



Food Policy

At Clapham & Clapham Park Montessori we believe that mealtimes should be happy, social occasions for children. We promote shared, enjoyable positive interactions at these times.

We are committed to offering children healthy, nutritious and balanced meals and snacks, which meet individual needs and requirements, following the Department for Education nutrition guidance¹.

We ensure that children's food is prepared and provided in line with children's individual needs, developmental stage and any agreed care or allergy plans, and that staff are able to understand and consistently apply arrangements for managing allergies, food intolerances, dietary requirements and choking risks.

Our approach to food and healthy eating

- We provide nutritious food for breakfast and at all snack times, avoiding large quantities of fat, sugar, salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings
- A balanced and healthy breakfast is provided to children who attend our 'Early Birds' sessions (this generally consists of either porridge or a wholegrain cereal such as Weetabix and wholemeal toast with butter and jam/honey). A choice of milk or water is offered as a drink.
- At Clapham & Clapham Park Montessori the children are offered a snack during sessions. This generally consists of fresh fruit and a cracker. Other snacks which may be offered include fresh vegetables (e.g. carrot or cucumber), oat cakes and rice cakes. A choice of milk or water is offered as a drink. If their child is not allowed to eat any of the foods listed above for medical, cultural or religious reasons, parents are asked to supply an alternative, which will be kept carefully and given only to their child.
- Withholding or granting of food and drink will never be used as either a punishment or reward.

Mealtime environment

- Children are supervised appropriately while they are eating, including being within sight and hearing of staff, and are supported to eat safely
- No child is ever left alone when eating or drinking to minimise the risk of choking, and a qualified paediatric first aider is always present in the room during meal and snack times.

- Children are seated safely on appropriately-sized low chairs while eating. They are encouraged to remain seated and not to get up and walk around with food in their mouths.
- Meal and snack times are organised so that they are social occasions in which children participate in small groups. During meals and snack times children are encouraged to use appropriate table manners and conversation is encouraged to support social development.
- Staff use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving themselves food and drink, and feeding themselves.
- Any child who shows signs of distress at being faced with a meal that they do not like will have their food removed without any fuss. If a child does not finish their first course, they will still be allowed to eat their dessert.
- Children not on special diets are encouraged to eat a small piece of everything. However, no child will ever be forced to eat or drink something against their will.
- Children who refuse to eat at the mealtime may be offered food later in the day.
- Children are given a reasonable amount of time within which to eat their meal so as to allow them to eat at their own pace.
- Cultural differences in eating habits are respected.

Drinks

- Only milk and water are provided as drinks to promote oral health. Parents do not need to provide drinks as part of a packed lunch and are requested not to do so.
- Fresh drinking water is available and accessible at all times.
- In hot weather staff will encourage children to drink more water to keep them hydrated.

Management of food allergies and dietary needs

- Individual dietary requirements are respected. Before a child joins the nursery, we gather information from parents regarding their children's dietary needs, including any special dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies that a child has, and any special health requirements, on the Enrolment Form. All information is shared with all staff involved in preparing and handling food.
- Where appropriate, we will carry out a risk assessment in the case of allergies and work alongside parents to put into place an individual dietary/allergy plan for their child. This will be reviewed regularly and any changes shared with all staff.
- We give careful consideration to seating to avoid cross-contamination of food from child to child. Where appropriate, an adult will sit with children during meals to ensure safety and minimise risks.
- At each meal and snack time, we ensure that a nominated practitioner is responsible for checking that the food being provided meets all the requirements for each child.
- Where age/stage appropriate, discussions will also take place with all children about allergies and potential risks to make them aware of the dangers of sharing certain foods.

- Staff show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. They 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 allergy.

Learning about food and cooking with children

- Staff support children to make healthy choices and understand the need for healthy eating.
- We promote positive attitudes to healthy eating through growing food, cooking opportunities and discussions.

Celebrations and special occasions

- Very occasionally, children may eat pancakes, biscuits or cakes which have been made in school or foods which reflect certain topical celebrations (e.g. Chinese food at Chinese New Year) at snack time.
- We allow parents to bring in biscuits or cupcakes/fairy cakes on special occasions. We ask for these to be shop-bought and provided in their original packaging so as to ensure that all food brought in by parents meets health and safety requirements and that all ingredients are listed in compliance with the Food Information for Consumers (FIR) 2014 regulations. Under no circumstances should these contain any nuts. These are usually taken home at the end of the session. We will provide a suitable alternative for children with allergies.

Food safety and hygiene

- All staff who prepare and handle food are competent to do so and receive training in food hygiene which is updated every three years.
- All staff are trained in preparing foods safely to avoid the risk of choking, following the Foods Standards Agency guidelines.
- All staff are aware of the symptoms and treatments for allergies and anaphylaxis.
- All staff are aware of the differences between allergies and intolerances, and that they need to maintain vigilance as children can develop allergies at any time.
- In the very unlikely event of any food poisoning affecting two or more children on the premises, whether or not this may arise from food offered at the nursery, we will inform Ofsted as soon as reasonably practical and in all cases within 14 days. We will also inform the relevant health agencies and follow any advice given.

Food brought from home (packed lunches)

- Children who stay over lunchtime bring a packed lunch. Parents are provided with guidelines and suggestions for healthy and well-balanced lunches and are also signposted to the NHS packed lunch guidance (<https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes/>).
- Children should not bring crisps, sweets (including chocolate), sugary cereals, sugary drinks or bubble/chewing gum to nursery.

- We share the Food Standards Agency choking hazards guidance² to support parents to prepare foods to reduce choking hazards. Parents are asked to ensure that any foods that could pose a choking hazard (for example grapes) are cut up into appropriately-sized pieces.
- In order to protect children with allergies, parents are asked not to provide any items containing nuts and children are reminded not to share or swap their food with one another.
- Children's lunch boxes are checked prior to giving the contents to the children to ensure any risks from potential allergens or choking hazards are managed.
- We request that parents use ice-packs.
- If children bring food that requires re-heating, staff will re-heat this for them in a microwave.
- Any food that remains uneaten in the packed lunch will be put back into the child's lunchbox to be taken home so that their parent/carer can see how much they have eaten.
- In the event that a child who is staying for lunch does not have any lunch with them, their parent/carer will be contacted and asked to bring a packed lunch for them. If for any reason this is not possible, staff will provide the child with something to eat from the list of foods that are available for snack and which they know that child can eat.

This Food Policy should be read in conjunction with the Allergies and Allergic Reactions Policy.

Policy reviewed:	Signed on behalf of the nursery:	Date for next review:
September 2026	Ros Bowles and Lucía Gómez-Santana	September 2027

²

https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/Early%20Years%20Choking%20Hazards%20Table_English.pdf