Inspire Education Community Trust

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Learning together and inspiring success

Early Years Food Policy

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Signed	Shaukat Islam

Contents:

Statement of intent

1. **[Updated]** Legal framework
2. **[Updated]** Roles and responsibilities
3. Food and drink served
4. Nutrition
5. **[Updated]** Eating environment
6. Celebrations and special occasions
7. **[Updated]** Allergies and special requirements
8. Food brought in from home
9. Eating habits
10. Food safety and hygiene
11. Communication
12. **[Updated]** Meeting the needs of all children
13. **[Updated]** Safer eating
14. Monitoring and review

Statement of intent

At **Inspire Education Community Trust**, we understand that the early years are a crucial time in a child's development and are aware that what children eat and drink and the habits they develop during this phase can impact their future health.

We value the importance of the EYFS in providing children with a nutritious, balanced diet that will encourage them to make healthy, informed choices. We work collaboratively with parents to promote healthy eating, identify health issues and highlight the risks of unhealthy eating practices.

We believe that food can be used in a variety of educational ways. Children are encouraged to celebrate holidays, religious festivals, special events and the various foods associated with these events and are encouraged to experiment with unfamiliar foods.

Inspire Education Community Trust meets all statutory food safety and nutrition requirements for educational settings in England' and aims to maintain these standards across all meals provided.

1. [Updated] Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Public Health England 'Example menus for early years settings in England'
- DfE 'School food in England'
- DfE 'The school food plan'
- DfE 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage'
- Food Safety Act 1990
- The Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014
- The Food Information (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2019 (also known as Natasha's Law)
- DfE 'Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance'
- **[New]** DfE 'Supporting children and young people with medical conditions and allergy'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies and documents:

- Healthy Eating and Drinking Policy
- Allergen and Anaphylaxis Policy
- Whole-school Food Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Early Years Policy
- Early Years Lunch Box Policy
- **[New]** Early Years Mealtime Risk Assessment

2. [Updated] Roles and responsibilities

The Trust board is responsible for:

- The overall implementation of this policy.
- Ensuring that this policy does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture or religion.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy, as outlined in the setting's Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Ensuring the setting uses reliable suppliers for the food purchased.
- Informing parents who provide food for their children about the storage facilities available in the setting.

[Updated] The EYFS lead, in conjunction with the head of school and the executive headteacher, is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy.
- Reviewing menus and mealtimes to ensure children's needs are being met.
- Ensuring equipment is suitable for its use and providing separate facilities for handwashing and for washing up in the kitchen area.
- Ensuring all staff members are trained in basic food safety and hygiene.
- Ensuring allergy action plans are completed, updated, and accessible to all staff.
- Ensuring that at least one member of staff with a valid paediatric first aid certificate is in the room when children are eating.
- Ensuring food is prepared in accordance with choking prevention guidance.
- Ensuring parents are given adequate notice of any changes to meals, food choices or any other aspect of food provision.
- **[New]** Ensuring all staff, volunteers and temporary staff receive induction and refresher training in safer eating, choking prevention, allergy awareness, food hygiene, supervision expectations and emergency procedures.

- **[New]** Ensuring temporary staff and volunteers receive a briefing before supporting children during mealtimes.

Early years staff are responsible for:

- Sitting with children while they eat, where required, and being advocates of healthy eating.
- Discouraging children from sharing or swapping their food in order to protect those with food allergies.
- Treating all children equally, taking account of the eating practices in their cultures.
- Checking allergy and dietary information before serving food.
- Remaining alert to signs of choking or allergic reactions.
- Responding immediately to incidents in line with first aid training and allergy action plans.
- Ensuring children are seated safely and that mealtime distractions are minimised.
- Recording details of any choking or allergy-related incidents and sharing them with parents and the EYFS lead.

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing the setting with information on their child's dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies.
- Providing specialist food for their child, where they may have an allergy, intolerance or medical need.

3. Food and drink served

All meals will include a variety of foods from the four main food groups:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Starchy carbohydrates
- Dairy and plain, fortified plant-based alternatives
- Proteins

Foods that are high in fat, salt and sugar will be limited in line with the setting's current Healthy Eating and Drinking Policy for the age group of the children concerned.

Portion sizes will be based upon the recommended intake for the age group of the children concerned.

Menus will reflect the diversity of the community, with a variety of flavours and textures.

Fridges and store cupboards will be cleaned regularly to ensure they are clean. Food stored in the fridge will be kept at 5°C or lower.

Menus will rotate on a **three-week** cycle.

Fresh drinking water will be available and accessible at all times and children will be encouraged to drink regularly.

Milk will be served during the morning or afternoon session.

Lower-fat dairy options (such as cheese and unsweetened yoghurt and fromage frais) will gradually be introduced after this age.

Milk or water will be the only drinks offered to children by the setting.

Staff will not consume carbonated drinks in the presence of children.

4. Nutrition

The setting understands that the early years are a crucial time to reduce health inequalities and set the foundations for a lifetime of good health. Staff will ensure that food items prepared and consumed on the premises comply with statutory guidelines and are healthy, balanced and nutritious.

Staff will encourage children to eat a balanced diet which contains a wide variety of foods, planning meals and snacks that include a variety of food and drinks from the four main food groups every day.

In doing so the setting will follow the DfE's advice regarding:

- The food and drink that should be provided, limited or avoided.
- Portion sizes

5. [Updated] Eating environment

The eating environment will be comfortable and relaxed. Children will be given plenty of time to feed themselves and hold feeding utensils.

Children will be provided with utensils that are appropriate for their age and stage of development.

Staff will sit with children while they eat and encourage interaction at each table. Children will be observed to ensure they are drinking and eating enough, and staff will be aware of the behaviour that may suggest a child is thirsty or hungry.

Children will be encouraged to develop good eating skills and table manners.

[New] Tables, and chairs will be age-appropriate, stable and checked regularly to ensure they remain safe for use.

[New] Dining areas will be kept calm, organised and free from unnecessary hazards.

[New] Hot food and drinks will be kept away from children where possible.

[New] Walkways and fire exits will remain clear during mealtimes, and spillages will be cleaned promptly to reduce slip hazards.

[New] Any damaged equipment identified during mealtimes will be removed from use and reported appropriately.

Meals times will be used to help children develop independence, through making food choices, serving food and drink, and feeding themselves.

6. Celebrations and special occasions

Whilst the setting will welcome gestures to celebrate children's birthdays or special events, it will request that **parents avoid allowing their child to bring in food items such as sweets and cakes to share with their peers.**

Any food shared in the setting during special occasions will be checked for potential allergens.

The setting will, instead, celebrate with activities such as the following:

- Craft activities
- Songs and stories
- Dressing up
- Decorating rooms

- Playing special games
- Encouraging children to find out about a wide range of events from a variety of cultures

7. [Updated] Allergies and special requirements

The setting understands that food allergies can be life threatening conditions for some children and will ensure they are taken very seriously.

As part of the setting's ongoing CPD for early years practitioners, staff will be trained to understand:

- The common allergens in food.
- The symptoms of an allergic reaction and the steps to take should anaphylaxis or anaphylactic shock occur.

Parents will be expected to make the setting aware of any allergies or intolerances their child has and the actions that need to be taken if a reaction occurs.

[New] Allergy, dietary and medical information will be reviewed termly, and whenever a child's needs change, to ensure records remain accurate and up to date.

[New] Relevant information relating to allergies, dietary requirements and medical needs will be readily accessible to staff involved in food preparation and supervision, whilst maintaining appropriate confidentiality.

A protocol will be established and made accessible to all staff to ensure everyone is aware of a child's allergies and symptoms.

Where it is suspected that a child has an allergy, the setting will encourage the child's parents to seek advice and diagnosis from their doctor.

The setting will ensure children with allergies are not exposed to foods that trigger allergies. Appropriate alternatives will be identified to ensure the child still eats a balanced diet.

All staff will be instructed, where necessary, to ensure they understand how to identify which allergens are present in every meal and snack provided.

All food that is pre-packed for direct sale (PPDS) will have the name of the food and the full ingredients list, with allergens emphasised, e.g. in bold, italics or a different colour, clearly displayed.

[Updated] Cross-contamination risks will be minimised through separate utensils, cleaning procedures and food preparation areas where possible.

[Updated] There will be a set of kitchen utensils that are only for use with the food and drink of the children at risk of allergic reactions. There will also be a set of kitchen utensils with a designated colour for specific allergens and intolerances.

Food items containing bread and wheat will be stored separately.

Learning activities which involve the use of food will be planned in accordance with children's' individual healthcare plans (IHPs), taking into account any known allergies of the children involved.

Children will be discouraged from sharing or swapping their food with other children.

Food provided for children with allergies will be managed in accordance with the Allergen and Anaphylaxis Policy.

Appropriate provision will be made for parental preferences, including cultural and religious food sensitivities, e.g. providing halal and kosher food as appropriate.

8. Food brought in from home

Food that is brought into the setting from home will be expected to comply with this policy and the Early Years Lunch Box Policy.

Food and drink will be appropriately labelled with the child's details.

Any food that is not consumed during the day will be sent home with the child.

9. Eating habits

All children will be supported to manage their own personal needs as far as possible, including understanding the importance of healthy food choices.

At mealtimes, fussy eaters will be seated with children that are more adventurous with their food to encourage the adoption of different food preferences.

Children will be regularly exposed to new foods in order to increase their liking for, and consumption of, a variety of new foods (providing these foods meet their specific dietary requirements).

Favourite foods will not be used as a reward to encourage children to eat foods they do not like.

The setting is aware that some children will have allergies or different dietary requirements; this will be taken into account when encouraging children to try new foods.

Before a child is admitted, the setting will obtain information about any special dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies – this information will be recorded and acted upon as appropriate.

Children will never be forced to finish everything on their plate. Small servings will be given, with the opportunity to have second helpings if the first serving is finished.

10.Food safety and hygiene

Food will be stored, prepared and presented in a safe and hygienic environment which is adequately equipped to provide healthy meals, snacks and drinks for children.

Children will be taught basic hygiene, such as not eating food that has fallen on the floor and washing their hands before eating and after using the toilet.

All staff will receive training in food hygiene before preparing or handling food.

All staff involved in preparing food for young children, or helping them eat, will be aware of the requirements of the Food Safety Act 1990.

11. Communication

Staff will work alongside parents to ensure that children are provided with healthy, balanced and nutritious food in the setting and at home.

Lead practitioner and Reception class teachers will be responsible for communicating with parents about the setting's approach to food provision and children's food intake across the day.

Parents will be provided with information on the routine meals and snacks (milk and fruit) that their children are given.

Parents will be provided a copy of this policy (by email) when their children start to attend the setting and will be consulted when the policy is updated. Parents can request a paper copy free of charge.

Menus will be on available for all parents to see on request and are available on the school website.

The setting will agree with parents on the methods used to manage fussy eating, ensuring they are consistent with those used at home.

Parents will be encouraged to attend events to celebrate special and cultural occasions.

12. [Updated] Meeting the needs of all children

Wherever possible, the setting will endeavour to cater for the cultural and dietary needs of all children in its care.

The setting is aware that children with special dietary requirements may need specific foods excluded or included; however, it will not exclude foods from a child's diet without a valid reason as this may lead to unnecessary restrictions in their diet. In meeting the needs of all children, the setting will take into account the following dietary requirements:

- Food allergies
- Food intolerances
- Vegetarianism
- Veganism or eating a plant-based diet
- Pescetarianism
- Religious preferences, for example:
  - Only eating halal foods.
  - Avoiding pork or beef.
  - Keeping kosher.
  - Eating specific foods only on certain days.

The setting will create a safe and inclusive environment for all children to eat, and children with special dietary requirements will be included in mealtimes with other children as far as possible.

A child will only need to eat their meal separately to other children where a risk assessment concludes that a significant risk remains despite adequate training and supervision of meals and snacks times.

Staff will have ongoing discussions with parents about their child's dietary needs and encourage parents to assist the setting by sharing guidance from healthcare professionals.

[New] The setting recognises that some children may require adapted support during mealtimes due to SEND, medical conditions, swallowing difficulties, sensory needs or developmental delay.

[New] Where required, personalised arrangements will be implemented in partnership with parents and relevant professionals.

[New] Adaptive seating, utensils, communication aids or specialist feeding support will be provided where appropriate, and staff will receive additional training where specific procedures or interventions are required.

The setting will seek professional advice for menu planning when needed.

13. [Updated] Safer eating

The setting will follow robust procedures to ensure that all children eat safely and that risks of choking, allergic reactions, and cross-contamination are minimised.

A member of staff holding a full paediatric first aid certificate will always be present in the room when children are eating.

Before a child starts at the setting, information about any special dietary requirements, preferences, food allergies, intolerances, or health needs will be obtained from parents or carers, clearly documented, and shared with all staff involved in food preparation and service.

The setting will work in partnership with parents, carers, and where appropriate, health professionals to create and maintain up-to-date allergy action plans. All staff will be made aware of these plans and will receive guidance on recognising allergy symptoms, understanding the difference between allergies and intolerances, and administering the correct treatment for allergic reactions and anaphylaxis. Staff will remain alert to the possibility of children developing new allergies, particularly during the weaning process.

Food will be prepared in a way that is appropriate to each child's developmental stage, with parents and carers consulted to ensure that textures and portion sizes are suitable. Children will be supported to progress safely at a pace appropriate for them, without assumptions made based solely on age.

[Updated] Food will always be prepared following national guidance to reduce the risk of choking, including cutting food into suitable sizes and avoiding e.g. nuts (not allowed in school) and hard sweets or appropriately modifying high-risk foods such as whole grapes, large chunks of apple, popcorn etc.

Children will always be within sight and hearing of staff while eating, and staff will sit facing the children where possible to monitor eating, prevent food sharing, and respond quickly to choking or allergic reactions.

[New] Children will never be left unattended while eating or drinking.

[New] Staff will position themselves appropriately to ensure all children remain visible throughout mealtimes and snack times.

[New] Agency staff and volunteers will not supervise children independently during mealtimes unless appropriately trained and authorised to do so.

Any choking incidents that require intervention will be recorded in detail, shared with parents or carers, and reviewed regularly to identify patterns and implement measures to further reduce risk.

[New] Emergency procedures for choking, allergic reactions, burns and medical incidents will be clearly communicated to all staff.

[New] Emergency medication, including adrenaline auto-injectors where required, will remain readily accessible at all times and will not be locked away.

[New] Incidents, accidents and near misses relating to mealtimes will be recorded, reviewed and monitored to support ongoing risk reduction and improvement of practice.

[New] Parents will be informed promptly following any significant mealtime incident involving their child.

The setting will work in partnership with parents and relevant professionals to create and maintain up-to-date IHPs and allergy action plans where required.

14.Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed **annually** by the **executive headteacher** and **EYFS lead**.

Any changes to this policy will be communicated, by the headteacher and EYFS lead, to all staff members. Parents of children who attend the early years setting will receive communication detailing any changes to the policy.