**28: Food and Drink**

Willows will provide healthy, nutritious, tasty and balanced food and drinks. Food and drink will be safely prepared with regard to the dietary and religious requirements of the children in our care. The majority of food is prepared on site with fresh ingredients.

Willows will ensure that the menu does not match the menu served at Clavering Primary school and will follow the following guidelines to ensure a healthy and varied diet. This will be a 3 week rolling menu containing a balance of red and white meat, fish and vegetation dishes.

We ask parents to notify us regarding any special dietary requirements or allergies when they register their child. Willows will record and act on information from parents/carers about a child’s dietary needs.

Willows are mindful of their responsibilities and obligations under the Food Safety Act 1990. Willows setting is registered with the local authority to handle food and all staff who either handle or prepare food have up to date Food Handling Certificates and are fully trained in food storage, preparation, cooking and food safety.

**Healthy Eating**

Willows will promote healthy eating and will lead by example.

* We will provide suitable healthy snacks for all the children.
* Children will be encouraged to develop good eating skills and table manners.
* All children will be given plenty of time to eat.
* Where appropriate, children will be involved in planning and preparing food and snacks.
* Fresh drinking water will be available at all times.
* Fresh fruit will be available at all sessions.
* All children will be actively encouraged to try all food.
* Staff will discuss with children the importance of a balanced diet where appropriate.
* The club will not regularly provide sweets for children.
* We will avoid excessive amounts of fatty or sugary foods.
* Children will not be forced to eat or drink anything against their will.

**Meal Times**

Care will be taken to ensure that food is well presented and varied, features different colours and textures to appeal to children and expand their palates. Children and adults wash their hands before eating and then sit together.

All children are encouraged to help lay the table where appropriate.

Bowls of food are put out for the children to help themselves where appropriate. This helps them to develop hand to eye co-ordination and encourages independence. It also helps children to be responsible and make decisions regarding quantities.

**Learning with Food**

Food can be the basis of main fun activities in our settings, not just cooking. At Willows, we have food centred activities, which are a good way of introducing children to new types of food before they are presented to them. Food plays a part in counting and maths, science, art and many more activities.

Children will be educated about healthy eating to help them gain a sense of nature and learn about where food comes from. They will learn that food is grown in the ground rather than simply bought in plastic packets from the supermarket.

**Cultural and Religious Diversity**

Willows are committed to embracing the cultural and religious diversity of the families who use our services. The directors, manager and staff will work with parents/carers to ensure that any particular dietary requirements are met.

Willows are also keen to help introduce children to different religious and cultural festivals and events through different types of food/drink sessions.

**Parental Involvement and Feedback**

Willows we realise that parental and family involvement is key to making sure that children have healthy and happy lifestyles. We display menus and listen to parents views regarding these. We also actively welcome parental feedback as they are intricately involved in the eating lives of their children.

**Guidelines for Mealtimes**

* Individual dietary requirements are respected
* Staff set an example of good table manners
* Cultural differences in eating habits are respected
* Children will be encouraged to say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ and to sit at the table
* Quiet conversation is encouraged
* Children will be encouraged to try new foods, but never forced to eat them
* Staff set a good example by eating the same food as the children
* Children who are slow eaters will be given time and never rushed
* Children will not be forced to eat meals or finish everything on their plate
* Children will be encouraged, where reasonably possible, to wait until everybody has finished their first course before starting on their dessert
* Menus will be displayed at the settings for parents/carers to see
* No child is ever forced to eat food they do not want
* Food served does not contain nuts, all of our setting are ‘nut free’
* Ofsted will be notified if two or more children are affected by food poisoning. This is in line with the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage