



FOOD AND NUTRITION POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT:

Skylar regards snack and mealtimes as an important part of the day. Eating represents a social time for children and adults and provides an opportunity to develop speech and language development and social skills, and to learn about healthy eating and routine.

The EYFS Nutrition Guidance (May 2025) states:

Providing healthy, balanced and nutritious food ensures that all children:

- *Get the right amount of nutrients and energy they need while they are growing rapidly, which is especially important for children who might not have access to healthy food at home. This can help prevent children from becoming overweight or obese.*
- *Develop positive eating habits early on. Children's early experiences with food can shape future eating habits. This can impact children's long-term health including maintaining a healthy weight, and good oral health. The early years are a crucial time to reduce health inequalities and set the foundations for a lifetime of good health.*

METHODS:

- Children's dietary needs and preferences, including any allergies or cultural requirements are established through the registration and admissions forms, completed by the parent/carer prior to them starting at Skylar. Staff communicate with parents/ carers continually through the week and are aware of individual children's feeding (including weaning) and sleeping patterns. Care is taken to ensure all children's needs are met.
- We include food from each of the children's cultural backgrounds in our weekly menu, providing children with familiar foods and introducing them to new ones. We also celebrate multicultural celebrations at Skylar and enjoy world foods as part of this.
- Children are supervised closely when eating – staff ensure children are sitting down and eating safely.
- At least one trained paediatric first aider is always physically present, sitting at the table with the children during all mealtimes and snack times.

Allergens and Intolerances

- Key information is stored on CPOMs (Trelia's central Safeguarding system) so that ALL staff are aware of children with allergies and intolerances. A paper copy including children's photos, with their specific allergens, is shared with the cafe team in Trelia and is displayed confidentially - all staff members are aware and know where to find this information.
- We display current information about individual children's dietary needs within the setting so that all staff and volunteers are fully informed about them. Some children require different types of milk due to intolerances and Skylar ensures that this information is included in the allergens/intolerances information. This is regularly updated as and when children's requirements change. Skylar purchases the correct milk to cater for the needs of the children with the parents' approval – where possible we purchase the same product used at home.

Weaning

- We are committed to promoting healthy eating and we ensure children have access to healthy and nutritious options while in our care. This starts from when a child is weaning – we provide freshly prepared fruit and vegetable purees then progress to mashed and finger foods when the child is ready for this next stage.

- We regularly communicate with the parents to find out when and how they wish to wean their children, offering advice from the NHS Best Start in Life guidance.
- We use the EYFS Nutrition Guidance to inform how we support the weaning process in Skylar and explain this guidance to parents and carers.

This guidance states:

'Go at the baby's pace and let them show you when they're hungry or full. For example, they may firmly close their mouth or turn their head away.'

'The introduction of solid foods should only start once a baby can:

- stay in a sitting position and support their own head
- coordinate their eyes, hands and mouth so they can look at their food, pick it up and put it in their mouth
- swallow food (rather than spit it back out)'

Healthy options

- Children are encouraged to eat a balanced diet containing a wide variety of foods based on the four main food groups (fruit and vegetables; potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates; dairy or dairy alternatives; and beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins) in accordance with The Eatwell Guide.
- Staff are aware of portion size guidance and children's are monitored closely and their portion size is adjusted according to their body size and appetite to ensure each child gets enough energy and nutrients.
- We provide guidance to parents/carers around providing nutritious food for their children, including a suitable range of healthy snacks and foodstuffs.
- All children have access to breakfast when they arrive, a healthy snack (including a range of fruits) during the morning and a healthy hot meal for lunch.

Food preparation

- All staff are Level 2 Food Hygiene qualified and follow guidance to prepare food safely and in line with regulations.
- Lunch options are prepared and cooked on site at Trelya's Community Cafe – the food is probed whilst being cooked in the cafe. Food is stored in the Skylar fridge/freezer. Skylar staff cook the food throughout the morning in the oven. If the food needs to be defrosted, then this is done in the fridge overnight. The food is checked before being served using a temperature probe to ensure that it is above 75 degrees. The probe is cleaned daily with an antibacterial wipe provided by the cafe.
- All foods are cut to a size that is suitable for a child's size, age and stage of weaning in line with DfE, Food Standards Agency and NHS guidelines to help avoid choking risks.
- Children are encouraged to join in with cooking opportunities and creating their own brunch and snacks. They are also involved in preparing lunches for special occasions such as family events.
- We provide opportunities for children to learn to grow food, prepare food and learn about a healthy diet and good oral health, including teeth brushing as part of our nursery routine.

Mealtime environment

- The Skylar team recognise mealtimes as important opportunities for personal, social and emotional development.
- The children are taught a consistent mealtime routine. They enjoy helping to lay the table and sitting with their peers and key adults to eat meals and snacks. Children know to ask to leave the table when they have finished eating.
- Mealtimes are a special time for children to sit and talk to their peers and key adults. Sometimes the children share news or listen to a story while they are eating their snack.
- Adults model positive and appropriate mealtime behaviours including trying new foods. Staff eating alongside the children is very effective with children often trying new foods as a result.
- Children are encouraged to use their words, signs or communication boards to help them ask for what they would like.

Communication with parents/ carers

- In the early stages of a child's journey at Skylar, a member of the team talks their parents/ carers to gain a deep understanding of their behaviours around food – this will include a discussion around food likes, dislikes and preferences, mealtimes and eating environment at home, other family members' behaviours around food. Following this, we will work closely with parents/ carers throughout each child's time at Skylar to ensure they are fully supported with their eating and nutrition. This may include working alongside other professionals such as the dentist and health visitor.
- Parents/ carers of children in Moonlight Room are invited to come in to share lunch with their child twice a week and attend a focused nutrition activity (during their child's nursery session) once a week.
- Parents/ carers are involved in all areas of their child's eating and nutrition. Staff are in constant communication with them before/ after each session and staff know to signpost to further support where needed e.g. health visitor, cooking advice in our community café/ family and youth workers, online advice and guidance.
- Parents/carers receive verbal feedback about what their child has eaten/ had to drink during each nursery session and they are advised if their child is not eating well.
- Families receive monthly Books of the month and half termly learning packs – these can cover topics such as oral health, mealtimes, recipe books for cooking with children, keeping healthy.

Drinking

- Children have access to their own water bottles throughout all sessions and regular water drinking is encouraged.
- Milk is also offered at breakfast and snack times. Milk is funded for children under 5 through the Cool Milk system and is delivered on a Monday. The milk is collected once it has been delivered and placed in the cafe fridge immediately. When Skylar staff are in the building the milk is then transferred to the Skylar fridge. Any opened milk is disposed of at the end of the day to ensure it is not used the next day.
- We welcome breastfeeding families, recognise the benefits of breastfeeding and encourage mothers to provide breast milk for their children in our care. Any breast milk from parents is stored in a separate fridge, named and dated and returned at the end of the session. We have a private space available should parents wish to breastfeed around their child's session times.
- If children take formula milk this is made up each day using water boiled to 70°C, then cooled (for no more than 30 minutes) as advised by the Department of Health. Care is taken when preparing formula – all staff ensure their hands are washed thoroughly and all bottles etc are sterilized and drip-dried before use.

Oral health

- Staff support children to brush their teeth during every Skylar session – each child is taught, from the very youngest children, how to brush and look after their teeth
- All food provided at Skylar is low in salt and sugar. Children drink milk with breakfast and have water available to them throughout the session.
- Staff promote good oral hygiene to families, offering advice and guidance on how parents/ carers can keep their children's teeth and gums healthy. We also have contact with the dentist on site – they have provided an information session for the children and their families and the children have visited the dentist to familiarise them with the dentist environment.

Food storage

- To ensure all food is stored at temperatures in line with regulations the fridge temperature is logged in the morning before the start of the session. The fridge is kept at a temperature of 5 degrees or lower. If any issues are detected with the fridge all produce is disposed of, and the fridge is not used until the issue has been resolved.

Other Professionals

- Skylar works alongside other professionals including health visitors and chefs for advice around healthier options for children and their families. We also provide support and family sessions for families to gain additional advice and guidance on this.

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Skylar Team
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