08 Early years practice procedures

**08.4 Prime times – Snack-times and mealtimes**

Please also refer to 03 Food and drink policy and 03.1 snack procedure.

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

**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 may also take turns to help set the table.
* Children wash their hands before and after snack-time.
* Children are offered semi-skimmed milk or water to drink.
* Children are offered fruit or raw vegetables, such as carrot or tomato. Children are encouraged to bite their chosen fruit or vegetable. Fruits such as grapes or blueberries are sliced to minimise a choking hazard.
* Portion sizes are gauged as appropriate to the age of the child.
* Biscuits, cakes or sweet treats are only offered on special occasions such as celebrations.
* 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, cut soft fruit etc.

**Lunch time**

* Children only eat food provided by their parents/carers, pre-school does not provide meals. Parents are encouraged to provide healthy, nutritious lunches.
* Table cloths are used and children’s places are personalised with their name label. Plates and cups are provided.
* Children wash their hands, get their own lunch box from the trolley and sit down at the table to eat.
* Children are encouraged to be independent with their lunches, adult support is always nearby if help is needed.
* 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 encouraged to eat their healthy savoury foods first.
* 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 scrape their plates and put them in the box for washing up, return their boxes and packets to their lunch boxes, and place them on the trolley.
* Children go to the bathroom to wipe their faces and wash their hands after lunch.
* Information for parents, regarding healthy lunches and nutrition guides for young children, is emailed as part of the Welcome Pack and is available on our website.