EARLY LEARNING CENTRE
FOOD AND NUTRITION POLICY

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD RELATED STANDARDS/ REGULATIONS

Standard 2.1 Health
Element 2.1.2 Health practices and procedures: Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
Element 2.1.3 Healthy lifestyle: Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.

Standard 2.2 Safety
Element 2.2.1 Supervision: At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.

Standard 5.1 Relationships between educators and children
Element 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.

Standard 6.1 Supportive relationships with families
Element 6.1.2 Parent views are respected: The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in the decision making about their child’s learning and wellbeing.
Element 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.

Regulation 77 Health, hygiene and safe food practices
Regulation 78 Food and beverages
Regulation 79 Service providing food and beverages
Regulation 80 Weekly menu
Regulation 168 Education and care services must have policies and procedures
AIM
To ensure parents are given clear guidelines regarding the provision of food for their child at the Early Learning Centre, and to provide parents with support and education regarding nutrition and food safety.

EXPLANATION
A well-balanced diet and regular exercise are essential to the growth and development of young children. Early childhood is an important time for establishing lifelong healthy eating habits which can benefit children in terms of good general health, reduced illness and reduced risk of childhood obesity related disease. Good eating habits can also influence a range of associated areas including behaviour, concentration and attention, speech and language, social skills and self-management skills.

PRACTICE
PROVISION OF FOOD:
General
Parents are required to provide a water filled drink bottle each day. Water only should be provided (juice, milk, cordial, soft drink etc. are not permitted). This bottle should be clearly named. Children have independent access to this drink bottle throughout the day as needed. A child’s bottle will be refilled with tap water by staff as required during the day. Parents are responsible for the cleaning of the water bottle.

Heating and refrigeration facilities for food are not available. Parents are advised not to send foods that require strict temperature control. Parents are responsible for ensuring that any food items needing to be chilled are kept cold, by way of ice packs within the lunch bag/box. Staff will ensure that children’s food is not placed in direct sunlight, and is kept in a cool location until ready to be eaten. If leftovers are provided for a child to eat, they will be given cold.

Nuts or foods containing nuts (eg. Nutella, peanut butter, nut muesli bars) are not permitted. In cases where particular classes have a child/ren with identified allergies, other foods may be banned for that class. Parents will be advised in writing of any additional food exclusions for their child’s class by the end of the second week of the school year.

As a Waste Wise school, we encourage families to be conscious of the packaging and waste associated with school lunches. Food should be provided in named, re-useable containers and foods in individual packaging are discouraged.

To protect children from the risk of dental disease and obesity related illnesses, we do not allow treats including lollies, fruit roll-ups and fruit ‘stick type’ foods, or chocolate/chocolate covered foods. Such treat foods should be left for home and kept to a minimum in children’s diets. Should
these items be sent, staff will explain to the child that such treat foods are for at home, and will send the item home in the child’s lunch box/bag.

Parents are asked to carefully consider the nutritional value of all foods provided for their child to eat during the school day, and to involve their child in making positive, healthy choices.

A list of “Yes” foods and “No” foods are provided for quick reference:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES FOODS</th>
<th>NO FOODS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All types of fruit: fresh, dried, tinned</td>
<td>Lollies/sweets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raw vegetables and salads</td>
<td>Roll ups, fruit sticks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crackers and crisp breads</td>
<td>Chocolate, chocolate bars, chocolate covered foods</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rice or corn cakes</td>
<td>Nuts including whole nuts, Nutella, peanut butter, bars containing nuts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandwiches, wraps, rolls, pita bread with healthy fillings</td>
<td>Cordial, soft drink, flavoured milk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Left over e.g. casseroles or pasta dishes to be enjoyed col **ice packs required</td>
<td>Other foods related to identified allergies, as advised on a class-by-class basis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yoghurts, custards (plain) **ice packs required</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fruit, savoury or vegetable muffins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scones- plain or fruit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Healthy fruit loaf or raisin bread</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dips such as hummus and tzatziki **ice packs required</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plain popcorn</td>
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<td>Baked beans</td>
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<td>Arrowroot and shredded wheat biscuits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pikelets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cheese slices or cubes **ice packs required</td>
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</table>

**Core Program**

For children attending the Core Program (Monday – Friday, 9.00am – 3.00pm), parents are required to provide morning tea and lunch for their child each day. Morning tea and lunch should be provided separately in re-usable containers, clearly labeled with the child’s name and either “Morning Tea” or “Lunch”. Parents are required to place their child’s morning tea and lunch in labeled baskets on arrival in their child’s classroom in the morning.

Food provided for morning tea should be a small snack, consisting of fruit and a small sandwich/crackers or similar. Children will be offered milk at morning tea, which will be provided by the School.
Food provided for lunch should be more substantial, consisting of a sandwich/wrap, fruit etc. Sandwich fillings should be healthy and nutritious, and high sugar fillings such as jam and honey are to be avoided.

Parents of children attending the Core Program are able to order lunch for their child from the Junior School Canteen. This option is available for lunch only; morning tea must be provided each day by parents. To place an order, parents must use the online “Flexi Schools” ordering system (www.flexischools.com.au). Online orders must be placed by 9.00am. ELC families may only order “lunch packs” from the specified ELC section of the Canteen menu (available on school website). No other items may be ordered. Orders will be collected from the Junior School by ELC staff and delivered to the classrooms in time for lunch.

If a child comes to school without food for the day, a courtesy call will be made to parents to ensure they are aware of the situation. Parents are encouraged to arrange and bring food for morning tea and lunch for their child. If this is not possible, a basic meal from a limited menu will be arranged for the child from the Junior School Canteen for lunch; however, there are no provisions to provide a child with morning tea and parents will be required to make arrangements for their child for morning tea. Parents will be advised of the cost of the provided lunch and will be required to pay the balance within 48 hours. Payment should be given to the ELC Admin Assistant, who will forward it to the Canteen.

**After School Care**
For children who attend the After School Care Program (Monday – Friday, 3.00 – 5.45pm), a snack will be provided for afternoon tea. A menu outlining the food provided each day will be displayed in the ELC Piazza on a Monday for the week ahead. This food will be provided by the School.

**Holiday Program**
For children who attend the Holiday Program (Monday – Friday during School Holidays, 8.15am–5.45pm), parents will be required to provide morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea in separate, named containers. Parents are required to place these items in labeled boxes on arrival at the ELC. If a child comes to the Holiday Program without food for the day, parents will be asked to arrange and deliver food for their child for the day (there are no Canteen or on campus catering facilities available during School Holidays).

**EATING ENVIRONMENT**

**General**
Meal times are intended to be a calm and pleasant experience and are viewed as an ideal opportunity for staff to interact with children, reinforce positive social behaviours and engage in discussions about food, nutrition, cultural differences and positive food choices.
All activities will be packed away prior to meal times and a clean and tidy environment will be created.

Children will be encouraged to always sit while eating.

**Core Program**
Morning tea and lunch will be eaten in the classrooms or outdoors, weather permitting. This allows flexibility in terms of the timing of morning tea and lunch for each class and allows for adequate supervision during transition times. In addition, children’s needs in terms of sleep and/or rest can be best catered for when meal times occur in the classroom.

Children will sit in social groups to eat. Staff members will engage with the children and encourage them to eat items from their lunch box/bag; however, children will not be forced to eat. Any food not eaten during the school day will be returned home in the child’s lunch box, in order to allow parents to ascertain what their child ate during the school day.

**After School Care**
Children attending After School Care will sit in social groups to eat afternoon tea. This may be in the Piazza or outdoors, weather permitting. Staff members will engage with children during this time and encourage children to try the foods provided; however, children will not be forced to eat.

**Holiday Program**
Children attending Holiday Program will sit in social groups to eat morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea. This may be in the Piazza or outdoors, weather permitting. Staff members will engage with children during this time and encourage children to eat items from their lunch box; however, children will not be forced to eat. Any food not eaten during the day will be returned home in the child’s lunch box, in order to allow parents to ascertain what their child ate during the day.

**FOOD EDUCATION**
Families will be provided with information about young children’s nutritional requirements, food safety and healthy food choices via information sheets, books and posters. These items will be available for parents to access as required from the ELC Piazza.

Parents will be provided with specific feedback and/or information if staff identify that the food provided for a child is inappropriate, insufficient or disliked by the child (after encouragement to try the item).

Children will be educated about food, positive food choices, cultural variations in food preferences and cooking related language and utensils through discussions with staff during meal times, classroom discussions, role/dramatic play experiences, cooking activities, books and alike. Food will never be used as a reward, nor as a form of punishment.
FOOD SAFETY (SEE MORE DETAILED FOOD HANDLING POLICY)
Parents are required to inform the School and their child’s class teacher of any food related allergies affecting their child. This should be provided in writing and any medical plans must be provided. Staff will take reasonable steps to ensure children with allergies are not exposed to foods which place them at risk. (See Allergy and Anaphylaxis Policy)

At all times, health and hygiene is of upmost importance when food is being prepared or consumed. Prior to meal times or cooking experiences, staff will disinfect tables where food will be prepared or consumed.

Children and staff will wash their hands thoroughly, with soap and water, prior to meal times or cooking experiences. Staff will wear single use gloves during cooking experiences and meal times when handling children’s food.

Staff will explain to children the importance of only eating food from their own lunch box/bag, and will vigilantly monitor that children do not share food.

As refrigeration and heating facilities are not available, parents are required not to send items that require heating or cooling. Temperature control is the responsibility of the parent and the provision of ice packs is encouraged.

CELEBRATIONS
It is acceptable to celebrate a child’s birthday at school. In addition, if a child is leaving the school part way through the year, it is acceptable to have a farewell celebration. Parents may send 24 cupcakes (preferred) or 1 large cake for their child to share with the children in his/her class for these events. Plain cupcakes with minimal icing and decorations are encouraged and a list of ingredients is appreciated. Healthy alternatives to cakes may be discussed with the class teacher.

Celebrations of this kind will be low key, and cakes (or a healthy alternative) only are to be provided. Party bags, drinks, lollies, party games or party favours are not permitted and staff are not able to facilitate a party-like event for any child.

Parents of a child with allergies are asked to provide 6 cupcakes or similar that can be frozen and kept at the School. These will be defrosted and provided to the child on occasions when cakes are provided.

We respect that the action of blowing out birthday candles plays an important and special role in birthday celebrations; however, health and hygiene standards are paramount. For birthday celebrations, the child will be given an opportunity to blow out a single candle on a single cupcake, which will then be theirs to eat. This will help to minimize any potential transmission of illness.
Children in the ELC are not permitted to bring in food items (chocolates, Easter Eggs, Candy canes etc.) to distribute to their classmates for celebrations such as Easter and Christmas; however, non-food items (eg. cards) are permitted. Food items will not be used by staff as part of celebrations (eg. Easter, Christmas, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day).

On special occasions, such as the end of a school year or similar, a “class party” may be celebrated and families may be asked to bring food to contribute to such an event. The class teacher will distribute a list of appropriate food items for families to bring. As much as practicable, these items will be healthy food choices, though on these occasions, a small number of “treat” foods may be permitted.

REFERENCES

- Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood
- Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia
- Personal communication with ACT Public Health Officer (Wednesday 15 August 2012)

Policy reviewed and updated 7/3/17