

## Childcare practice procedures

### 8.7 Mealtimes

Children are supervised during mealtimes and always remain within sight and hearing of staff.

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 young children.

#### Bottle fed babies

- Babies' hands are washed prior to being given their bottle.
- Babies are fed by their key person or back-up key person if they are not in.
- Bottles are warmed and ready in time; babies should not be left hungry and crying while bottles are being prepared.
- The key person sits in a comfortable chair, or on cushions to feed the baby; the key person needs to be relaxed and calm.
- Babies should be held close so that eye contact can be made. Key persons are responsive to their communication gestures during feeding, talking quietly to them, stroking or holding their hands.
- Babies are winded after feeding, nappies are changed, and the baby is settled to sleep or play.
- Other key children may want to be close to their carer when a baby is being fed. This may allay any anxiety or feelings of jealousy, especially for toddlers.
- 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. Unless in extreme circumstances, feeding should not be regarded as a shared task; unfamiliar carers should not take over feeding times just to 'get it done'.
- Babies will want to hold their own bottles, but they are never left propped up with a bottle to feed themselves.

#### Mealtimes

- For the most part, older babies and toddlers who are feeding themselves have their meals in their space, with their key group and key person.
- Staff who are eating with the children must role-model hygiene, healthy eating and best practice always, for example not drinking cans of fizzy drinks in front of the children. Staff must only eat the same meal as provided for the children and not their own food
- Staff arrange the table before the children sit down; there should be no waiting time. Older children like to help lay the table
- Hands are wiped/washed clean before their meal.

- The key person sits with their children. They do not put food on plates if the toddler indicates that they do not want it but always encourage them to try everything and to self-serve.
- Toddlers can get very upset if their detested food is put in front of them; they do not understand 'try a little bit' in the way an older child does.
- 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.
- In order to protect children with food allergies or specific dietary requirements, children are discouraged from sharing and swapping their food with one another.
- While toddlers are mainly fed in their rooms, opportunities should be open for older children to be invited into their room for lunch, especially siblings, or children who have just moved up into the older group. There should also be opportunities for babies and toddlers to join the older children, providing they do not find this unsettling or distressing.
- Daily menus are displayed and the full menu is on our website

**The staff team:**

- Will gather information from parents at the settling in visits and at drop offs and handovers to understand the texture of the food and the stage the child is at with weaning.
- Will know who the first aider on the premises is and where to find them
- Will teach children how to chew and swallow food properly and ensure they take their time during meals to reduce the risk of choking.
- Puree, mash, and cut food as required by each child
- Will not offer raisins to under 12-month-old children, although these can be chopped up as part of a meal
- Will ensure Sausages will have skins removed and be cut into thin strips and not into chunks.
- Not give whole seeds to children under 5
- Will not give popcorn as a snack
- Will not give marshmallows or jelly cubes from a packet to eat or as part of any messy play activity as they can become stuck in the throat
- Will not give children hard sweets
- Will remove stones and pips from fruit before serving
- Will cut small round fruits like grapes, strawberries, and cherry tomatoes lengthways and into quarters
- Will cut large fruit like melon and hard fruit or vegetables like apple and carrot into slices instead of small chunks

- Soften hard fruit and vegetables such as carrot and apple and **remove the skin** when first given to babies from around 6 months.
- Will remove bones from meat and fish
- Will cut cheese into strips rather than chunks