

09 Standard Childcare Practice

09.7 Prime times – Snack-times and mealtimes

Feeding and mealtimes are key times in the day for being close and to promote security, as well as for exploration and learning. Styvechale Grange Preschool understands the importance of a healthy balanced diet for young children. At each meal/snack time, a named person is responsible for checking that the food provided meets all requirements for each child.

Snack times

- A 'snack' is prepared mid-morning and mid-afternoon and can be organised according to the discretion of the setting manager e.g. picnic on a blanket.
- 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, as long as they are eating a varied and balanced diet.
- Fruit or raw vegetables, such as carrot or tomato, are offered in batons, which children should be encouraged to help in preparing. Bananas and other foods are not cut as rounds, but are sliced to minimise a choking hazard.
- Portion sizes are gauged as appropriate to the age of the child.
- Biscuits should not be offered, but toast, rice cakes or oatcakes are good alternatives.
- Children arrive as they want refreshment and leave when they have had enough. Children are not made to leave their play if they do not want to have a snack.
- Staff join in conversation and encourage children's independence by allowing them to pour drinks, butter toast, cut fruit etc.

Mealtimes

- Whilst eating, there should always be a member of staff in the room with a valid Paediatric First Aid certificate.
- Tables are never overcrowded during mealtimes. Some social distancing is encouraged even though it is acknowledged that children will play in close proximity for the rest of the session.
- Children help staff prepare tables.
- Children wash their hands and sit down as food is ready to be served.
- Children are encouraged to choose what they want and to take their own helpings.

- **A member of staff should always be in sight and hearing of children when eating and sat facing them wherever possible so they can ensure that children are eating in a way to prevent choking and so they can prevent food sharing and be aware of any unexpected allergic reactions.**
- Staff have their lunch with children and do not eat different food in front of children. Staff who are eating with the children role-model healthy eating and best practice at all times, for example not drinking cans of fizzy drinks in front of the children.
- Children are given time to eat at their own pace and are not hurried to fit in with adults' tasks and breaks. They are not made to eat what they do not like and are only encouraged to try new foods slowly.
- In order to protect children with food allergies or specific dietary requirements, children are discouraged from sharing and swapping their food with one another.
- If children do not eat their main course, they are not denied pudding. Food is not used as a reward or punishment.
- Mealtimes are relaxed opportunities for social interaction between children and the adults who care for them.
- After lunch children are encouraged to pack away their lunchboxes and help wipe the table and sweep the floor.
- Children go to the bathroom and wash their hands after lunch.
- Information for parents is displayed on the parent's notice board, including:
 - Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers https://infantandtoddlerforum.org/media/upload/pdf-downloads/HR_toddler_booklet_green.pdf
 - Snack menus including identification of any foods containing allergens