

# EARLY YEARS AWARD CRITERIA

## 1. Food quality and where food comes from

If you or your caterer hold the Food for Life Catering Mark at bronze or higher, you will have already demonstrated that you meet the criteria in section one. However, you may find the below information helpful.

If you or your caterer do not hold the Food for Life Catering Mark, you must demonstrate compliance with the criteria below.

1.0	Our menus demonstrate compliance with national standards or guidelines on food and nutrition.	
1.1	We make sure that at least 75% of dishes on our menu are freshly prepared from unprocessed ingredients.	
1.2	All our meat is farm assured to show it is from farms which satisfy UK welfare standards.	
1.3	We do not buy fish on the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) 'Fish to Avoid' list.	
1.4	We use eggs from free-range hens.	
1.5	Our food does not contain any undesirable additives or trans fats present due to food processing.	
1.6	No genetically modified (GM) ingredients are used in our food.	
1.7	Drinking water is prominently available.	
1.8	Our menus are seasonal and we highlight in-season produce.	
1.9	Information is on display about where our food is produced (food provenance).	
1.10	Menus provide for all dietary and cultural needs.	
1.11	We verify that all our suppliers apply appropriate food safety standards.	
1.12	We support our cooks and catering staff with skills training in fresh food preparation and the food quality standards.	

## 2. Food leadership and food culture

In each setting it is important that the food and drink provided and the culture of food and drink provision follows best practice principles for all infants and children.

2.0	<p>Our food policy shows how we are meeting the Early Years Award criteria. It describes how we are working with children, parents, carers, staff and cooks to provide good menus that meet Food for Life Catering Mark standards and how we grow, cook and enjoy fresh, healthy food.</p>	
2.1	<p><b>If you have Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative Stage 3 accreditation you will already have demonstrated you achieve criteria 2.1 to 2.6 and you can go straight to 2.7. However, you may find the resources and information supporting these criteria helpful.</b></p> <p><b>If you don't have Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative Stage 3 accreditation you must demonstrate compliance with 2.1 to 2.11.</b></p> <p>We link to Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative standards in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Support parents to have a close and loving relationship with their baby.</li> <li>✓ Encourage and support mothers to feed their babies as they choose to and offer a breastfeeding friendly environment.</li> <li>✓ Provide safe storage for expressed breast milk.</li> <li>✓ We make up feeds safely if parents choose to provide formula milk.</li> </ul>	
2.2	<p>We follow current Department of Health and Start4life guidelines in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ We only offer infants under one year drinks of milk (breast or formula) or water.</li> <li>✓ We follow current guidance on appropriate foods to offer in the first year of life.</li> <li>✓ We provide a selection of appropriate complementary (weaning) foods for infants from around six months of age and ensure that infants are encouraged to take part in meal times and have a range of flavours and textures of food as they become independent eaters.</li> </ul>	
2.3	<p>We signpost eligible families to the Healthy Start scheme, where this may be appropriate.</p>	
2.4	<p>We encourage all parents and carers to give their children vitamin drops in line with current policy.</p>	
2.5	<p>We signpost families to oral health improvement programmes, and oral health advice.</p>	

## 2. Food leadership and food culture (continued)

2.6	We consult with children, parents, carers and staff when planning our menus and provide guidance on home-provided food.	
2.7	We ensure staff eat with our children and act as positive role models during meal and/or snack times.	
2.8	We present our food attractively and encourage children to develop an interest and enjoyment of food through stimulating their senses.	
2.9	We encourage children's independence in choosing and eating meals and/or snacks.	
2.10	We design and make food related artwork and decorate our dining areas.	
2.11	We support our cooks and catering staff to access training and encourage them to interact with the children, parents, carers and staff.	

## 3. Food education

3.0	We use the topics of healthy and sustainable food as a theme for activities to support all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) educational framework.	
3.1	We grow food with the children using safe organic methods and give them an opportunity to eat fruit, vegetables and herbs they have grown.	
3.2	We provide cooking sessions for children that promote healthy recipes with fruit and vegetables, including those we have grown.	
3.3	We have links with farms and/or local food businesses.	

## 4. Community, partnerships and parent engagement

4.0	We celebrate diversity and include food-related activities to celebrate multicultural festivals and events and different cultures. This is done throughout the year for our children, parents and the wider community.
4.1	We make efforts to actively engage parents, carers and the wider community in our growing, cooking and farm links activities.
4.2	We take every opportunity to encourage children and families to taste and talk about a variety of foods, including seasonal fruit and vegetables.
4.3	We keep parents and carers informed of Food for Life activities and invite them to attend meal and/or snack times.
4.4	We share Food for Life learning with other early years settings and schools in our local area.
4.5	We work to strengthen links between early years and schools by encouraging shared food-related activities.
4.6	We work in partnership with local authorities to engage parents, carers and their children in oral health improvement programmes.

