

Thomas Coram Centre and Nursery School

Healthy Nursery School Policy



**Thomas Coram Centre
and Nursery School
49 Mecklenburgh Square
London WC1N 2NY**



Reviewed and Approved: Summer 2023

Next review: Autumn 2026

Reviewed every three years in line with Little Steps to Healthy Lives accreditation

Our Commitment

At Thomas Coram Nursery School we are committed to promoting the health and well-being of each child, parent/carer and member of staff who is part of the school and community. We are proud to hold the bronze award for Little Steps to Healthy Lives (2023-2026) which will be attached when we receive the document.

Children's Views

We have a wide range of strategies for ensuring that children's views are taken into consideration and that they are involved in the decision-making process. For example, children help to devise the menus and develop the growing areas in the garden.

Parental Involvement

Parents are also actively involved and consulted on all aspects of the school's work. At Thomas Coram Nursery School we aim to support parents in promoting their children's health and enhance their own health and wellbeing. We have responded to their requests by prioritizing increased links with health practitioners. The school has a no smoking policy and there are groups to help parents stop smoking.

Staff Wellbeing

We are also very aware of the staff's health and wellbeing and have recently introduced community event days to introduce staff to strategies to combat stress and enhance wellbeing.

Multi-agency Expertise

We are fortunate in being able to involve a wide range of professionals to enrich the provision we offer. We can use these links to signpost parents and children for specific advice. Our Parents' Room contains resources for parents on a wide range of health-related issues.

Responsibility

As Head teacher, Perina Holness takes the lead on promoting health and wellbeing at the nursery school, liaising closely with team leaders, catering team and health professionals. This policy is promoted in the Staff and Parents' handbooks. We continually monitor our work to ensure that the provision we offer is fulfilling our aims. This monitoring process involves children, parents and colleagues and is overseen by the Governing body.

This policy is divided into three parts:

- Part 1 Healthy Eating and Dental Hygiene
- Part 2 Physical Activity
- Part 3 Emotional health and wellbeing

Part 1 **Healthy Eating**

At Thomas Coram Nursery School we are fortunate in having our own catering team who produce home-cooked food for children and staff each day. They work closely with Perina and colleagues across the school to ensure that the food we provide meets nutritional requirements and is enjoyed by the children. We also work with Health Improvement Practitioners at Camden Council who review our menus and provide training for the staff team. We incorporate the 'Five-a-Day' strategy into our daily menus.

Aims

Our aims are:

- To provide children under five years old with a wide and nutritionally balanced diet to develop their health, growth and well-being.
- To show children that meal times are a good time to socialise with each other and to share food together.
- To support children and parents to understand the importance of a broad and healthy diet.

Eating a Varied Diet

We believe that children should eat a varied diet because this is associated with better health as it is more likely to contain all the vitamins and minerals the body needs. The food provided is nutritious and meets the National Standards. They should eat foods from each of the four main food groups every day. The four main food groups are:

- Bread, other cereals and potatoes
- Fruit and vegetables
- Full fat milk and dairy foods
- Meat, fish and plant-based alternatives such as pulses (peas, beans, lentils and soya)

We understand the importance of having plenty of opportunities to drink water and children and adults have access to water throughout the day.

Healthy Eating and Dental Health

The curriculum we offer provides many opportunities for the children to find out about healthy eating. Under 'Physical Development' we look at our bodies and how to keep them healthy. Seasonal themes offer opportunities to find out about food. For example, looking at Harvest, and planting and growing, offers opportunities for children to grow their own food and think about their growth.

Sugary foods are strongly avoided and sweetened drinks are not served as they can encourage a liking for sweet foods in young children, can lead to tooth decay if consumed frequently, and tend to be high in calories and low in vitamins and minerals.

The healthy diet provided in nursery is the best possible diet for healthy teeth. Foods that contain sugar are eaten as part of a meal and the amount of sugar is significantly reduced. Snacks such as fruit, vegetables, rice cakes and bread sticks are nutritious and free of added sugar. Water and milk, which are the safest drinks for teeth, are provided between meals. Salt is not added to our cooked meals.

Dental health is an important issue in Camden where half of 5-year-old children have tooth decay. The DFE have made explicit the statutory requirement to promote the good oral health of children. Thomas Coram Centre aims to reduce dental problems related to diet by adopting this healthy eating policy alongside promoting robust oral hygiene practices.

We hold regular focus weeks where the importance of dental hygiene is actively promoted. Oral health is promoted with parents through regular updates and training opportunities provided by Camden NHS services. All families are encouraged to register with a dentist and share the contact details of with us.

Equal Opportunities

All children and their parents/carers should be respected as individuals and their food preferences and religious requirements should be accommodated. This is done by celebrating different festivals and encouraging families to share how they celebrate the festival and the food, which is associated with it. All that children bring with them to their place of care is their race, gender, family background, language culture and religion. This should be valued in order for children to feel accepted and accepting of themselves. It is important to value the contributions which different cultures and nationalities make to the variety of foods eaten.

Involving Parents/Carers

As with all aspects of our work, we seek to enter into a partnership with parents. We do this by:

- Making sure parent/carers are aware that we are committed to promoting healthy, varied and enjoyable food.
- Making menus available by displaying menus.
- Asking parents for suggestions for menus, teas etc.
- Giving clear information on what children eat each day.
- Finding out about special diets before the child starts, or developments as they happen e.g. Allergies.
- Working with parents to celebrate festivals.
- Regularly offering opportunities for parents to come to sessions about nutrition.

Adult Responsibilities

Adults have a key role in influencing children's attitudes and choices. Adults at Thomas Coram Nursery School seek to be positive role models by:

- Providing an opportunity for children to learn about food, food sources, nutrition, health, seasons and growing cycles and other people's ways of life.
- Talking about holidays and festivals as food plays an important part in most people's celebrations. We try to find healthy alternatives to the traditional sweet offerings that are given at so many festivals.
- Developing children's social skills - sitting in small groups at lunch times.
- Eating a small amount of the same food and drink as the children, to encourage children to taste new and different foods. (Staff do not eat their own food with the children).
- Encouraging a pleasant and social atmosphere at breakfast, lunch and tea-times, ensuring the environment is clean, neat and inviting. Children are encouraged to be independent - pouring their own drinks, buttering their own toast etc.
- Promoting the concept that mealtime is for eating but it is also a time for learning and socialising.
- Encouraging children to listen and take turns, speaking to each other without shouting.
- Supporting children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities when eating.
- Encouraging developing independence and confidence when children are table-setting and helping to clear up.
- Encouraging children to try the broad range of foods offered.
- Using meal times as an opportunity to talk about healthy eating.
- Teaching table manners i.e. to be seated, to encourage children not to talk with food in their mouths, to give children enough time to eat, to encourage children to use 'please' and 'thank you'.
- Encouraging health and safety when eating e.g. using utensils appropriately

Please note: We do not mash the children's food or mix it unless there is a medical/developmental reason. For example, we will give the children the jacket potato with the skin on, so they can develop their abilities to cut it and chew it.

We are also aware of the importance of the staff's nutritional wellbeing. If they are not eating with the children, staff are able to purchase a healthy meal each day from our kitchen. Water is available for everyone throughout the day. Staff have received training on diet, nutrition, food safety and hygiene. Catering staff have under taken additional training in food & hygiene.

Children's Responsibilities

Children are encouraged to take an active role:

- To take turns, setting tables, putting out name cards and clearing tables.
- To learn to use knife, fork and spoon appropriately.
- To participate in menu writing and planning.
- To develop skills and increase knowledge of healthy eating through exploration, shopping/cooking activities and discussion.
- To share experiences with peers and adults.
- To behave appropriately at the dinner table.
- To develop social skills with reference to their age and stage of development.

- To develop understanding of healthy foods and confidence to explore new tastes.
- Kinder are encouraged to pour own drinks, serve themselves where appropriate, especially for seconds, vegetables, allow them to add their own cheese, topping etc.

Meal Provision

Breakfast	All children: 8.30am
Lunch	Toddlers: 11.45am / Kinder: 12.30pm
Snacks	Toddlers: 10.30am /10.45am (fruit/water, milk available all day) Kinder: Free-flow
Tea	Toddlers: 4.00pm / Kinder: 4.00pm

Breakfast

Breakfast is an important start to the day and should contribute to daily nutrition. Breakfast will include:

- Cornflakes
- Weetabix
- Shredded wheat
- Rice Krispies
- Milk
- Water
- Fresh fruit
- White/brown bread toast

Snacks

Snack time is an important social time where children learn from each other and learn the new names and tastes of different vegetables and fruit. Parents are asked to provide fruit, vegetables and plain crackers for snacks. Water and milk are provided for drinking.

Lunch

Our lunch time menus operate on a four-week cycle which will change from summer to winter (See sample menus in Appendix 1). When celebrating festivals, the menus may change slightly to include food cooked for celebrating festivals.

Birthday and Leaving Parties

Birthdays are a very important event for many children and we welcome fresh fruit and vegetable platters to celebrate the event. The nursery will provide water to drink. Through experience, the school has found it more meaningful for the children to have parties in their key groups, or base room. Please do NOT bring party bags for the children, as some children have allergies or are on specific diets.

Festivals and Celebrations

Festivals provide a valuable opportunity to include special occasion foods and to extend knowledge and awareness of other cultures. Parents are welcome to bring specialised foods to share but please discuss this with the keyworker prior to the celebration because of our children's special diets.

Vegetarians and Vegans

We respect moral preferences and provide vegetarian/ vegan meals each day as part of the main menu choice. With regard to healthy diets and planet-sustainability, we have one meat-free day each week.

Foods we do not use

It is our policy not to provide foods with salt and high sugar content, nuts/peanut butter, pork, and monosodium glutamate. Children are not permitted to bring sweets or drinks into nursery. We also ask parents not to put sweets or biscuits in their children's pockets.

Steps taken to devise this policy:

- Parents' views were sought
- A nutritional analysis of the menu was undertaken by Laura Sterne, Health Improvement Practitioner, Health and Wellbeing Team at 'Camden Learning'
- Kitchen staff worked with the children to prepare menus
- A menu was prepared in consultation with the cook
- Staff input was sought

Part 2 Physical Activity

Physical Development in the Foundation Stage is about improving skills of co-ordination, control, manipulation and movement. Physical development has two other very important aspects. It helps children gain confidence in what they can do and enables them to feel the positive benefits of being healthy and active. Effective physical development helps children develop a positive sense of wellbeing. There are many opportunities for the children to be active and these are outlined in our Physical Development Policy.

Children have access to a large outside space with space to run, resources to encourage coordination and equipment to climb on. We regularly ask the children's views on how the space can be improved [see children's audits]. They are able to use this space for most of the day. Inside we have the studio in which children are able to engage in movement and dance and soft play. We have secure space for buggy storage to encourage parents to walk to the centre.

Gender Issues

There are a number of issues that need to be considered in relation to physical activity. They are that:

- Both boys and girls need to be encouraged in this area.
- Girls need to have suitable clothing and foot wear to actively participate.
- Both female and male staff should be seen as physically active.

For further reading, see our 'Equal Opportunities' policy.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, whether short- or long-term, are entitled to the same access to the curriculum as other children. This category includes children identified as 'gifted and able'. We seek to ensure that children with Special Needs and Disabilities have every opportunity to be physical active. For example, by modifying equipment or layout to meet their particular needs.

Part 3 Emotional Health and Wellbeing

Personal, emotional and social development underpins learning and development in all areas of life and across the curriculum. At Thomas Coram Nursery School we are committed to promoting a positive sense of self for all children in our care. We stress the importance of parents, family and the wider community in this process. [See our 'Personal Social and Emotional Development' policy including 'Promoting Positive Behaviour' policy.]

We have identified three strands for our work:

- Encouraging self-esteem and resilience.
- Respecting and valuing our beliefs and culture and those of others.
- Appreciating the world around us and our place in it.

Children

We aim to support children to enable them to:

- Develop a strong sense of self and feel good about themselves.
- Feel secure within their families and in the community.
- Understand and express their emotions.
- Understand the feelings of others and to empathies with them appropriately.
- Negotiate and compromise.
- Become increasingly independent in meeting their personal needs.
- Acknowledge their own successes and disappointments, and those of others.
- Respect the culture and beliefs of others.
- Appreciate the world around them and care for their environment.

Through giving the children plenty of opportunities to make real choices we hope to encourage a sense of mastery which is strongly linked to resilience and good mental health. [See Pugh 2006 in Pugh and Holness, 'Contemporary Issues in the Early Years'.]

Parental Involvement

Parents are key to children's sense of security and wellbeing. We seek to involve parents in all aspects of their child's life in the nursery school [see 'Parent Involvement' policy]. We also offer parents support e.g. one-to-one support through the psychology service. Our aim is to offer help quickly when parents need it and so stop any difficulties becoming entrenched.

Role of Staff

Young children need secure attachments with the adults who care for them if they are to develop good mental health and the younger the children the more important this is. We operate a strong key worker system which ensures that each child has a close relationship with at least one adult in the nursery school. From this secure base they are able to explore and become increasingly confident. They are also able to return to the security of this relationship when they may need additional support e.g. When they experience conflict with another child (see 'Promoting Positive Behaviour' policy).

We seek to:

- Provide an atmosphere of trust through developing secure attachments.
- Show through body language that everyone is welcome and valued.
- Follow the child's lead in the showing of affection.
- Give positive feedback whenever possible.
- Give praise and encourage children to notice the achievements of others.
- Have times of day to share achievements.
- Give the child opportunities to share her/his achievements and disappointments with others.
- Provide opportunities to work in pairs and small groups.
- Be aware of the importance of arrival and departures.
- Be aware of the importance of friendships and encourage friendships between children.
- Ensure that there is a predictable and appropriate routine which enables the children to feel secure.
- Ensure that the physical environment is warm and welcoming and reflects the diverse culture and communities the children come from.
- Help child feel safe to express, acknowledge, label and work through emotions, calm down and to talk about the feelings when appropriate.
- Help the child to demonstrate different emotions.
- Give support - physical, emotional or verbal - according to the individual, following their lead regarding physical and verbal contact and reassurance
- Offer the child alternatives for expressing emotions when needed - banging a cushion / kicking a ball.
- Support children when they are in conflict.
- Encourage children to negotiate themselves when appropriate.

- Offer support and strategies if the child is unable to reach a conclusion on her/his own.
- Give positive feedback when a child does something caring for others.
- Encourage them to think about how their actions have upset someone, if necessary.
- Explain, and talk about how the child can make amends
- Having consistent, firm and fair boundaries for behavior applied throughout the nursery.
- Support and encourage developing independence skills - give children time to do things for themselves.

Appendix 1: Sample Menu

Autumn Menu - Four Week Menu Cycle

Week 1 and 3

	Lunch	Tea
Monday	Macaroni cheese, Mixed Salad Melon	Vegetable and potato Frittata Salad
Tuesday	Beef or lentil lasagne Broccoli Yoghurt	Tuna dip Humus dip (V) Pitta bread Vegetable sticks
Wednesday	Lentil spinach curry Rice Cucumber & tomato salad Carrot cake	Various sandwiches
Thursday	Chicken/vegetable pie Quorn & vegetable pie (V) Mango/pineapple fruit coulis	Borlotti beans and vegetable soup
Friday	Fish gratin Quorn gratin Garden peas Fresh fruit salad	Pitta bread Pizza rocket / spinach topping

Week 2 and 4

	Lunch	Tea
Monday	Vegetable & borlotti beans Pasta Cheese Fresh fruit salad	Vegetable risotto Veg sausages Salad
Tuesday	Beef chilli, rice, Salad Coleslaw Melon	Sweet potato soup Bread
Wednesday	Vegetable & Quorn tagine, couscous Salad yoghurt & fruit puree	Crackers and cheese, Fruit scones
Thursday	Roast chicken Lentil roast (V) Roast potatoes Gravy Shredded cabbage Exotic fruit platter	Vegetable soup Fruit
Friday	Creamy salmon and macaroni bake Macaroni cheese (V) Mixed vegetables Ice cream & peaches	Veg burgers Chips Salsa sauce Fruit

Lunch includes: Brown bread and various salads. Water is available with every meal and throughout the day. Fresh fruit is available every day. **This menu is subject to change depending on seasonal produce.**