



Bacchus Marsh
Grammar

ELC POLICY

Early Learning Centre Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Policy

Approved by the Approved Provider: 28 July 2026

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Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Policy

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1 Quick Reference

| dietary requirements | weekly menu | medical conditions | allergies | food intolerances | cultural food practices | religious dietary restrictions | risk minimisation | menu display | safe drinking water | health and hygiene | food preparation | dietary management | healthy eating | child development | individual needs | family consultation | food safety standards | special dietary needs | allergy aware |

2 Purpose and Background

- 2.1.1 To set out how we ensure children are offered food and drinks that are appropriate to their needs while they are in our care.
- 2.1.2 This policy is a requirement under the Education and Care Services National Regulations. The approved provider must ensure that policies and procedures are in place for health and safety matters in relation to nutrition, food and beverages, and dietary requirements (s 168).
- 2.1.3 This policy helps us to comply with the specific obligations regarding food and beverages we have under the National Regulations (ss 77-80) and the National Quality Standard.
- 2.1.4 Healthy eating and good nutrition have a major influence on children's health and wellbeing and a direct impact on their growth and development. Having good nutrition at a young age is essential for healthy development of young children, as most children have formed lifelong habits by school age.
- 2.1.5 Mealtimes provide a valuable opportunity to build an environment that enhances children's sense of being, becoming and belonging. We value the social development that mealtime provides, therefore we ensure that they are positive, relaxed and social and represent a family life atmosphere.
- 2.1.6 It is recognised that every member of the service impacts on children's health and contributes to creating an environment that promotes healthy eating and good oral health. All members of our service including educators, staff, children, and families will be supported to meet this policy and given a chance to provide input.

3 Scope

- 3.1.1 This policy applies to:
 - 'Staff': the approved provider, paid workers, volunteers, work placement students, and third parties (e.g., contractors, subcontractors, self-employed persons, employees of a labour hire company) at our service who carry out work that is relevant to this policy
 - Children in our care, their parents, families and care providers
- 3.1.2 Food safety is covered in our Food Safety Policy and Procedures

4 Definitions

- 4.1.1 The following definitions apply to this policy and related procedures:
 - 'Dietary requirements' specific food and beverage needs, based on each child's growth, development, cultural, religious and health needs
 - 'Food safety' means practices for food handling that ensure food is safe and suitable to consume. Food safety is covered extensively in our Food Safety Policy and Procedures
 - 'Medical management plans', 'risk management plans', and 'communication plans' are required for children who have a specific health care need, allergy or relevant medical condition – see our Medical Conditions Policy
 - 'Healthy eating': Eating a wide variety of foods from the five food groups each day. These are:
 - fruit
 - vegetables and legumes/beans
 - grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain
 - milk, yoghurt, cheese, and alternatives
 - lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds, and legumes/beans.
- Healthy eating also means eating in a way that is socially and culturally appropriate, having regular meals and snacks and eating food to satisfy hunger, appetite and energy needs.



- 'Nutrition': The process of providing or obtaining the food necessary for health and growth.
- 'Discretionary'/'Sometimes' food and drink: Discretionary/Sometimes food is high in fat, sugar and salt or a combination of these. They typically have very little nutritional value and are often processed and packaged. Examples of discretionary food include:
 - chocolate, confectionery, jelly
 - sweet biscuits, high fat/salt savory biscuits, chips
 - high sugar/high fat cakes and slices
 - cream, ice cream
 - deep fried foods (e.g. hot chips) and pastry-based foods (pies, sausage rolls and pasties)
 - most fast food and takeaway foods
 - some processed meats (e.g. sausages, frankfurts/hot dogs, salami, strasburg, devon, some commercial chicken nuggets and fish fingers)
 - soft drinks, fruit juice and fruit drinks, cordial, sports drinks, energy drinks, flavoured milk and flavoured mineral water.

5 Policy Statement

5.1 Meeting children's individual dietary requirements

- 5.1.1 The approved provider and nominated supervisor must ensure that educators offer children food and beverages that are appropriate to their needs at regular times throughout the day (National Regulations s 78)
- 5.1.2 Children at our service bring their own food and drinks from home, but we have routine mealtimes and snack times and provide fresh and safe drinking water. Children are allowed to eat outside of our routine eating times if required
- 5.1.3 Staff must follow our Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Procedure to ensure all children's nutrition and dietary requirements are identified and catered to

5.2 Identifying children's dietary requirements

- 5.2.1 At the time of a child's enrolment, we must collect information about their daily dietary needs, including their:
 - Growth and developmental needs
 - Cultural or religious food practices
 - Health and medical needs, including dietary restrictions, allergies and risk of anaphylaxis
- 5.2.2 Up-to-date health information must be recorded in children's enrolment record (National Regulations s 162); and, where relevant, in a child's medical management plan, risk-minimisation plan and communication plan (National Regulations s 90)
- 5.2.3 We must consult with families about their child's dietary needs during our routine check-ins, and send reminders to parents to update us in writing if there are any changes
- 5.2.4 Room leaders and the nominated supervisor must ensure that educators and other relevant staff members are aware of each child's current dietary requirements. This will be achieved through regular formal and informal communication (e.g., written instruction, at induction and orientation, during staff/room briefings etc)
- 5.2.5 If there are concerns about a child's food intake, educators and the parents should discuss the matter in an open and respectful manner
- 5.2.6 Educators must provide families with information about their child's food and beverage intake while in our care

5.3 Food and drinks from home

Healthy lunchboxes

- 5.3.1 Families are encouraged to provide a healthy lunchbox for their child (labelled with their name), that includes:

- A bottle of water
- Adequate amounts of food and drinks from the five food groups with a variety of tastes, colours textures, and flavours

5.3.2 Parents should avoid packing sugary drinks, confectionery, deep fried food or food containing nuts

Supporting parents

5.3.3 If a child is often bringing food or drinks from home that do not fit into our approach to nutrition, educators must:

- Discuss this with their parents in a respectful manner. They must not shame parents or refuse to allow the child to consume the food or drink
- Provide parents with resources and support

5.3.4 If a child does not bring sufficient food from home, educators must:

- Contact their parents
- Escalate ongoing concerns to the nominated supervisor, who can provide the family with support and referrals

5.4 Access to safe drinking water

5.4.1 The approved provider and nominated supervisor must ensure that children have access to safe drinking water, preferably tap water, at all times (National Regulations s 78)

5.4.2 Educators must make fresh water available where children play, eat and rest and remind children to drink water throughout the day

5.4.3 Educators must keep water bottles belonging to children with a food allergy in a separate location from the other children's water bottle to reduce the chance of other children drinking from them

5.5 Food safety and medical requirements

5.5.1 If a child has a food-related medical condition or health need (e.g., allergy, diabetes, food intolerance etc.), staff must follow our Medical Conditions Policy, which sets out how to implement medical management, risk management, and communication plans (National Regulations s 90)

5.5.2 If applicable, we must display a notice stating that a child who is at risk of anaphylaxis is enrolled at the service (National Regulations s 173(f)(ii)). The notice must be in a prominent position that is clearly visible from the main entrance, but must not identify the child

5.5.3 The approved provider and nominated supervisor must ensure that all staff (including volunteers) follow our Food Safety Policy and Health, Hygiene and Cleaning Policy to maintain proper health, hygiene and food safety practices (National Regulations s 77)

5.5.4 We follow the best practice 'allergy aware' approach rather than banning allergenic foods (e.g., we are 'nut aware' rather than 'nut free'). This means we must implement risk management measures instead of outright bans (as detailed in our Food Safety Policy and Medical Conditions Policy)

5.5.5 All bottles, drinks and lunchboxes from home must be labelled with the child's name

5.5.6 We must follow government guidelines to prevent choking hazards, including not serving or modifying (e.g., grating, finely slicing, cooking until soft, mashing) food that poses a choking risk to children under 5 years

5.5.7 Educators must incorporate oral/dental hygiene education in daily routines to promote good dental health among children and staff

5.6 Positive mealtimes

5.6.1 Educators must supervise children during mealtimes to ensure children's safety and wellbeing (see our serving food safely procedure in our Food Safety Policy)

5.6.2 Mealtimes should be used as a time to promote children's agency – children should be encouraged to make their own food choices, serve themselves where possible and be involved in mealtime set up and clean up



- 5.6.3 Children should be encouraged to eat independently (with consideration given to the child's age or developmental stage)
- 5.6.4 Furniture and equipment must be child-centred and suitable for the different ages and stages of our children
- 5.6.5 The eating area/s must be set up to encourage social interaction and a sense of belonging among the children. Educators should also interact with children and each other during mealtimes
- 5.6.6 Mealtimes should be relaxed, pleasant, and structured to meet most children's needs
- 5.6.7 Food must never be used as a punishment, reward or bribe
- 5.6.8 Educators must respect children's food choices and appetites and never force children to eat or drink. Second helpings should be offered
- 5.6.9 Educators model and reinforce healthy and hygienic eating habits during mealtimes
- 5.6.10 Families must take care with foods that are normally stored in the fridge/freezer or must be cooked before being eaten.
- 5.6.11 The Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff, volunteers and students will:
 - ensure children are offered their foods and beverages throughout the day that meet their nutritional and developmental needs and any specific dietary requirements. These requirements may be based on written advice from families (e.g. in the enrolment form) or as part of a child's medical management plan
 - ensure routines are flexible enough so that children who do not eat during routine meal or snack times, or who are hungry, are provided with food. Educators will not force children to eat food they do not like or more than they want
 - encourage families to provide healthy food for their children at home which is consistent with the Australian Dietary Guidelines., talk to families about their child's food intake and voice any concerns about their child's eating
 - ensure food is stored safely in line with procedures set out in the Health, Hygiene and Safe Food Policy
 - supervise children when they're eating or drinking
- 5.6.12 Celebrations and events promote healthy eating and discourage discretionary options.
- 5.6.13 Encourage children to develop their sense of agency by feeding themselves independently and developing their social skills at mealtimes
- 5.6.14 Model and reinforce healthy eating habits and food options with children during eating times.
- 5.6.15 Ensure that healthy eating and oral health information is provided to families, such as information about accessing local dental services and how to create healthy, nutritious meals.
- 5.6.16 When food is provided to staff and educators for meetings, celebrations and events, healthy food options are included, and discretionary/sometimes options are discouraged.
- 5.6.17 The Nominated Supervisor will ensure staff are trained in nutrition, food safety and other cultures' food customs if professional development in these areas is required. Educators and staff are supported to access professional development and resources to enable them to deliver healthy eating and oral health education.
- 5.6.18 Partnerships will be established with relevant organisations and health professionals to support healthy eating and oral health practices where appropriate.

5.7 Educational programming

- 5.7.1 Educators must plan and conduct lessons and activities that teach children about the benefits of healthy eating, oral/dental health and the different types of nutritious food
- 5.7.2 Educators and staff are supported to consume healthy foods and drinks and maintain good oral health practices at work.



- 5.7.3 Healthy eating and oral health information and policy requirements are included in educator and staff orientation/induction.
- 5.7.4 Food and mealtimes should be used as an opportunity for children to learn about their identity, relationships, their community, literacy, numeracy, science, and the world
- 5.7.5 All staff (including volunteers and students) are formally inducted. They are given access to review, understand and formally acknowledge Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Policy and related documents
- 5.7.6 We must regularly share with families information from recognised nutrition authorities about healthy eating and oral health like accessing local dental services and how to create healthy and nutritious meals.
- 5.7.7 Food-related activities must be incorporated into our program to reinforce children's connection to food. These may include gardening, eating outside, and cooking

6 Principles

- 6.1.1 We meet each child's dietary needs, and promote nutritious and appropriate food and beverages for good health, development, and well-being
- 6.1.2 We have an inclusive environment that meets children's cultural, religious, and health-based dietary requirements
- 6.1.3 We have an allergy-aware approach and implement strict food safety measures to ensure children are not at risk while they are in our care
- 6.1.4 We communicate respectfully and partner with families to encourage children's healthy eating. We consult with families regularly so we can cater to each child's dietary needs
- 6.1.5 Staff are supported to access professional development and resources.
- 6.1.6 We regularly review our policies and procedures so we can be sure we are implementing the current best practice for children's nutrition, dietary requirements and food safety
- 6.1.7 We help children to take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing, and we see mealtimes as an opportunity to encourage their sense of agency and social belonging

7 Policy Communication, Training and Monitoring

- 7.1.1 This policy and related documents can be found in our Policy Folder and OneDrive Policy folder
- 7.1.2 The approved provider and nominated supervisor provide information, training and other resources and support regarding the Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Policy and related documents
- 7.1.3 All staff (including volunteers and students) are formally inducted. They are given access to review, understand and formally acknowledge Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Policy and related documents
- 7.1.4 The nominated supervisor runs a professional development program for each staff member, which covers this policy
- 7.1.5 Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined in this policy and in individual position descriptions. They are communicated during staff inductions and in ongoing training
- 7.1.6 The approved provider and nominated supervisor monitor and audit staff practices and address non-compliance. Breaches to this policy are taken seriously and may result in disciplinary action against a staff member
- 7.1.7 At enrolment, families are given access to Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Policy and related documents
- 7.1.8 Families are notified in line with our obligations under the National Regulations when changes are made to our policies and procedures

8 Legislation (Overview)

8.1 Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations

Law	Description
s 167	Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards
Regulations	
s 73	Educational program
s 77	Health, safety and safe food practices
s 78	Food and beverages
s 79	Service providing food and beverages
ss 90 - 91	Medical conditions policy
s 162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
s 168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
s 170	Policies and procedures to be followed
s 171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
s 172	Notification of change to policies or procedures
s 173	Prescribed information to be displayed
ss 181 ,183 - 184	Confidentiality and storage of records

8.2 Other Applicable Laws and Regulations

Act / Regulation / Standard	Description
<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011</i>	Describes the primary duty of care to people in the workplace
<i>Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code</i>	Covers food safety requirements
<i>Privacy Act 1988</i>	Principal act protecting the handling of personal information
<i>Food Act 1984 (VIC)</i> <i>Food Safety Regulations (VIC)</i>	Covers the safe handling of food, including the Australian Food Safety Code

8.3 National Quality Standard

Stand ard / Eleme nt	Concept	Description
2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented
2.1.3	Healthy lifestyle	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazards

Standard / Element	Concept	Description
5.1.1	Positive educator to child interactions	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included
5.2	Relationships between children	Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships
6.1	Supportive relationships with families	Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role
6.1.2	Parent views are respected	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing
6.1.3	Families are supported	Current information is available to families about the service and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing
7.1.2	Management systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service
7.1.3	Roles and responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision-making and operation of the service

8.4 Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) V2.0 / Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework

EYLF Outcome	Key component
3: CHILDREN HAVE A STRONG SENSE OF WELLBEING	- Children become strong in their social, emotional and mental wellbeing - Children become strong in their physical learning and wellbeing - Children are aware of and develop strategies to support their own mental and physical health and personal safety

8.5 National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

Most relevant principles
Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice
Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

9 Related Documents

9.1 Key Policies

Food Safety Policy | Child Safe Environment Policy | Health, Hygiene and Cleaning Policy | Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy | Physical Environment Policy | Enrolment Policy | Medical Conditions Policy | Enrolment Policy | Additional Needs Policy

9.2 Procedures

Roles and Responsibilities – Nutrition and Dietary Requirements (attached) | Food Safety Procedures (in Food Safety Policy) | Medical management plans (in Medical Conditions Policy) | Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Procedures (in Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy)



10 Sources

Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations | National Quality Standard | Australian Dietary Guidelines | Eat for Health – Australian Guide to Healthy Eating | Get Up & Grow – Healthy eating and physical activity for early childhood | NHMRC's Infant Feeding Guidelines: information for health workers 2012 (current) | State/territory food legislation | Australian Breastfeeding Association | Best Practice Guidelines for Anaphylaxis Prevention and Management in Children's Education and Care Services V2.1, 2023 | Victorian Department of Education's Healthy eating in the National Quality Standard | Healthy Eating Advisory Service

11 Authorisation

ELC Document Name	Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Policy	
Name of Reviewer: Approved Provider	Andrew Neal	Signature:
Name of Reviewer: Nominated Supervisor	Kerry Osborn	Signature:
Date Revised	July 2026 Reviewed annually and when there are changes that may affect this policy or related procedures. The review will include checks to ensure the document reflects current legislation, continues to be effective, or whether any changes and additional training are required	

12 History

Date	Amendment
August 2025	1. New policy that replaces the former Food, Nutrition and Beverage Policy
March 2026	2. Annual review – no changes
July 2026	3. Reviewed with Smiles for Miles and made recommended changes