SANDCASTLES POLICY

*SAFEGUARDING & PROMOTING CHILDREN’S WELFARE*

NUTRITION

***Healthy eating and physical activity are essential for proper growth and development.***

*Hunger prevents children achieving high level learning – detailed by Ferre Laevers involvement scales. Sugar rushes put unnecessary and unhealthy burden on young bodies with blood sugar directly impacting children’s capacity for self regulation.*

*2018 - Across Lancashire a high proportion (one third) of young children aged 2-12 years are currently overweight. Locally we are seeing an increasing number of children requiring medication to combat constipation. Local primary schools have implemented a ‘mile a day’ programme and are currently reviewing their menus. There are very concerning trends.*

*Treating dental decay is now the most common reason for paediatric hospital admissions across Lancashire with more than 1/5 of 5 year olds having decayed teeth.*

During Summer 2018 we undertook a review of Sandcastles menu and meals and approach to exercise and eating.

We took advice from:

* the children’s food trust <http://childrensfoodtrust.org.uk/wp/childrens-food-trust/early-years/nurseries-preschool-childrens-centres/>
* Healthy portion sizes and healthy foods <https://www.infantandtoddlerforum.org/toddlers-to-preschool/little-peoples-plates/portion-sizes/>
* Lancashire school meals as served at local primary schools
* Dental health advice
* our local community pharmacist – regarding medicating constipation in children
* our linked Health visitor Emily McCoombe
* Feedback and suggestions from parents
* Suggestions from Alistair Bryce Clegg, Curiosity approach and Leeds University regarding physical activity and learning.

Children are encouraged to eat a **varied diet** as it is more likely to contain all the vitamins and minerals the body needs whilst building good habits for the future. Current NHS advice suggests all children under 5 years should take daily vitamin drops (available cheaply from HV clinics). Children need to eat regularly so we offer cereal breakfast 8-8:30, lunch at 12.00noon, and snacks at 10.00am 2/2:30pm and 4.00pm. We aim to **educate** children about different foods and teach good habits for future eating patterns. We promote habits for health from ‘settling in’ sessions where children’s food preferences and habits are discussed.

Children should eat foods from the four main food groups daily:

- carbs -bread, other cereals, potatoes

* fruit and vegetables
* milk and dairy foods
* meat, fish or vegetarian alternatives.

Our lunch **menu** for the week is shared with parents. The menu aims to offer **all** children here suitable food e.g., pasta and lentil bolognaise on a day vegetarians stay for lunch - (wholemeal bread is always handy to make a sandwich for any child we cannot tempt towards a particular lunch and an alternative to dessert can always be found in the fruit bowl).

Children are seated at the table and encouraged to **serve themselves**, eat a child sized portion, **feed themselves,** demonstrate to one another and younger children how to eat socially and develop **good manners.** They are given sufficient **time to eat,** but not expected to sit for ages (lunch takes 25-45 minutes). Adults sit with the children and model good manners and conversation. We serve **child size portions** but second and 3rd) helpings are always available.

Snack times include a drink of water or milk, carbohydrate and fruit/veg. Toast, rice cakes, sandwiches, teacakes, breadsticks, fruit or very occasionally biscuits, cake or hot chocolate.

We encourage children towards trying **different vegetables**. We also disguise vegetables within meals by blending into sauces.

We offer **pasteurised semi-skimmed milk or water** as a mid session drink (in a lidded cup if essential). We never serve fizzy drinks and whenever children are thirsty we advocate **water** - it quenches thirst, does not spoil appetite or damage teeth. On cold days at Beach school we serve warm sugar free Vimto, we feel keeping warm out ways our juice ban during these sessions.

We do our utmost to cater for **food allergies** and **special diets.** We request allergy care plans and as much information about suitable foods and potential reactions as possible from parents and in some cases families may be asked to bring food in whilst our cooks design safe meal plans. Whilst we would not routinely serve nitrate laden ham if this is the only protein a child will eat at home or here we will serve it whilst collaborating with parents to try to find healthier alternatives.

Parents and carers will always be advised if their child is **not eating well.** And we will agree how to encourage individual children. We avoid using stickers, stamps and similar rewards during the majority of our day however at lunch we often find these effective.

We work in accordance with **Food Hygiene** guidance. Staff complete online food safety training.

We never force a child to eat. Withholding food will not be used as a **punishment** nor sweets as a **treat.** Instead of insisting children eat in line with DfE guidance we ask children to describe foods – e.g. are they crunchy / what do they smell like, sometimes we do this as adult led activities with no expectation to eat the foods.

**Food related activities** are planned into our curriculum - baking, growing seeds, pretend shop, collage with pasta and rice, printing with fruit and vegetables, tasting, smelling and feeling activities. We take care to show respect to families some of whom may find playing with food wasteful. We also collect for our local food bank during appeals. Our cooking club is planned to balance children’s enthusiasm with our commitment to healthy eating – we do make desserts and treats but we also prepare savoury foods.

**Food from around the world** features in celebrating festivals - e.g. Chinese New Year, Shrove Tuesday, Diwali.

Children are not left alone at any time, but certainly never when eating, in case of **choking.** First aiders are always on duty. Our preference is to ensure all our team are trained in paediatric first aid.

Children are encouraged towards daily physical activities and to spend time **outdoors** to ensure that they have opportunity to be exposed to sunlight which helps their bodies to make vitamin D. (N.B. sunburn precautions are observed.)

**Physical activities** are planned into our routine to encourage appetite, build up muscle strength and aid overall fitness.

An increasing number of children are now **medicated to ease constipation** – we work in partnership with these parents to ensure their children are encouraged to eat a healthy diet, sufficient hydration and take part in daily physical activity to promote a healthy bowel.

Helen O’Hagan. 30 Nov 2024 To be reviewed by Nov 2027