

Autism Early Support Food & Drink Policy

For internal use only

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Contents

1. Updates from previous version.....	3
2. Purpose	3
3. Scope.....	3
4. Terms and definitions	3
5. Aim	3
6. Procedure.....	3
7. When preparing food.....	4
8. Snacks and Mealtimes.....	5
9. Allergies.....	6
10. Procedure for enrolment of a child with an allergy.....	6
11. Further reading	7

1. Updates from previous version

Reference to oro-motor policy removed

Health and Hygiene reference amended to a procedure

2. Purpose

Autism Early Support Trust Limited's Nursery regards snack and mealtimes as an important part of the setting's day. Eating not only represents a social time for children and adults but also can be used to help children learn about healthy eating, to communicate their likes and dislikes and to learn how to use cutlery effectively. This policy also relates to our HEALTH AND HYGIENE procedures and should be read in conjunction with this.

3. Scope

This Policy applies directly to all AES Employees and volunteers.

4. Terms and definitions

In this Policy, the following capitalised words and expressions shall have the meaning ascribed below:

“AES” means Autism Early Support Trust Limited.

“AES Employees” means individuals who have employment with AES, board members of AES, and, to the extent applicable, consultants and employees hired via staffing companies working for AES.

5. Aim

Our aim is to meet the children's individual dietary needs to promote healthy growth and development.

AES will provide Items that are healthy, balanced and nutritious at the nursery.

As well mealtime will be used as an opportunity to develop the children's communication skills and to practice using cutlery and drinking vessels

6. Procedure

- Before a child starts at AES Nursery we find out from parents their child's dietary needs and preferences, including any allergies, special diets or special health requirements We also ask parents about the child's self-help skills, including use of cutlery.
- We record information about each child's dietary needs and parents sign the record to signify it is correct.
- We regularly consult with parents to ensure that our records of their children's dietary needs – including any allergies – are up to date. Parents are requested to provide a written record of any changes. (Parents sign the updated record to signify that is correct).
- We liaise with other professionals in the child's care and education to provide consistency with safe eating and drinking practises, particularly for children with associated motor difficulties affecting posture and swallowing.
- We display information (pupil profiles, snack lists, snack mats) about individual children's dietary needs so that all staff and volunteers are fully informed about them.

- Children who have allergies are given a yellow snack mat which immediately identifies to anyone supporting the child that steps need to be taken.
- We have systems in place (such as above) that ensures children receive food and drinks that is consistent with their dietary needs as well as their parent's preferences.
- We have systems in place to ensure that children are provided with the support they require to eat and drink safely, including risk assessments, opportunity to develop oral motor, fine motor and gross motor skills.
- We plan snack menus ahead and display menus of snacks for the information of parents.
- We provide nutritious food at snack time avoiding saturated fat, sugar, salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings.
- We include food from the diets of the children's cultural backgrounds, providing both familiar and new food experiences.
- We take care not to provide food containing nuts or nut products and are especially vigilant where we have a child who has a known allergy to nuts. We also have a no nut policy.
- We take care to ensure the safety of each of our children by making sure that all fruit and vegetables are washed and peeled as appropriate before being served and by cutting fruit such as grapes in two lengthways and supervising children at all times.
- We provide opportunities for children to explore food outside of mealtimes, such as messy play, where the children can explore textures, tastes and tools.
- Children are not left unattended and there is a member of staff within sight and hearing of a child when they are eating or exploring food. Ref (EYFS 3.29).

7. When preparing food

We are aware of the need:

- To prepare food hygienically in the kitchen and to wash hands before preparing or eating food. We have at least one member of staff with up to date food hygiene training who cascades this information to the rest of the staff team.
- To not be involved in food preparation if we are ill with infectious skin diseases or any other contagious illness.
- To never cough or sneeze over food.
- To use clean cloths.
- To ensure that waste is properly disposed of and is out of reach of the children.
- To make sure tea towels are kept scrupulously clean and washed between each session.

8. Snacks and Mealtimes

We provide small snacks for the children during the morning and afternoon. Lunch is provided by the parent/carer with a packed lunch.

- We organise meal and snack times to facilitate social interaction and communication skills with both children and staff participating and using visual supports and communication aids to help our children make their needs known.
- We use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices and feeding themselves.
- We provide children with utensils which are appropriate for their ages and stage of development and take account of eating practices in their cultures.
- For children with specific oral motor and fine motor difficulties, assessments will be carried out to ensure appropriate provision is made to support their development.
- We inform parents who provide lunches or other food for their children about storage facilities at the centre and we give them information about suitable containers to transport food in.
- We do not allow children to share or swap food with each other.
- We give parents information on their child's home and school diary sheet about what their child has eaten or drunk during a session with us.

Packed Lunches

We do not provide cooked meals and children who stay for our two lunchtime sessions per week are required to bring packed lunches. We send a letter to parents to provide information about packed lunches. Parents are to ensure perishable contents of packed lunches are in suitably cold containers kept below 5°C or if using a container to keep hot food, the food should be kept above 63°C.

We will:

- Check that parents whose children are staying for lunch have brought their child's lunchbox when they drop their child off in the morning.
- Inform parents on our policy on healthy eating
- Encourage parents to provide sandwiches with healthy fillings. We discourage sweet drinks or fruits juices and can provide milk or water.
- Discourage packed lunches that consist largely of crisps and processed foods, cakes and biscuits.
- Provide suitable plates, cups and cutlery.
- Ensure that staff sit with children to eat their lunch for safety and also to encourage socialisation and communication at mealtimes.
- NOT reheat food

Drink

- We are aware that to enable a child to grow, it is essential for them to have enough water at meal times.
- We have fresh drinking water available constantly throughout our sessions and help children to understand how to ask for a drink at any time.
- Children that cannot use language to say when they are thirsty will be offered fluids regularly throughout the day. As well as drinks being available throughout the day, all children have access to drinking water during snack times and also at lunch time.
- Semi Skimmed milk will also be provided for the children
- We encourage children to use a straw as they progress from a bottle to an open cup when drinking, to promote appropriate tongue position for certain speech sounds and swallow patterns.

9. Allergies

AES operates an inclusion policy, this meaning that all children, no matter what their need will be cared for within the setting. This may mean that we gain advice from outside agencies but every effort will be made to accommodate a child's allergy.

AES Nursery displays a poster for parents identifying the 14 major allergens. A Checklist of all the potential allergens in all the food products provided by AES is also displayed in the food preparation area.

10. Procedure for enrolment of a child with an allergy

Before the child actually starts the nursery the Parent/Carer receive a welcome pack. This asks the parents for consent for lots of things that will take place in the nursery on a day to day basis. This pack also asks if the child has or has ever had an allergy and asks for details. If the child has a 'severe' allergy then any reaction the child has is classed as 'severe' they will be asked to provide written details. The Parent/Carer will then need to consult their doctor and provide us with a medical plan detailing the correct procedure should the child become inadvertently exposed. When the child starts the nursery all staff will be made aware of the child's allergy and the course of action to take if exposed to the allergen. There is a list of children, recording who has allergies in the food preparation area and snack area, which is kept up to date. AES identifies each child's allergies clearly in their snack mat, pupil profile and checklists displayed in the food preparation and snack area.

As a registered food provider we will notify Ofsted of any food poisoning affecting 2 or more children cared for on the premises as soon as reasonably practicable, but in any event within 14 days of the incident.

11. Further reading

Legal Framework

Regulation (EC) 853/2004 of the European Parliament and the council on the hygiene of Foodstuffs.

Further guidance

Safer Food, Better Business (Food Standards Agency 2011)

(EYFS 3.29)