



Early years practice procedures

Prime times – Snack Time and Meals

Feeding and mealtimes are key times in the day for being close and to promote security, as well as for exploration and learning. We understand the importance of a healthy balanced diet for children.

Bottle fed babies

- Babies are ideally fed by their key person or another familiar adult.
- Bottles are warmed and ready in time; babies should not be left hungry and crying while bottles are being prepared.
- Together they will sit in a comfortable chair, or on cushions to feed the baby. Holding the baby close and given eye contact, linking communication gestures during feeding, talking quietly to them, stroking or holding their hands.
- Planning for feeding times should be done to try to avoid overlap so that one-to-one attention can be given. If this cannot be avoided the feeding times should be arranged so that the key person can comfortably be with both babies at the same time.
- Babies will want to hold their own bottles, but they are never left propped up with a bottle to feed themselves.

Snack times

- A 'snack' is prepared mid-morning and mid-afternoon and can be organised to meet the needs of the room, rolling snack, group snack, picnic in the garden for example.
- Children wash their hands before and after snack-time.
- Children are only offered full-fat milk until they are at least two years old because they may not get the calories they need from semi-skimmed milk. After the age of two, children can gradually move to semi-skimmed milk as a main drink, if they are eating a varied and balanced diet.

- Fruit or raw vegetables, is prepared appropriately to minimise choking hazards depending on the age ranges of the children. Older children are encouraged to help in the preparation of snacks.
- Portion sizes are gauged as appropriate to the age of the child.
- Staff join in conversation and encourage children's independence by allowing them to pour drinks, butter toast, cut fruit etc.

Mealtimes

- Whilst eating, children are always within sight and hearing of a member of staff.
- There is a Paediatric First Aider present at meal and snack times.
- Staff who are eating with the children must role-model hygiene, healthy eating and best practice at all times, for example not drinking cans of fizzy drinks in front of the children.
- Food is brought to their room in serving dishes and is served to babies and young children and as they move through the rooms children are encouraged to self-serve and choose what they want to eat, not making them eat what they don't like but encouraging them to try new foods.
- Staff arrange the table before children sit down, tables shouldn't be overcrowded at mealtimes so children have space.
- Babies' and toddlers' hands are washed clean before their meal.
- Babies and toddlers are not discouraged from eating with their fingers; this exploration of their food with their hands is the beginning of self-feeding. As the child develops the use of a spoon is encouraged.
- Children are given time to eat at their own pace and are not hurried to fit in with adults' tasks and breaks.
- Mealtimes are relaxed opportunities for social interaction of children with their group and the adults who care for them. It is a time of sensory learning and learning skills, as well as for the fundamental satisfaction of being fed.
- If children do not eat their main course, they are not denied pudding. Food is not used as a reward or punishment.
- To protect children with food allergies or specific dietary requirements, children are discouraged from sharing and swapping their food with one another.
- Information for parents is displayed on the parent's notice board, including:
 - Daily menus
 - Information on Zebedee's – the company who supply our lunchtime meal.