



North Islington Nursery School  
Food and Nutrition Policy

Agreed: September 2025

Review: September 2027

## **Aim of the Policy**

At North Islington Nursery School, we are committed to ensuring that children are provided with healthy, balanced and nutritious foods which enable them to:

- Get the right amount of nutrients and energy they need while they are growing rapidly.
- Develop positive eating habits early on. Children's early experiences with food can shape future eating habits which impact on long term health including maintaining a healthy weight and good oral health.
- Be supported by knowledgeable adults that prepare and provide food and drinks in a safe and calm environment.

This policy also ensures that children who have varying dietary needs are supported accordingly.

## **Contents of this policy include:**

- Our approach to healthy eating for children under the age of 5
- Information on how our policy is developed
- Information about our menus and our partnership with Caterlink
- Guidance on weaning, breast and formula feeding
- Our mealtime experience including how children learn about foods
- Celebrations and special occasions
- Management of food allergies and dietary needs
- Supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities
- Provision for cultural and dietary preferences
- Food brought from home
- Cooking with children
- Food safety and hygiene
- Sustainability

This policy has been created using a range of national documents and publications including Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance (May 2025), [www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/baby/weaning/ Common allergens.pdf](http://www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/baby/weaning/Common_allergens.pdf)

This policy has been drawn up in consultation with staff, parents/carers and the Governing Body. It will be reviewed every 3 years or sooner if statutory requirements within the EYFS change.

## **Healthy Eating**

At North Islington Nursery School, we ensure that the food and drinks offered to children provide the nutrients needed for rapid growth and development, support brain and immune function, build a strong body and healthy teeth, and prevent short- and long-term health issues like obesity. This involves offering a variety of fruits, vegetables,

starchy foods, protein sources, and full-fat dairy, while limiting unhealthy fats, sugar, and salt, and ensuring good hydration with water and milk.

Our school works in partnership with Caterlink whose chef cooks fresh meals on site every day for breakfast, lunch and tea. Snacks are also provided twice a day. Menus are changed termly and alternate every 3 weeks. A copy of the menu can be found in the school reception area and the chef also provides meal information on the board outside the kitchen. Meals provided will reflect cultural diversity and have been developed by a nutritionist and a member of Islington's nutrition and well-being team. Caterlink ensures that all meat main meals are cooked fresh in the kitchen on site and are made with Red Tractor/Farm assured fresh meat.

## **Breast, Formula Feeding and Weaning**

Before any child attends the nursery school, staff, led by the allocated Key person, will carry out a home visit where parents/carers can tell us about their child's stage of eating. Using this information, we will draw up a weaning/feeding plan so that all staff are aware of the child's feeding needs. Staff at the school are trained and experienced to know the signs of when a baby is hungry and they will be fed responsively according to individual needs. This information will be shared with parents/carers at the end of each session.

In the UK, exclusive breastfeeding is recommended for around the first 6 months of a baby's life with continued breastfeeding throughout the first year. We fully support this approach, and the baby room kitchen is equipped to store, prepare and sterilize bottles, teats and other equipment safely. Parents/carers must bring pouches or bottles of breastmilk that are clearly labelled with the child's name and date. The NHS Start for Life provides information on the benefits of [Breastfeeding - NHS](#).

If a baby is not exclusively breastfed then we advise that first infant formula (first milk) should be the addition or alternative to breast milk for babies in the first year of life, unless an alternative has been prescribed by a doctor. The NHS provides information on types of formula [www.nhs.uk/baby/breastfeeding-and-bottle-feeding/bottle-feeding/types-of-formula](http://www.nhs.uk/baby/breastfeeding-and-bottle-feeding/bottle-feeding/types-of-formula). Parents/carers must provide their child's formula milk (labelled) and when bringing in a new tin/carton, this must be unopened and sealed. Staff will use the guidance from NHS Start for Life on how to make up infant formula and how to sterilise equipment [www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/baby/feeding-your-baby/bottle-feeding/how-to-make-up-a-feed/how-to-sterilise-equipment](http://www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/baby/feeding-your-baby/bottle-feeding/how-to-make-up-a-feed/how-to-sterilise-equipment) [www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/baby/feeding-your-baby/bottle-feeding/how-to-make-up-a-feed](http://www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/baby/feeding-your-baby/bottle-feeding/how-to-make-up-a-feed).

In partnership with parents/carers, staff will establish a weaning routine for children from 6 months old. It is essential that the setting is aware of foods that parents/carers are trying with their baby at home and which approach to weaning is being taken. Once an initial plan has been made, staff will allow the baby to take the lead in letting them know when they have had enough or when they are hungry and want more. Staff will use the guidance from NHS start for Life when developing a safe and healthy weaning programme for every child [Weaning - Best Start in Life - NHS](#)

## **Mealtimes**

At North Islington Nursery School mealtimes are 'family style'. Children are seated at a table, and meals are served from the table. Those that are able, are encouraged to serve themselves food and drinks. Mealtimes are a sociable time where staff encourage children to find out about and discuss the foods they are eating. Children are also encouraged to state their preferences and are never forced to eat foods that they do not like. However, staff will encourage children to try everything served so that they benefit from a wide range of nutritional foods of different textures. No food is considered a 'treat' and food will never be withheld because of behaviour.

Younger children have access to low chairs with straps (alternative to a highchair) so that they fit comfortably under the table.

The adults sitting with children at mealtimes will talk positively about the foods served and our menus reflect and celebrate diversity and cultural differences.

Mealtimes are not rushed, and children are expected to develop table manners, using words such as 'please' and 'thank you'.

All staff undertake Food Hygiene training, and this is renewed every 3 years.

Snack times are always supervised, and children are seated when they eat. Sometimes snack time may take place outside, but children will always be asked to wash their hands before eating snack and they will be always seated.

Those children that are able, will be expected to help clean away after mealtimes. This may mean scraping plates, putting cups and plates onto the trolley or sometimes, washing up milk and water cups from snack time.

All children have access to water. In the baby and toddler rooms, children have a labelled water bottle or cup with their photo and name. In the nursery class, children have access to a water cooler and clean cups. Milk is offered at snack times in the morning and afternoon.

There will always be at least one member of staff in each room at mealtimes and snack times who has a full and relevant paediatric first aid qualification. All staff at the setting that work directly with children undertake this training every 3 years.

## **Celebrations and Special Occasions**

At North Islington Nursery School, we believe that food is often a way of bringing people together. We host annual International Evening where families are proud to share dishes from their culture and traditions. On these occasions, we ask parents/carers to label all dishes with ingredients, highlighting any potential allergens. We also ask that dishes made to share do not contain high levels of salt and sugar.

For birthdays and other events such as Christmas parties (where parents/carers may not be present to supervise what their child is eating) we ask that a healthy alternative to cake and sweet treats are offered. For example, parents are encouraged to provide fruit to celebrate their child's birthday.

## **Management of Food Allergies and Dietary Needs**

During a Home Visit, staff collect information about children's dietary needs and any allergy/intolerance they may have. If any child has an allergy/intolerance, we will need to obtain a letter from the child's G.P or dietician stating what the allergy is. We then create a meal plan for the child so that our kitchen staff know which meals they need to adapt to meet the child's needs. If an allergy or intolerance is suspected but not confirmed, staff will work with parents/carers to create a meal plan where certain foods are avoided for a period. This will be reviewed at 6-week intervals.

All staff will be aware of which children have foods that they cannot eat, and their plans will be in a folder in their class. There is also a daily overview sheet of the children that have an allergy/intolerance, including their photo so that all staff are clear about any restrictions. Similarly, staff will also know which children are meat eaters, vegetarian, pescetarian or vegan.

Meals for children who have an allergy will be provided separately by the kitchen and will be labelled with the child's name.

Where a child may be at risk of being exposed to foods that are harmful, such as in the baby room where children may reach out for foods that they cannot eat, staff will create a risk assessment as part of their medical plan. This risk assessment may state that the child should eat separately from others. This may involve a child sitting slightly out of reach of other children's foods or it may mean that a child may need to sit on a separate table from other children. At all times, an adult will be sitting with all children.

Staff are aware of the symptoms of an allergic reaction, and they will also know which children have an epi pen or similar and will follow the actions set out in their medical plan in the event of an emergency.

**We are a NO NUT setting.**

## **Provision for Cultural and Dietary Preferences**

At North Islington Nursery School, we offer a vegetarian, pescetarian or vegan menu for those children who do not eat meat for religious or other reasons. We do not serve pork at the setting. To ensure that we support children feel connected to their cultural heritage, our menus include a wide range of international and traditional dishes.

## **Supporting Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities**

Some children at North Islington Nursery School may have a specific dietary need due to physical or developmental issue which may affect their ability to eat independently. This may mean that staff provide 1:1 support and are trained by a medical professional to meet the child's needs. A medical plan will be in place and any necessary training for staff will be completed before a child can stay for mealtimes where there are additional feeding needs.

Sometimes, children may have an aversion to a particular food or the texture of some foods, and this information will be discussed at a home visit. In agreement with parents/carers, staff will draw up potential mealtime plans that may be different to the typical menu offer. Where appropriate staff will always offer a little bit of everything that other children are being served but may at times also provide additional agreed foods so that all children can eat. In consultation with parents/carers and any other professional involved with the family, we will endeavour to ensure that these additional foods are of nutritious value and low in salt and sugar. All adaptations will be recorded and for some children a daily menu of what a child has eaten may be kept. Particularly where there are concerns that a child is eating very little or is struggling to achieve/maintain a healthy weight.

Staff will ensure that the environment where children are eating meets the needs of all children. There may be times where some children prefer to eat sitting alone or in a quieter space within the room. We will always liaise with parents/carers to discuss their child's needs and our plans to support them before we make any adaptations.

## **Food Brought from Home**

Any foods brought from home will only be shared at special events and occasions where a child's parent/carer is present. The responsibility is then passed to the parent/carer to decide if their child can consume the shared foods.

We ask that foods brought into school for special occasions are low in salt/sugar and we offer ideas for healthy options if parents/carers are unsure of what to bring. Foods containing nuts are banned from the setting.

Except for when we are supporting children with additional needs and/or a disability, we do not allow parents/carers to bring in food from home to replace food we serve. We believe that our menu is more than adequate in providing children with a healthy and balanced diet whilst they are at the setting.

When children are required to bring a packed lunch to school for an outing parents/carers are reminded to ensure that their child's lunch is healthy and nutritious. We ask parents/carers to avoid packing sweet treats and those food items with a high salt content. We also ask parents/carers to only send their child with water or whole/semi skimmed milk.

## **Cooking with Children**

Like all teaching and learning experiences at North Islington Nursery School we encourage all children to participate and cooking is no exception. Often, we will cook/prepare food for special occasions or when teaching a specific subject area. We try to ensure that our recipes allow children to develop a range of techniques such as stirring, rolling shaping, cutting etc whilst also learning about a wide range of ingredients, tastes and textures. We enjoy growing our own fruits, vegetables and herbs which we use in seasonal cooking activities. All our cooking recipes are low in salt, and sugar and we avoid baking sweet treats where sugar is added.

## **Food Safety and Hygiene**

All staff that serve meals with children will have completed a full and relevant paediatric first aid certificate which is renewed every 3 years. Staff also complete a Food Hygiene course every 3 years that covers how to plan, prepare and serve meals safely.

All main meals are prepared in our school kitchen which is maintained by the school and inspected by Caterlink and Food Standards Agency annually.

Any staff member or child that is involved in the preparation of food must always wash their hands before handling food.

All fruit and vegetables are washed thoroughly before use.

Cloths for cleaning tables and washing up with the classrooms are colour coded to prevent cross contamination.

Cooking activities within the classrooms do not involve the handling of raw meat or fish.

## **Sustainability**

Food sustainability at North Islington Nursery School involves practices that ensure healthy, environmentally friendly food is provided while teaching children about where food comes from and how to reduce waste. We aim to include sourcing local and seasonal foods in our cooking activities with children and are confident that our catering company, Caterlink mirror this ethos whilst also minimizing ultra-processed foods.

We enjoy involving children in food growing and meal preparation and have our own dedicated growing space in the nursery garden. We have also created a compost area, promote recycling, and use calm, distraction-free mealtimes to foster mindful eating and a sustainable food culture.

