**ALLOWAY EARLY YEARS CENTRE**

**FOOD AND NUTIRITION POLICY**

RATIONALE

*“Eating well is essential for healthy growth and development in childhood. Children’s early experiences with food, including the foods they are offered and the eating patterns they are exposed to, both at home and outside the home, can shape future eating habits.*” (Setting the Table, 2025)

*“The early years are considered a crucial time to reduce health inequalities. Providing healthy and nutritious meals and snacks in childcare settings is important, particularly in meeting the needs of families who could benefit the most.”*

(Setting the Table, 2025)

*“I have the right to good quality health care, to clean water and good food”. (Article 24)*

(UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, 1989)

AIM

To provide children with healthy, nutritious snacks whilst attending the Early Years Centre.

To ensure the snack and lunch environment is nurturing, calming and encourages choice and independence.

OBJECTIVES

To ensure children receive the opportunities stated in the Health and Social Care Standards (Scottish Government, 2017):

* 1: I experience high quality care and support that is right for me (including Eating and drinking)
* 1.33 I can choose suitably presented and healthy meals and snacks, including fresh fruit and vegetables, and participate in menu planning.
* 1.34 If I need help with eating and drinking, this is carried out in a dignified way and my personal preferences are respected.
* 1.35 I can enjoy unhurried snack and mealtimes in as relaxed an atmosphere as possible.
* 1.36 If I wish, I can share snacks and meals alongside other people using and working in the service if appropriate.
* 1.37 My meals and snacks meet my cultural and dietary needs, beliefs and preferences.
* 1.38 If appropriate, I can choose to make my own meals, snacks and drinks, with support if I need it, and can choose to grow, cook and eat my own food where possible.
* 1.39 I can drink fresh water at all times.

IMPLEMENTATION

Snack

* We aim to provide the children with choices in the food that they eat. They are involved in planning healthy and nutritious snack menus each week.
* A selection of healthy foods, including plenty of fruit and vegetables and a variety of other foods will be provided at snack.
* Semi-skimmed milk and still water is available at snack time and water is also available to all children throughout the session, if required.
* The snack allergen content of each item will be placed in reception
* The menu will provide the children with a varied diet following setting the table guidance.
* Children are encouraged to follow snack routines and try the different foods on offer.
* If a child does not want to eat the snack provided, they will not be forced to. We will only continue to encourage them.
* Parents/carers will be advised if their child is not eating well.
* Parents/carers of the children on special diets are asked to provide as much information as possible about suitable foods for their child. Dietary requirements and allergies are displayed in medicine cupboard within playroom.
* At Alloway Early Years Centre, staff will sit with children while they eat their snack and will provide a good role model for healthy eating.
* All staff will complete food hygiene coast module.
* Children will be provided with oily fish as a choice weekly if not part of the lunch menu.

Lunch Provision

* Rolling lunches have been implemented at Alloway Early Years Centre.
* We provide a quality lunch experience which support children’s developing social skills through opportunities for conversation between children and adults, learning to use cutlery correctly, developing good table manners and tasting and trying different foods.
* Children are actively involved in the lunch process both in setting up and tidying away in the same way as they are involved in snack.
* Independence is promoted as children are encouraged to serve themselves from serving dishes placed in the centre of the table.
* Staff are positive role models for the children through:
  + Setting a good example at mealtimes
* Introducing and modelling good manners
* Role modelling conversations
* Supporting children to eat
* Promoting independence
* Encouraging children to try new foods
* Monitoring portion sizes
* An adult should be seated at the table with the children. It is not necessary for the adult to wear aprons and/ or gloves as they are not preparing food.
* The lunch menu is displayed in the EYC lunchroom.
* Staff lunchtimes are staggered to allow for sufficient staff to deliver a quality lunch experience.
* Where children bring a packed lunch, this should be in a clean plastic bag or equivalent for storage in a fridge. A reusable zipable pocket could be used. For portion control this would be A5 size.
* At lunch time packed lunches should be set out and served to the children on a plate.
* Healthy packed lunches should be promoted with parents.

(Adapted from ‘Guideline for lunch provision in Early Years Centres’, South Ayrshire Council, 2019)

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually or as required in light of experience or any new national/local initiatives

Updated Sept 25 – K. McCallum