

YOUR CHILD'S LEARNING JOURNEY

CONTENTS

Registration	Page 1
Settling in your child	Page 2
How we support you	Page 6
How you can support us	Page 8
Recording & managing your child's development	Page 9
Child transitions, graduation & starting school	Page 11
Children with special needs	Page 13
Child protection & safety	Page 15
Nursery meals, diet & nutrition	Page 17
Advice & fact sheets	Page 20

REGISTRATION

How to register your child

Once you make the decision to register your child for Nursery, the registration process is the start of your child's development journey with us. The information asked to register your child in the registration form is very detailed and this is because a Nursery is heavily regulated with underpinning laws and legislation for example: child protection and data protection. Nurseries are also legally bound to comply with compliance legislation from our Governing Inspectorate Ofsted.

We ask that you always keep the nursery updated of any key information changes to ensure that we always hold up to date and current key information on your family. A £50 deposit is required to register your child's place with Evolution Childcare and this is refunded from your final month's invoice.

SETTLING IN YOUR CHILD

Parents are welcome to settling in

Once you have registered your child with us, we will arrange with you, settling in sessions. Settling in a child into nursery smoothly is so important for their wellbeing. Children cannot play or learn successfully if they are anxious and unhappy. Parents welcome our settling in procedures to help and support parents and children and to make them feel comfortable from the onset.

Good settling in practices enable children to really embrace and enjoy what Nursery has to offer, and to be confident and secure that their parents will return at the end of the session/day and to overcome separation anxiety. The transition to Nursery can feel quite daunting for a small child. This is why we at Evolution Childcare work hard to support you and your family through this transition.

Through clear daily routines and structures as well as effective staff deployment and specific grouping of children at key times of the day we ensure that your child receives quality care, attention and warmth from our team in a welcoming and calm environment.

Our aim is to offer a home from home environment that not only ensures that the environment is safe and secure but also has strong links with the home to make this transition as smooth as possible. This is achieved with the use of key pieces of equipment and resources, staff taking on a caring and nurturing approach and care and education being delivered at each individuals pace and rate to cater for their ever-changing needs.

To support this further our team ensure that key routines and aspects of each child's normal everyday procedures not only are taken on board but impact and remain a focus for their daily experiences whilst with us. These can be anything from:

- Sleep times at home
- Favourite stories, songs or rhymes that they enjoy singing and being sung
- Comforters and other personal routines that they enjoy
- Special words, sounds or phrases that are used and a child is familiar with
- Meal times and preferences
- Special family photos that your child will enjoy seeing and making reference to throughout their nursery day.

You could even provide us with tapes of you singing special rhymes and songs for us to play within the nursery for your child to enjoy or you could share favourite musical CD's and songs that you enjoy within the home for your child to also listen to throughout their nursery day. We are only too happy to implement anything that you feel will assist your child in their learning, education or in their general wellbeing and putting a smile upon their face.

At Evolution Childcare nurseries we want children to feel safe and happy in the absence of their parents, to recognise other adults as a source of authority, to help them build friendships and to be able to share with their parents afterwards the new learning experiences enjoyed in the day nursery and preschool.

In order to accomplish this Evolution Childcare will:

- Encourage the parents to visit the day nursery and preschool with their own children during the weeks before an admission is planned
- Arrange for the day nursery and preschool manager and/or key worker to visit the family at home, if possible, in order to gain more insight into the child's background and needs and allow the child to become familiar with day nursery and preschool adults
- Introduce flexible admission procedures, if appropriate, to meet the needs of individual families and children
- Make clear to families from the outset that they will be supported in the day nursery and preschool for as long as it takes to settle their child there
- Reassure parents whose child seems to be taking a long time to settle into day nursery and preschool
- Encourage parents, where appropriate, to separate from their children for brief periods at first, gradually building up to longer absences.

Settling in is usually a three visit build up to a full day. We take the individual needs of the children into consideration and these may be adapted to suit the emotional needs of the child.

Key workers

Within our nurseries we aim to offer a welcoming, safe and stimulating environment where children are able to truly enjoy learning through a play-based curriculum with our aim being to build upon and support children in obtaining confidence and self-esteem to truly fulfil their fullest potential. In support of the curriculum we agree that children learn best when they are healthy, safe and feel secure and by offering an environment that:

- Offers healthy activities, indoor and outdoor play as well as balanced and nutritious diets
- Offers a safe environment that is well risk assessed to enable children to take safe risks and make mistakes as this is a key way of building children's confidence
- Offers a secure and protected environment with rigorous and thorough systems in place
- We can ensure that our nursery truly supports the welfare and wellbeing of each and every child.

Every child who starts within Evolution Childcare is designated their very own personal Key Worker who will be able to answer any concerns, queries or comments you may have whilst keeping you fully informed on your child's developmental progress.

Our team are highly trained in this proves to ensure that the transition from home to nursery runs as smoothly as possible for both the child and parent alike. Although we have a Key Worker system in place, we ensure that within each room all staff support one another and the development and progression of each child's learning journey and assist in this through planned and unplanned learning opportunities throughout each child's day. Therefore, in the event that your Key Worker should be on annual leave please be assured that any other staff member within the room will also be able to assist and support you and your child throughout this time.

The aim of the Key Worker is to assist your child in becoming familiar within their new setting and environment and support them in feeling confident and safe within it. They will develop a genuine bond with your child and you working upon building a close and professional relationship, ensuring that your child's individual needs are being catered for and that their individual development and progression is frequently discussed with you and recorded. This free flow of information is essential and something within our nurseries that we highly value as it enables us to support each child in progressing at their own pace and achieving their fullest potential.

A sense of belonging

At Evolution Childcare we aim to ensure that every child feels accepted and has a strong sense of belonging whilst at Nursery as once this is achieved each child will feel comfortable enough to explore and investigate from a secure basis which forms the foundations for play and learning through play.

We work towards achieving this as soon as your child registers with us. Each child on registration is assigned their own coat peg that has either their name, photograph or both on it so each day when they arrive, and they have their own personal space within the nursery where their personal belongings can go. This soon becomes recognised as being their space and an area that is familiar to them within the setting.

In the rooms, children are also part of routine boards and welcome boards. Here photos of themselves and friends are shown as well as on displays demonstrating their first-hand experiences having fun, and hands on learning whilst embarking on activities and creative play throughout the nursery day. Photos of the children form the foundations for many of our displays and boards within the rooms to enable the parents to see the enjoyment that the children are having daily as well as sharing these experiences with them.

Exercises and activities such as these all support each child in settling into the nursery as they promote a sense of belonging this in turn results in each child being confident and feeling accepted and safe which builds upon confidence as a whole. Confidence then manifests itself into broadening a child's horizons which then leads to children trying new activities, speaking in large and small groups as well as having and forming new relationships alongside many other new challenges, of which all of these are key and important skills that children need to acquire.

Policies and procedures

The Nursery has policies and procedures that are the framework to Evolution Childcare. The policies outline the legal and compliance framework that protect parents, children, staff and visitors in our settings whilst the Procedures outline exactly what we shall all do in each and every eventuality.

We ask you to thoroughly examine these policies and procedures on your settling in session with your key worker, and to sign to accept you agree to abide by them. The policies are working documents and may be subject to change. Parents are automatically emailed updates

to keep you fully abreast of any changes. Parents who do not wish to sign and accept any particular policies must sign a disclaimer informing nursery of their personal preference. This will be held in good faith and adhered to.

Welcome pack

All Parents starting at an Evolution Childcare Nursery receive a Room Welcome Pack introducing the room, the curriculum requirements, the team, key dates in your diary and general information about the day to day running of the room. We really want to 'cement' this key time in your child's life and send a very personal and beautiful keepsake home within the first week to mark the occasion.

Parent's handbook

The Evolution Childcare Parents Handbook contains some key information based on:

- Legal and Legislative Policies and Procedures
- EYFS Statutory Regulation Compliance Policies and Procedures
- Governments 'Change for children programme' 5 outcomes for children
- Evolution Childcare Terms and Conditions of a Registered place
- Evolution Childcare Operational Plan

A Parent's Handbook master copy is available in each Nursery Office and copies are available on request.

HOW WE SUPPORT YOU

One team, one goal

Evolution Childcare believe that successful parents in partnership is essential to the success of a Nursery. Our one team, one goal ethos supports parents in partnership and is considered crucial to the wellbeing, development and progress of your child. During your time at Evolution Childcare we will encourage and promote parents in partnership with a two-way flow of information, knowledge and expertise. The more we know about you and your child and the more you know about us, the more successful we will be in creating a partnership that is fully supportive of your child.

There is a considerable amount of information that needs to be acquired, documented, reviewed and measured. So how will we pass on and exchange this information with you?

- Our parent handbook
- Our website
- Our parent notice boards
- Feedback from your keyperson, either daily sheets or verbal
- Development reports about your child based on observations
- New evolved Nursery policies published in our reception area
- The nursery bi-monthly newsletter
- Email
- General notices and signs around the nursery
- Parents evenings
- Social events such as summer fayre, quiz nights and open days
- Training sessions for parents such as behaviour management and child protection
- Suggestion boxes in the Parents Reception area
- Complaints and compliments procedure (on parent notice board)
- Outreach programme – Links with schools, health centres and local businesses

It is very likely you and your child could be with us for many years, it is essential we establish an environment that makes it easy to exchange information and views. We also want to make it easy for you as well as your child to make new acquaintances and friends and we will provide lots of opportunities for this to happen.

Parents evenings

At Evolution Childcare, we recognise the importance of informing, supporting and communicating with parents. Parent's evenings also provide an opportunity to keep parents informed and involved in their child's learning.

We recognise and encourage parents' roles as co-educators, promoting regular face-to-face discussion and correspondence via newsletters, emails and social media. Access to children's "Learning Journeys" and the issuing of child development records and reports enable parents to share in their children's achievements and to identify areas where support may be necessary.

As parents ourselves, we share with a common goal of maximising every aspect of a child's learning experience, and in achieving this we recognise the importance of establishing a trusting and honest partnership with parents from the outset. Easing transition from nursery to school is a key goal and is put into practice through our transition programme for parents and children. Prior to starting with Evolution Childcare, we have our settling in sessions where parents are made welcome on a daily basis and staff are available to discuss any issues or concerns.

At Evolution Childcare nurseries we hold two parents evenings a year where you get to discuss your child's overall happiness, development and progress at nursery and give feedback to us on your experiences.

At the parents evenings you will meet with your child's key worker and will look through your child's development record and key worker file where you will relish in the lovely photos, work samples and written observations the staff make as you child continues to develop, thrive and thoroughly enjoy their learning. You will also receive a written progress report so you are fully aware exactly how you child is progressing along the way.

The management team are always present to ensure your every need is catered for and you feel supported and happy on your child's learning journey with us.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT US

Parents' involvement

Parents are the first educators of their young children. We believe that parents involvement is the biggest influence on children's attitudes, behaviour and achievements. We strive to work effectively with our parents to enrich the curriculum we offer and raise children's achievement.

- Parents' involvement is encouraged in shared record keeping about your child, both formally and informally, ensuring that parents have access to all written records on their own children.
- Ensure that parents are given information on a regular basis about their child's progress and have the opportunity to discuss it with staff.
- Ensure that all parents have opportunities to contribute from their own skills, knowledge and interests to the activities of the group.
- Ensure that all parents are fully informed about meetings, conferences, workshops and training.
- Consult with families about the times of meetings to avoid excluding anyone.
- Hold meetings in venues, which are accessible and appropriate for all.
- Welcome the contribution of parents, whatever forms these may take.
- Make known to all parents the systems for registering queries, complaints or suggestions.
- Provide opportunities for parents to learn about the nursery curriculum and about young children's learning, in the nursery and at home.
- Staff guide parents/carers as to how the learning is organized and managed in our school. Parents are given support so they will have a positive experience.
- Staff try to ensure that parents/carers from all sections of the community are involved in the life of the nursery
- Parents/carers help with outings.
- Parents/carers share their particular skills, knowledge and culture.

We recognise that parents differ in their ability to offer support. Some parents/carers are under pressure due to family circumstances. We accept participation on whatever level parents/carers feel they can give it. No-one should ever be made to feel uncomfortable. The most valuable contribution parents can give us is commitment to their children's education.

RECORDING & MANAGING YOUR CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT

A child's learning journey

A child's learning journey is a celebration of a child's achievements and interests during the time they spend in Nursery. This accumulation of material and mediums, celebrates and shows the child's learning journey and development through carefully chosen, dated and sequenced. We manage a child's learning journey through:

- Observations
- Annotated photographs
- Snapshots of significant achievements
- Quotes from the child
- Comments from the parents/carers
- Contributions from other settings the child attends
- Dating and sequencing entries in the child's learning journey help our staff to indicate a child's progress in their learning and development.

Child development records

Child development records are used alongside the learning journals to monitor each child's progress as they develop towards the Early Learning Goals. Each month our practitioners select an area of learning and a development matters area and carry out an observation on each individual child. Once a practitioner is satisfied that a learning area has been met it is logged, the time and date confirmed and recorded in the child development record.

Early years progress checks at 2 years

The EYFS Statutory Framework states that a progress check should be carried out on all children at the age of two. The framework states 'When a child is aged between two and three, practitioners must review their progress, and provide parents and/or carers with a short-written summary of their child's development in the prime areas.

This progress check must identify the child's strengths, and any area where the child's progress is less than expected. If there are significant emerging concerns, or an identified special educational need or disability, practitioners should develop a targeted plan to support the child's future learning and development involving other professionals as appropriate'. The check is completed by the child's key worker who knows each child extremely well and with the full involvement of all the relevant people to provide a full and comprehensive picture of the child.

On leaving an Evolution Childcare nursery on your child's journey onto School you will be given your child's full child development record, plus a final assessment and transition record for all School Leavers. This profile gives a teacher an exact child development record of your child's abilities and readiness for year 1.

Children at play

For all children, play is vital, play is essential and play is everything. Play is a child's work. Everything a child at play does, or doesn't do, influences the next stage of their development. The early years are the time when a child's brain is developing, making connections and creating a network of skills at an enormous pace and speed that are forming the building blocks for the rest of their lives.

Learning through play

By the age of five, a child has learned all the basic skills needed to survive walking, talking, muscle and body control, figuring out interpersonal relationships, amongst others. It's pretty incredible and actually amazing when you think about it and it all takes a lot of practice. We can help our children by understanding that they develop skills in different areas and by providing opportunities and activities to help them on their way.

By listening, watching and tuning in to our children we can get a feel for the best activity at a given time. Some children are active doers and will need lots of outdoor physical, energetic play. Others are happy sitting at home with toys and can play on their own for hours. There are lots of ways of learning and if you and your child are having fun and enjoying both the activity and each other then you are helping your child. Sometimes your child's gender will determine the way they play and how they learn.

As parents you know your children best of all so home activities can be geared to what your child likes and geared to the pace that suits them. Lots of the ideas we are suggesting are things to do with your child at play. Playing together is one way of showing your child that you care for and love them. You are giving them attention and making them feel special. But giving children opportunities to play on their own is also very valuable and providing them with things to do helps them get more out of play.

When we look back in fondness at our own childhood, good memories are often attached to the games we played, the things we did with our parents and with other children. Remember the endless games of 'I spy'!!

One of the best parts of being a parent is being allowed to play, to have the chance to relive all those things we did as children or to make up for activities we never did as children; swinging on swings, getting really messy using finger paints, dressing up and so on. So next time a fellow parent asks you where you are going – throw your chest out and shout 'I am off to play out!'

CHILD TRANSITIONS, GRADUATION & STARTING SCHOOL

Child transitions

Child Transitions happen whenever children switch from parent to educator, move from place to place, or change from one activity to another. Different places and spaces have their own purposes, expectations and ways of doing things.

There are many different types of transitions children will go through in their lifetime. For example, when starting nursery for a first time, this is often described as a major transition in a child's life. Other types of transitions which can be described as minor, are when a child is moving from play time to hand – washing and then sitting for morning snack or between other activities in Nursery or at home.

It is important to view transitions for children not as single events but as pathways to later successful outcomes particularly toward learning. Evolution Childcare highlight the importance of transitions for children and encourages parents and staff to assist children to understand the traditions, routines and practices at nursery each individually to the child to ensure that each child feels comfortable, secure and confident with the process of change.

Types of child transitions

Three key transitions for children:

1. Transitioning to Nursery

The transition from home to Nursery is a milestone for both children and families. Families, like children, may experience some anxieties during this time. For example, children may struggle with new routines and being separated from their family. However, families themselves may have concerns about their child's ability to cope with the demands of their new environment – learning where things are, what is expected of them, asking for help when needed. Forming a strong partnership between Nursery and the child's family helps to establish an understanding between educators and families about expectations and attitudes, and provides a foundation for building on the knowledge of both parties.

2. Transitions between rooms or activities in Nursery

The significance of moving from one room to another or from one activity to another for a child can often be overlooked as they are still in the same service. Moving from a room where they know the flow of the day and what and who to expect in it, to a new environment with perhaps different staff with different ways of doing things can be overwhelming for the child.

3. Daily transitions within the service

Although daily transitions for children can be considered as minor ones, they still have the potential to cause children a significant level of stress. Children's individual needs must be considered during any transition and particularly when assisting with daily transitions. For example, visual cues rather than verbal communication may help to explain what is coming next.

Graduation

To recognise and reward the achievements of the Pre School children, each year at Evolution Childcare we hold an annual graduation party for all school leavers within the nursery. During this event we hold a graduation ceremony where each child receives a graduation certificate and has their photo taken individually wearing a cap and gown and then as a class so that the memories of their time within the nursery can be shared with the child in future years and happily be looked back upon.

This is our way of saying farewell and good luck to the children who have been with us for many years. The family are also invited to this occasion to celebrate and reflect upon the time spent, fond memories, conversations and development milestones that the children have progressed through from first words and steps to carol concert roles and room moves as all of these are happily revisited and reflected upon during this extra special time.

Starting school

Starting School and the transition from nursery to BIG school is a huge milestone in a child's life, and one parent's worry will be a traumatic experience for all involved. In a bid to enable this transition to be as smooth as possible, Evolution Childcare have embarked on a community outreach programme which began in March 2006. It was recognised that children within early years settings would benefit greatly from established links with schools. The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum continues to the end of reception year, and therefore it was of great importance to maintain continuity between settings and establish links with schools.

Starting school with an outreach programme

The main aim of the outreach programme was to establish these links, to ensure that a prospective reception teacher and ourselves as child care practitioners were fully aware of the educational back and foreground individual children had and were going to have. Linked to our developmental files, teachers were provided with the opportunity to learn first hand about the children that would be attending their school.

The programme has provided opportunities for reception teachers to visit, meet the children and observe the educational environment here at nursery. It also provided our Early Years Teacher with the opportunity of visiting various reception classes, finding out about reading, number and letter schemes, enabling us, where necessary, to adapt to these.

In some cases, schools have provided photograph books for the children to enable them to become more familiar with their new setting before they arrive and we have been invited to spend some of the children's school settling in periods with them. Through the outreach programme we have been able to assist prospective parents in making choices about schools in the area and advise them on what activities and preparations they can make to assist the transition.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Evolution Specialist Childcare is committed to the integration of children with special needs. Our philosophy is that children with a special need have a right to be educated and to develop to their full potential alongside other children. Everyone stands to gain if all children are allowed to share the same opportunities and helped to overcome any disadvantages they may have to face.

Specialist childcare integration

Integration will be achieved with:

- Wider doors available for wheelchairs
- The play area is all one level
- We will assess each child's needs in terms of access and adapt our facilities as appropriate.

Support and expertise

- We have a designated Special Needs Coordinator
- There are several members of the staff team who are experienced in the care of children with special needs
- Outside agencies, including the Health and Education Authorities, will be called on to give advice and support and the staff team will receive training where appropriate
- Staff work together with parents/main carers as partners to give day to day care for the child and parents/carers will be given support by all the staff team.

We ensure that all children are treated as equals and are encouraged to take part in every aspect of the day nursery and preschool activities. All children will be involved in the daily routine, e.g., garden, music and movement, trips to the shops. When outings are being organised, children with special needs will always be included. Wherever possible we will promote positive images of those with special needs.

Children with special educational needs all have learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most children of the same age. (DfES, 2001). The 1996 Education Act states that all early education settings, state schools, and Local Education Authorities, together with health and social services, must follow the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice when dealing with children with SEN.

In early education settings and state schools children aged 3 to 5 years old follow the foundation stage curriculum. The Early Learning Goals of this curriculum set out what most children should be able to do by the end of the school reception year. Should your child be making slower progress than you expected, or need additional or different support to other children their age, it does not necessarily mean that your child has special educational needs – teachers use a variety of teaching methods in their classroom given the different rates at which children progress. However, if you do have concerns about your child you should seek advice.

If your child is not yet at school you can talk to your health visitor or doctor. Once at an early years setting or at school a useful person for you to become familiar with the school's SENCO – Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator. This is the person responsible for co-ordinating help for children with special educational needs. Alternatively you could approach your child's teacher or head teacher.

Once it is decided that your child has SEN, the setting should follow the Code of Practice as follows:

- Early Years Action (for early education settings) or School Action: your child begins to receive additional or different help from other children because of their special educational needs. The school must tell you if such measures are used.
- Should your child then not make enough progress, the school may seek advice from people outside of the school, such as an educational psychologist or speech and language therapist. This level is called Early Years Action or School Action Plus.
- Following on from this, if your child's needs are not then met by the mainstream school with the help of specialists, the local education authority will make an assessment of your child. If the LEA decides your child needs special help, they will write a statement of special educational needs. This statement usually means that your child's school will get a certain amount of money to spend on supporting your child. This is normally spent on a 'Learning Support Assistant' – someone who will help support your child in their setting.

The department for education and skills provides a comprehensive guide to the process that a child with special educational needs will pass through, called "Special Educational Needs (SEN), A Guide For Parents And Carers" and is available from www.dfes.gov.uk or from the following address:

DfES Publications Centre
PO Box 5050
Sherwood Park
Annersley
Nottingham NG15 ODJ
Phone: 0845 6022260
Email: dfes@prolog.uk.com

CHILD PROTECTION & SAFETY

Safeguarding Children is something that all Nursery Schools have a duty of care to perform to the absolute best of their abilities. Child Protection is a multi-stranded identifying concept that reaches beyond basic child protection to incorporate the additional aims of preventing the impairment of children's health and development, ensuring children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care, as well as protecting children from maltreatment.

The UK Government has defined the term 'safeguarding children' as:

'The process of protecting children from abuse or neglect, preventing impairment of their health and development, and ensuring they are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care that enables children to have optimum life chances and enter adulthood successfully.'

This shift from traditional child protection to a more all-encompassing approach were influenced by the first Joint Chief Inspectors' safeguarding children report (2002) and the Victoria Climbié Inquiry (2003).

The Every Child Matters programme outlined in the Children Act 2004 formalised these changes in approach into a legislative framework. Every Child Matters aimed to improve outcomes for children in 5 key areas:

- Being Healthy
- Staying Safe
- Enjoying and Achieving
- Making a Positive Contribution
- Achieving Economic Well-Being
- To help achieve this the Act was the formation of the multi-agency Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs).

These consist of representatives from local partner agencies such as housing, health, police and probation services. The LSCBs are charged with co-ordinating the functions of all partner agencies in relation to safeguarding children. They carry out this function by, among other things, agreeing the contribution of all member agencies and deciding how these pooled funds should be allocated.

In addition they are responsible for commissioning independent Serious Case Reviews and training member agency staff in safeguarding children best practice. The Act also placed a duty on all agencies to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

In 2006 the government released Working Together to Safeguard Children, which set out the ways in which organizations and individuals should work together to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children. In 2010 this was superseded by Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010) which expanded the focus on interagency working and took into account the recommendations of Lord Lamings 2008 progress report The Protection of Children in England which suggested it was imperative that frontline professionals get to know children as individuals.

Evolution Childcare has a designated and well trained specialist in each Nursery whose main role is to take the lead in ALL child safeguarding matters. This includes ensuring good practise, training staff and monitoring the effectiveness of all our Child Protection and Safeguarding policies.



NURSERY MEALS, DIET & NUTRITION

Evolution Childcare have our own Diet and Nutrition specialists with our in-house chef and prepare healthy balanced, nutritious and tasty meals.

It's really important for a healthy adult life and healthy relationship to food to get off to a healthy start. There is a huge amount of evidence based studies from the NHS (National Health Service) to demonstrate that when children are young it is the perfect time to reinforce and establish good habits of eating well and moving more and as they get older they will find it comes as second nature.

The key to underpinning a lifelong healthy relationship with food is to educate and involve the whole family in what we as a nursery are trying to achieve in partnership together for their children.

A busy working mum may not have time to produce and provide a nutritious and well balanced meal plan for snacks and lunches as well as tempting young palates with increased variety and cultural sample meals that we at nursery can. By providing in-house meals we assist in many ways including health care, weight issues and dental care issues caused from too much sugar.

Diet and nutrition

Many foods and drinks have sugar added to them, our in-house chefs ensure all foods are label friendly and are sugar-free and no added sugar. For a sweet treat, we pick foods that are naturally sweet, such as strawberries, honey and pineapple rather than cakes and biscuits.

Sugar swaps

We swap sugary drinks for milk – children under two need full fat milk, water or watered-down 100% fruit juice. There's often a lot of sugar in breakfast cereal. Porridge, eggs on toast and fruit with yoghurt are our tasty alternatives. Ideas for lower-sugar snacks include breadsticks, rice cakes, chopped vegetables and fruit – tinned, frozen or fresh fruit are all great.

Snacks

As well as 3 meals a day, snacks are important to keep young children's energy levels high throughout the day. At nursery we provide healthy mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks. Healthy snacks such as toast, rice cakes, homemade plain popcorn or chopped carrots and cucumber with plain yoghurt/hummus. As well as snacks like rice cakes and pitta bread, fresh fruit is also a good choice. We Never give young children nuts as they can easily choke and they are highly allergic.

Healthy portion sizes

Parents sometimes can substitute meals sizes as a show of affection and rather over feed children. Children need smaller portions than adults – a good way to think about how much smaller children's stomachs are is to look at the size of their fist compared to your own. They usually know when they're full so we let them stop when they've had enough rather than

forcing them to clear their plate. Young children learn from staff and parents and what they see around them, so if everyone is eating healthily, they will too.

Fussy eating is very common in children under 5 and especially between the ages of 1 and 2 and it's usually just a phase. At nursery we are trained to deal with this and will keep offering the food, without forcing the point – praise them when they try something new but give them less attention when they won't.

Meal time

As soon as children start eating solids we introduce regular mealtimes. Sitting down to eat demonstrates they are learning good habits. Meals are at regular times and a snack mid-morning and mid-afternoon is provided. Children need nutritious snacks to keep their energy levels topped up throughout the day to help them grow and develop well.

Five-a-day

All children need at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day. Each main meal provided has lots of vegetables and snack time is an ideal time for nursery to boost the fruit and veg tally – chopped cucumber and carrots with hummus is delicious and popular. Remembering of course that a portion of fruit or veg roughly fits into a child's hand.

Child health

The early years of a child's life are critically important. Research tells us this, as does experience. They are important in their own right, and as the foundation for success at school, in making friends and relationships, and for all adult life.

Whilst Mothers and Fathers play the most important part in raising children but many other people make a vital contribution: grandparents and the wider family, friends, neighbours, teachers, and early years and health professionals. We need to value and support all those who make a contribution to helping children grow up healthy, happy and ready to learn. We want to enable families and professionals to have the information, skills and confidence they need to help all our children develop well and fulfil their potential.

We know that high-quality health services, early education, and care for young children and their families make a real difference. The Government's aim is to put in place a coherent framework of services for families, from pregnancy through to age five which focus on promoting children's development and help with all aspects of family life.

What child health research tells us

There is a growing body of evidence that supports what most parents know by instinct – the early years of a child's life are critical to their future chances, and what parents and families do makes a big difference. Evidence suggests five critical factors during the foundation years:

- Children's health in early life: this includes factors such as low birth weight and affects wellbeing, development and behaviour. A child's health is strongly influenced by their parents' health and behaviour, particularly that of their mothers. Smoking and nutrition

in pregnancy, breastfeeding and immunisations are key predictors of children's health in later life

- Good maternal mental health: mothers' mental health is significantly associated with child development outcomes, particularly social, behavioural and emotional development
- Quality of parenting and parent-child relationships: children do better when they have a close and positive relationship with their parents, and mothers and fathers work together to provide warm, authoritative, responsive, and sensitive parenting
- Learning activities: the things that parents help children to do at home, like reading and playing, are key predictors of future development and readiness for school
- High-quality early education: making a difference to children's achievement in the early years is crucial. Pupils who start off in the bottom 20 per cent of attainment at age five are six times more likely to be in the bottom 20 per cent at key stage one.

ADVICE & FACT SHEETS

At Evolution Childcare we offer advice and fact sheets on issues (e.g. biting, eating problems, potty training, allergies) to help Parents have quick access to relevant support and information that they may need. Please ask at your nursery office for more details.

