

What did we choose and Why

Our Nursery had changed from having an onsite cook to using the local school meals service to provide our lunchtime meals during August of 201.

Whilst the meals provided are nutritionally balanced for school age children the staff were becoming concerned that not all of the meals were appropriate for our age range (6 months -5 years)

During the spring of 2015 we gathered the comments and opinions from the parent/carers feedback forms of what they would like to see on the menus in order for the meals to meet the needs of our children and families as well as our policy as a nursery.

Some concerns were...

- The children were having cake for pudding on a daily basis. Children were starting to refuse pudding and ask for fruit.
- Some of the meals were not suitable for the very young children such as pizza
- We were not satisfied that the children were having chips every Friday
- The meals were not as culturally diverse as we would like
- The children were given a cake based pudding every day

The preschool children were asked what they like and didn't like about the current menus and within reason this was also taken into consideration.

The children got upset as they sent several small portions of food and there wasn't enough for each child to have some of, so they couldn't always have what their friends were having

The children began to refuse the cake for pudding and started to ask for fruit or yogurt.

The children also started to leave the chips and potato wedges as these appeared on the menu several times a week

One child asked for more pasta and we asked for this and gained it 😊

We sought advice from the Health Improvement Specialist and The Director of Public Health Award Coordinator for Early Years in our area.

They suggested we meet with the school and request some changes to the meals we were being provided with.

Senior managers met with the school and we were able to negotiate some immediate changes and some changes to the September menus to meet our need.

We immediately asked for 3 days of fruit or yoghurt and not cake

No chips on a Friday and we had the vegetarian option for all children instead of fish and chips.

A copy of the September menu so we could put our own choices on the days we considered that the meals were not going to be suitable for our age range.

So once we had received this, the senior team and staff looked at the menu and again made some changes to ensure that it was appropriate for our age range and was more diverse.

- We ensured that the food provided would be suitable for children with dietary needs.
- With this further information they devised a new set of menus that had taken all of our recommendations into place, to ensure when it was pizza it had separate ham and cheese for the babies as they couldn't manage the pizza.
- A curry had been included
- The fish and chips was replaced with fish with mashed potato on a Friday
- Pudding is now fruit and/or yoghurt except on a Friday when we have a fruit crumble and custard

When these menus had been finalised they were displayed in reception for the parents to see with a sign explaining what we had done but also to still let us know if other changes can be moved to keep the quality and improving up.

While we were improving the lunch time menus we also thought we should look and see if the tea that we provide in the afternoon could be updated and changes were made to this. This includes more fish and also warmer foods ready for the winter such as cheese or beans on toast. We have also included different variations of bread such as pittas, wraps, rolls and muffins and varied the fillings from tuna, ham, cheese, marmite and chicken.

We used to give the children fromage frais for tea but since doing a display for the parents outlining the amount of sugar that is in food and drinks and it appeared that there was a large sugar content in the small portion of yoghurt that you get in the pots, so we have removed this from the menu and replaced it with natural yogurt.

The older children are encouraged to self-serve, the food is placed in the middle of the table and they are given their plates to dish up the amount they want (this is monitored).

Again they are encouraged to have a little bit of all of it and try what they have on their plates before getting seconds.

In each of the rooms there are posters showing the recommended portions for each age group and what it the equaliviant to when it comes to each food group. The children like the opportunity to be able to serve their selves and they feel 'grown up' having the responsibility to dish up what they want.

We write on a board what the children eat and how much of each food this is so the parent/carer can see without having to track down a member of staff just to ask how much they have eaten.



