

Talking about food the Nourish way

Our approach

- We acknowledge that everybody has a range of different experiences, sensations and preferences, and so a positive relationship with food can look different for everyone.
- We take a gentle approach to nutrition, which involves teaching children to listen to their bodies, understand their hunger cues and know when they feel full. This helps children feel more in control and responsible for their choices.
- We use Sensory Food Education as part of our offer in schools, which invites children to explore a variety of fruits and vegetables using their five senses in a pressure-free environment. This practice aims to help children feel comfortable and excited about trying new foods.
- We promote food neutrality, the idea that no food is inherently 'bad' or 'good'. Food neutrality aims to detach value judgements from different foods; instead, we emphasise the benefits that different foods can have on our brain and body. This approach allows children to explore food with open curiosity.
- We recognise issues of food insecurity, food-related health disparities and unequal access to nourishing and culturally appropriate foods. We ensure our work in schools is inclusive and fair, to make sure every child, no matter where they live, is supported through our work.

We want to support every child in...

Primary school:

- To make food fun and exciting
- To eat confidently by trusting their physical sensations
- To eat a variety of food including fruits, vegetables, whole grains and proteins
- To build curiosity around food
- To feel comfortable around food

Secondary school (the above plus):

- To build and maintain a positive relationship with food
- To develop their understanding of the functions and benefits of food
- To play a role in shaping a food environment at their school which offers more opportunities for better eating

Language and framing

Topic	Instead of saying this	We say this
Gentle approach/promoting agency	“You have to finish everything on your plate” “Don’t waste food” “You shouldn’t be hungry again”	“Listen to your body” “Is your tummy rumbling?” “Do you feel tired (after eating XYZ)” “Are you thirsty”
Sensory Food Education	“Just eat it” “You won’t know if you like it unless you try it” “Stop being fussy”	“No one has to taste it” “Explore foods with all of your senses – how does it look/ smell/ feel/ sound in your mouth” “What an amazing colour! I wonder what it’s like”
Eating a variety of different foods / balanced diet	“You need to eat your vegetables to be healthy” “That’s not a proper meal”	“Eating the rainbow gives us the energy to learn in school, play with our friends and do the things we love”
Fairness	“Not everyone needs a free school meal, so why should those who can afford it get a free meal”	We are working with the school so that “every child is able to eat well at school”
Reframing ‘healthy’	“That’s junk food” “You shouldn’t eat that, it’s bad for you” “That’s not healthy”	Nourishing and nutritious = “variety (lots of / a balance) of different foods” “Eating a variety of different foods will help you to play, learn and do the things you love” Use a plant growing analogy e.g. “eating XYZ supports you to grow up strong”
Steering away from judgmental or upsetting language around food	Don’t say “that’s gross!”, “why are you eating that?”, “that’s a weird choice”	“I like XYZ about this food” “I don’t like XYZ about this food”
Food as a reward and moral judgement of food	“That’s a treat” “You’ve earned this” “You need to watch what you eat” “That’s full of calories”	“Foods to unlock / support children's potential, to flourish, thrive, grow” Food is not described as ‘good’, ‘bad’, ‘junk’, ‘treats’ etc. Talking about restrictive eating, calories, and obesity can demonise foods, creating a negative relationship between food and our bodies, which can negatively impact children into their adulthood.

How does food help our bodies?

Energy levels

“Cucumbers are made up of 96% water - they help keep you hydrated and maintain your energy levels”

Concentration and cognitive functioning

“Drinking enough water helps us to concentrate and think clearly”

Immunity

“White-coloured vegetables like garlic and cauliflower help maintain your immunity and a good hormonal balance” / “Red coloured fruit and veg, like tomatoes and red pepper help your body fight diseases”

Digestive health

“Fruits are high in fibre, which helps your digestive system work properly”

Mood regulation

“Eating regularly, and eating foods that release energy slowly, like wholegrains, can help to keep your blood sugar steady and improve your mood and concentration”

Heart

“Purple vegetables like beetroot and red cabbage are good for your heart which keeps your blood pumping properly” / “Spinach is full of iron which helps keep our heart happy”