



Individual feeding plans and meeting need

Clare House Nursery recognises that every child has unique nutritional, developmental and medical needs. We are committed to providing a safe, inclusive and child-centred approach to feeding, ensuring that each child receives appropriate support to enable them to enjoy positive mealtime experiences.

Individual Feeding Plans, Individual Healthcare Plans and Risk Assessments will be completed where required for children who:

- Have swallowing or feeding difficulties.
- Have identified medical conditions.
- Require modified food textures.
- Have allergies or medically prescribed dietary requirements.
- Receive support from Speech and Language Therapy (SALT), Dietitians, Occupational Therapists, Paediatricians or other healthcare professionals.

The nursery will work closely with parents, carers and relevant professionals to ensure that feeding arrangements are safe, appropriate and reviewed regularly. All recommendations provided by healthcare professionals will be followed to ensure children's nutritional, developmental and medical needs are consistently met.

Aim

Our aim is to provide a safe, inclusive and nurturing environment where every child can enjoy nutritious food, develop healthy eating habits and build a positive relationship with food.

Practitioners play a vital role in achieving this by providing safe, responsive and child-centred care during mealtimes. Through effective supervision, safe food preparation, robust allergen management, responsive feeding practices and positive role modelling, practitioners promote children's health, wellbeing, independence and confidence while protecting them from avoidable harm.

We work in partnership with parents, carers and healthcare professionals to ensure that every child's individual nutritional, medical, cultural and developmental needs are understood, respected and safely met. We recognise that safe feeding and nutrition are safeguarding responsibilities, and all practitioners are expected to remain vigilant, follow safe working practices and contribute to an environment where every child can thrive and reach their full potential.

Responsive Feeding and Supporting Food Refusal

At Clare House Nursery, we recognise that every child develops their own relationship with food. Some children may confidently explore new foods, whilst others may require additional time, reassurance and support.

Practitioners understand that food refusal can occur for many reasons, including developmental stages, sensory processing differences, medical conditions, previous experiences, anxiety or additional needs.

Children will never be forced, pressured or bribed to eat. Instead, practitioners will provide calm encouragement, respond sensitively to each child's individual needs and support children to recognise their own feelings of hunger and fullness.

Where a child consistently refuses food or experiences difficulties with eating, practitioners will work in partnership with parents or carers to develop an individual approach. Where appropriate, advice will be sought from Health Visitors, Speech and Language Therapists (SALT), Occupational Therapists, Dietitians, Paediatricians or other relevant professionals.

Support strategies may include:

- respecting the child's appetite and recognising their hunger and fullness cues
- offering familiar foods
- new food (depending on child's needs) will be offered away from the table
- introducing small portions without expectation to eat
- allowing children to explore food through looking, touching and smelling before tasting
- adapting seating arrangements or the mealtime environment where appropriate
- following recommendations from healthcare professionals.

Introducing New Foods Through Sensory Play

Practitioners will support children to explore new foods through planned sensory play experiences before they are introduced at mealtimes. By encouraging children to look, touch, smell and talk about different foods without pressure to taste them, practitioners help build confidence, reduce anxiety and develop positive relationships with food at each child's individual pace.

Cultural, Religious and Individual Dietary Needs

At Clare House Nursery, we are committed to providing an inclusive environment where every child's individual dietary needs, cultural background, religious beliefs and personal preferences are respected and valued. We recognise that mealtimes play an important role in children's wellbeing, identity and sense of belonging.

We work closely in partnership with parents and carers to ensure that each child's dietary requirements are fully understood before they attend the nursery and are reviewed regularly or whenever changes occur. All relevant information is recorded and communicated to staff to ensure children's needs are met safely and consistently.

Where required, we will provide or accommodate:

- Religious dietary requirements, including foods prepared in accordance with specific faith practices.
- Vegetarian and vegan diets.
- Medically prescribed diets, including those relating to allergies, intolerances and other health conditions.
- Texture-modified diets and specialist feeding plans where advised by healthcare professionals.
- Individual dietary requirements arising from developmental, sensory or additional needs.

Children requiring modified food textures or specialist feeding arrangements will have an Individual Feeding Plan, Risk Assessment and, where appropriate, an Individual Healthcare Plan developed in partnership with parents, carers and relevant healthcare professionals.

Staff will follow all professional recommendations to ensure food is prepared and served safely, reducing the risk of choking and supporting each child's nutritional needs.

All meals and snacks will continue to meet the nursery's food safety, allergy management and choking prevention procedures.

Practitioners involved in preparing, serving or supervising meals will receive information regarding children's dietary needs through daily room communication, Individual Healthcare Plans, allergy information, feeding plans and staff handovers to ensure consistency and children's safety.

Clare House Nursery promotes an environment of equality, respect and inclusion. Children are encouraged to learn about and celebrate different cultures and traditions through positive experiences, including food, whilst ensuring that every child's dignity, health, safety and wellbeing remain paramount.

Staff Competence

Practitioners supporting babies and young children during weaning, feeding and mealtimes will receive appropriate training and be assessed as competent before undertaking these responsibilities independently.

Competence will be monitored through:

- Induction.
- Supervision.
- Observations of practice.
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD).
- Safeguarding and Health and Safety audits.
- Reflective practice discussions.

Practitioners will only administer emergency medication or support specialist feeding arrangements once they have received appropriate training and have been assessed as competent to do so.

Safeguarding

Clare House Nursery recognises that safe feeding, safer weaning and supporting positive relationships with food are fundamental safeguarding responsibilities. Robust supervision, appropriate food preparation, knowledgeable practitioners, responsive feeding practices and effective partnership working help protect children from preventable harm, promote healthy development and ensure every child experiences safe, enjoyable and inclusive mealtimes.

Practitioners recognise that changes in a child's eating habits, persistent food refusal, significant weight changes, anxiety around food or ongoing feeding difficulties may indicate an underlying

medical, developmental or safeguarding concern. Staff will remain professionally curious, monitor concerns carefully and maintain open communication with parents or carers.

Where appropriate, concerns will be discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and referrals made to relevant health professionals, including Health Visitors, Speech and Language Therapists (SALT), Occupational Therapists, Dietitians or Paediatricians.

Any concerns relating to a child's eating patterns, nutritional intake, growth, hydration, wellbeing or safety during mealtimes will be recorded using the nursery's Record of Concern Form and managed in accordance with the nursery's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026).

Through early identification, partnership working and child-centred practice, Clare House Nursery aims to ensure that every child develops a healthy relationship with food while safeguarding their health, wellbeing and overall development.

Monitoring and Review

The Nursery Manager will monitor the implementation of this policy through regular observations, supervision meetings, mealtime observations, audits and reflective practice discussions.

This policy will be reviewed annually, following changes in legislation or national guidance, or sooner if an incident, audit or review identifies that improvements are required.

