Nutrition and Mealtimes Policy

At Muddy Puddles we believe that mealtimes should be happy, social occasions for children and staff alike. We promote shared, enjoyable positive interactions at these times. We are committed to offering children healthy and nutritious snacks, which meet individual needs and requirements, following the Department for Education nutrition guidance.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Allergies and allergic reactions policy.

Our approach to food and healthy eating

• No child is ever left alone when eating or drinking to minimise the risk of choking, and a qualified paediatric first aider is always present during meal and snack times

• Staff set a good example, eat with the children, and demonstrate good table manners. Meal and snack times are organised so that they are social occasions in which children and staff participate in small groups. During meal and snack times children are encouraged to use appropriate table manners and staff promote conversation to support social development

• Staff use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drinks, and feeding themselves

• Any child who shows signs of distress at being faced with a meal they do not like will have their food removed without any fuss. If a child does not finish their first course, they will still be given a helping of any second dish

• Children who refuse to eat at the mealtime are offered food later in the day

• Children are given time to eat at their own pace and are not rushed.

Drinks

• Only milk and water are provided as drinks to promote oral health

• Fresh drinking water is always available and accessible. It is frequently offered to children and babies, and intake is monitored

• In hot weather staff will encourage children to drink more water to keep them hydrated.

Baby feeding and weaning

• We follow babies' individual feeding patterns following conversations with parents. We regularly review these to ensure they continue to meet the baby's needs

• We feed babies responsively according to their needs and support mothers with breastfeeding through making provision for expressed breastmilk

• We prepare infant formula milk if required, following NHS guidelines

• Weaning is introduced in collaboration with parents, including discussions about the stage their baby is at, the types of foods and textures their baby is eating at home and how these are presented to the baby; no assumptions are made based on the age of the baby

Management of food allergies and dietary needs

• Individual dietary requirements are respected. Before a child joins the nursery, we gather information from parents regarding their children's dietary needs, including any special dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies that a child has, and any special health requirements. All information is shared with staff and displayed in each room

• Where appropriate, we will carry out a risk assessment in the case of allergies and work alongside parents to put into place an individual dietary/allergy plan for their child. This will be regularly reviewed and any changes shared with all staff

• Staff show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. They do not use a child's diet or allergy as a label for the child, or make a child feel singled out because of their diet or allergy.

Provision for cultural and dietary preferences

• Cultural differences in eating habits are respected.

Learning about food and cooking with children

• Staff support children to make healthy choices and understand the need for healthy eating

• We promote positive attitudes to healthy eating through play, growing, shopping and cooking opportunities and discussions.

Celebrations and special occasions

• We will sometimes celebrate special occasions with treats such as cake, sweets or biscuits. These will be given at mealtimes to help prevent tooth decay and not spoil the child's appetite

• We do not allow parents to bring in cakes on special occasions

• We consider celebrating with alternatives such as stickers and badges, bubbles, fruit platters, choosing a favourite story, becoming a special helper, playing a party game, dancing and/or singing their favourite song, and so on

Food safety and hygiene

• All staff who prepare and handle food are competent to do so and receive training in food hygiene which is updated every three years

• All staff are trained in preparing foods safely to avoid the risk of choking, following the Foods Standards Agency guidelines

• All staff are aware of the symptoms and treatments for allergies and anaphylaxis

• All staff are aware of the differences between allergies and intolerances, including that they need to maintain vigilance as children can develop allergies at any time

• In the very unlikely event of any food poisoning affecting two or more children on the premises, whether or not this may arise from food offered at the nursery, we will inform Ofsted as soon as reasonably practical and in all cases within 14 days. We will also inform the relevant health agencies and follow any advice given.

This policy was adopted on	Signed on behalf of the nursery	Date for review
01/03/2026	Heather Black	01/03/2027