

09 Early years practice procedures



09.07 Prime times – Snack-times and lunchtimes

Children are supervised during snack times and lunch times and always remain within sight and hearing of staff.

Snack times

- A 'snack' is prepared mid-morning and mid-afternoon.
- Children may take turns to help set the table. Small, lidded plastic jugs are provided with choice of milk or water.
- Children wash their hands before snack-time.
- Children are offered semi-skimmed milk as a main drink with an alternative milk drink available if required by dietary needs.
- Fruit or raw vegetables, such as carrot or tomato, are offered in batons, which children may be encouraged to help in preparing. Latest guidance on how to cut bananas and other foods to minimise a choking hazard are followed.
- Portion sizes are gauged as appropriate to the age of the child.
- Toast, rice cakes, crackers, pasta, bread sticks, and pitta bread are offered as part of snack.
- 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.
- Children are encouraged to choose what they want and to serve themselves. Independence is encouraged but younger children are assisted by staff if needed.
- It is a time of sensory learning and learning skills, as well as for the fundamental satisfaction of being fed.
- Toddlers are not discouraged from eating with their fingers; this exploration of their food with their hands is the beginning of self-feeding. When they have finished, they may wish to 'play' further with any remaining food. It is fine for them to get a bit messy; they and their table can be cleaned afterwards.
- Staff join in conversation and encourage children's independence by allowing them to pour drinks, butter toast, cut fruit etc.
- After snack, children are encouraged to scrape their plates into the recyclable food waste bin and help wipe the table and sweep the floor.

Lunchtimes

- Tables are never overcrowded during mealtimes.
- Children help staff set tables which may be arranged in key person or buddy groups.
- Cloths are used where practical and children's places are personalised with, for example, placemats with their photograph on. Any allergies are displayed on the child's placemat.
- Children wash their hands and sit down with their lunch box.
- Staff have their lunch with 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.
- There is a paediatric first aider in the room at snack and lunchtimes.
- Children are given time to eat at their own pace and are not hurried. 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 savoury course, they are not denied the sweeter alternative that may have been placed in the lunchbox by the parent/carer. 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.
- There are sometimes opportunities for children to eat with friends on other tables.
- After lunch, children are encouraged to keep any leftover food in their lunchbox so the parent/carer can see how much they have eaten.
- If necessary, children go to the bathroom and wash their hands when they have finished eating their food.
- Information for parents is displayed on the pre-school's website including:
 - Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers https://infantandtoddlerforum.org/media/upload/pdf-downloads/HR_toddler_booklet_green.pdf
 - Typical snack menu [Health | Info | Little Doves Christian Pre-School \(littledovescp.org.uk\)](https://www.littledovescp.org.uk/Health-Info/)