play and learn. Only drinking water or milk is provided. Fresh drinking water is available at all times.

We encourage children to serve age appropriate portion sizes

Staff support children in our care to have small portion sizes on child sized plates. It is better for children to ask for seconds than to serve themselves too much. Children are not praised for finishing the food on their plate but for trying different food types. This helps children to recognise when they are hungry and when they have eaten enough. Snacks served are mini-meals, with components as healthy as mealtime choices.

Meal and snack times are relaxed, calm and with shared conversation

Meal and snack times are recognised as an important time to develop verbal skills as well as a time to learn about healthy eating. We eat with the children at mealtimes and eat the same food. We can easily offer help, role model good manners and eating behaviour, direct conversation, and create a calm and relaxed eating environment. At the same time, we can supervise the children eating. At mealtimes the Children come together and sit at low level tables and chairs in groupings of up to 8 children. The children are supported with appropriate levels of staffing to ensure the learning experience is positive. Snack times are relaxed, children are encouraged by staff to access the table which is located in a quiet area of the room alongside their peers.

Children are encouraged to try healthy food

Children are encouraged to have a little of the different dishes on their plate and have a balanced diet. Dried fruit is not served as part of a snack as this can cause tooth decay. Children are allowed to say 'no' to foods and all food served is healthy. Food is not used as a reward or punishment. Children are not praised for finishing the food on their plate but will be praised for trying different foods.

We use food to support the development of children

All children in our setting are given opportunities to explore food using their different senses. Children are involved in food growing and in food preparation, such as simple cold dishes; sandwiches, fruit salads and dips. Children are encouraged and helped to be successful in whatever self-feeding and self-serving they are capable of doing to support their growing independence, for example using low level serving bowls. Food is served in a form that young children can eat with minimum assistance and without choking; the texture changing from soft mashed food to adult texture by the age of 10 - 12 months.

Parents and/or carers are given information on the meals and snacks provided

We inform parents and/or carers how much their child ate during the day and foods they particularly enjoyed or tried. Children benefit when parents and practitioners share information and work together. Parents/Carers are provided with the lunch menu. In addition, they are made aware of snack options. Menu planning includes incorporating ideas and suggestions from both children and their parent/carer. The families have the option of providing a healthy and balanced packed lunch.

We support parents to do the best for their children

We ask for food brought from home to meet voluntary food and drink guidelines for Early Years settings in England, We encourage eligible pregnant women and mothers with children under four to register with the Healthy Start scheme and access the weekly food vouchers and free Healthy Start vitamins. We provide effective support and information for parents and carers about all aspects of feeding infants and young children. Families are invited to attend healthy eating/ cooking workshops which also promote healthy lifestyles. In addition the Children's Centre outreach staff are able to provide bespoke support.

We provide suitable food for all

Children with complex needs have their nutrition needs taken into account. A food/drink substitution, made in the case of allergies or other dietary requirements, will be similar in nutrient content to the food/drink it replaces. Foods served reflect the ethnicity and cultures of all children using the provision. Parents and/or carers are asked for advice to ensure the needs of all children are met and we learn from carers and parents' experiences and suggestions.

Special occasions e.g. birthdays and celebrations

We promote children's birthdays by singing 'happy birthday' within the group rooms. Saracens Bell Lane has a no birthday cake/treat policy in line with promoting healthy lifestyles. If food is used for any other celebrations it forms part of a balanced meal provision and doesn't replace healthy foods.

Only healthy drinks are provided

Water and milk are the best drinks for children's teeth and bodies. We provide semi skimmed milk and or water at snack time. Drinking water is available at all other times. Juice (even diluted juice) or other sugary drinks are not provided.

We have a supportive breastfeeding environment

For those accessing the Children's Centre services/staff/ visitors, we have refrigerated storage space for expressed breast milk which is clearly labelled with name and date. Mothers are welcome to breastfeed (or express breast milk) and a secluded space will be provided, if required. We can direct mothers to where they can access further breastfeeding support.

We have received appropriate training

We have received food safety and hygiene training if involved in preparing and handling food. We have undertaken other relevant training to keep me up to date on healthy drinks and foods suitable for children under five.