

Early years practice procedures

**Prime times – Snack-times and lunchtimes**

Children are supervised during mealtimes and always remain within sight and hearing of staff **and where possible should be sat facing children whilst they are eating so they can make sure children are eating in a way to prevent choking and also prevent food sharing and be aware of any unexpected allergic reactions.** A member of staff with a valid paediatric first aid certificate is always present at mealtimes and there is a named person on the rota responsible for ensuring that the food provided meets each child’s needs.

One member of staff will sit with the children once they are ready to eat and another member of staff will assist as required with hand washing.

**Snack times**

* A ‘snack’ is prepared for mid-morning. It is generally organised in the snack area but on occasion may be on a picnic blanket e.g. outside in the garden.
* Children may also take turns to help set the table. Small, lidded plastic jugs are provided with choice of milk or water.
* Children wash their hands before and after snack-time.
* Children are only offered full-fat milk because they may not get the calories they need from semi-skimmed milk.
* 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. We encourage children to attend in small groups as a social experience. 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.
* Whilst most of the fruit and vegetable snack will be prepared already. A small amount will be prepared with the child who is snack helper.
* Items of snack will be positioned so that staff can support children to be independent whilst also observing them eating.

**Lunch times**

* Tables are never overcrowded during mealtimes.
* Children are always within sight and hearing of staff at mealtimes and where possible sat facing them while they are eating.
* There is a Paediatric First Aider present at children’s lunch and snack times.
* Children help staff set tables.
* Cloths are used where practical, and children’s places are personalised with mats that are laminated. The mats have any allergies or dietary requirements printed on them.
* Children bring a packed lunch from home which is stored on a trolley.
* Children wash their hands before eating.
* Children can access their lunch boxes once staff are in position to watch.
* Jugs of water, cups and paper towel are always in vicinity.
* Children are encouraged to choose what they want and to take their own helpings.
* Staff who are eating with the children role-model healthy eating and best practice, 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 encouraged to try new foods slowly.
* To protect children with food allergies or specific dietary requirements, children are discouraged from sharing and swopping their food with one another.
* If children do not eat their savoury, they are not denied their pudding e.g. yoghurt. Food is not used as a reward or punishment.
* Mealtimes are relaxed opportunities for social interaction between children and adults.
* After lunch children are encouraged to tidy up their lunch box and help wipe the table and sweep the floor.
* As part of our climate sustainability action plan, children will be encouraged to recycle their waste in the appropriate receptacles.
* Children wash their hands after lunch. They may then sit in the book corner and look at the books.
* Information for parents/carers is shared on newsletters, policies and displayed on the parent/carers notice board, including:

Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers <https://infantandtoddlerforum.org/media/upload/pdf-downloads/HR_toddler_booklet_green.pdf>

* Information regarding children’s allergies and dietary preferences is displayed in the snack area and kitchen.
* Staff are responsible for emptying the food waste caddy into the carpark food bin after lunch, not forgetting to add the kitchen waste food e.g. tea bags etc. beforehand.