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Nutrition policy

At St Thomas Preschool we strive to be a nut-free zone.

We are part of Healthy Early Years London, a London programme where we are regularly visited to ensure we meet HEY standards of healthy food, healthy options and effective physical activities and areas. We received our Silver standard for this.

The sharing of refreshments plays an important part in the social life of the preschool as well as reinforcing children's understanding of the importance of healthy eating. We aim to provide nutritious food, which meets the children's individual dietary needs.

We follow these procedures to promote healthy eating in our setting:

- Before a child starts to attend the setting, we ask their parents about their dietary requirements, including any allergies.
- Information regarding the child's needs will be recorded in the child profile and the 'all about me' which will be passed to our housekeeper .
- We regularly consult with parents to ensure this record is kept up to date, but it is parents' responsibility to keep us up to date.
- We display current information about individual children's dietary needs so that all staff are fully informed about it.
- We implement systems to ensure that children receive only food and drink that is consistent with their dietary needs and preferences, as well as parents' wishes.
- We plan menus in advance, involving the children and staff in the planning.
- We display the menus for parents to view.
- We provide nutritious food for all meals and snacks, avoiding large quantities of saturated fat, sugar, salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings.
- We include a variety of foods in the four main food groups:
 - dairy foods
 - foods
 - grains, cereals and starchy vegetables
 - fruit and vegetables

Our menus are adjusted to meet the Voluntary Food and Drinks Guidelines for Early Years as recommended.

- We are especially vigilant where we have a child who has a known allergy to nuts/dairy etc.
- Through discussion with the parents and research reading by staff, we obtain information about the dietary rules of the religious groups to which our families belong, and of vegetarians and vegans, as

well as about food allergies. We take account of this information in the provision of food and drinks.

- We provide a vegetarian selection of lunches, except when fish is added one day a week, but it is separate so children can have just the vegetables.
- We require staff to show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. Staff 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 allergies.
- We organise meal and snack times as social occasions, to encourage discussion and information regarding what the children are eating as well as general conversation in which both children and staff participate; we do this with all the children.
- We use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink and feeding themselves as much as possible.
- We provide utensils that are appropriate to their age and stage of development and that take account of the eating practices of their cultures.
- We have fresh drinking water available constantly and children have free access to have a drink when they choose to.
- We inform parents who provide food for their children about the storage facilities available in the setting.
- For young children who drink milk, we provide semi skimmed and whole pasteurised milk.
- Children's understanding of the importance of healthy eating will be reinforced at preschool.
- The preschool is committed to providing a varied, balanced, nutritious diet, using fresh and wholesome foods, wherever possible containing no additives or artificial colourings.
- All food is prepared and cooked on the preschool premises.
- Once a year (normally March) we ensure stocks run low in order to replenish afresh and ensure no overstock or unused stock.

Recipes

Parents are encouraged to contribute ideas and practical help. Parents are welcome to participate in cooking activities with the children.

Qualifications

The cook and other members of staff have food and hygiene certificates which are updated as necessary.

Inspections

Food and hygiene inspections are carried out and any recommendations implemented. We have 5 stars.

Special events

Children and parents enjoy celebrating special occasions and sharing food with their friends. For children's birthdays we encourage parents/carers to provide savoury foods or cake by prior arrangement with their key person. We choose to promote healthy eating habits. All cakes must adhere to preschool dietary requirements and parents/carers must inform us of all ingredients. This 'party' forms part of the children's regular teatime.

At mealtimes:

- adults will sit with the children in small groups to promote a family atmosphere

- children will be encouraged to follow good hygiene practices, such as washing hands before and after eating and not talking with their mouths full
- staff will praise and encourage the children to give them a sense of achievement and encouragement
- children will not be made to eat against their wishes, they will however be encouraged to try their food
- refusal to eat will not be punished
- parents will be informed of their child's eating habits and staff will work with them to address any issues and develop an appropriate plan for them both to work to, ensuring consistency at home and preschool
- we will aim to accommodate parents' wishes when appropriate for the child's stage of development.

This policy was adapted in May 2023 and will be reviewed in May 2024

