

**1.16**

**Snack-times and meal times**

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 arranged at the snack bar. This is operated as a “rolling snack” and opened at 10am and closed at 11am.
* Small, plastic jugs are provided with a choice of full fat milk or water. Chopping boards and ”child friendly” knives are available at the table for children to cut their own fruit.
* Children wash their hands before snack-time and hands and face after.
* Fruit and raw vegetables are offered in larger pieces to allow children to cut up smaller if they wish.
* 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 the snack bar, they can re-fill their plates if they wish. We recognise some children may not have had breakfast or may be extra hungry that day so ensure there is always extra available.
* Children are not made to leave their play if they do not want to have a snack.
* Staff sit with the children, join in conversation and encourage children’s independence by allowing them to pour drinks, butter toast, cut fruit etc.

**mealtimes (older children)**

* Tables are never overcrowded during mealtimes.
* Children may help staff set tables.
* Any table cloths used will be plastic, used for meals only and disinfected before and after use.
* Portion sizes are gauged as appropriate to the age of the child. Food is served on to plates and handed to the children once they have sat down.
* Children wash their hands and sit down as food is ready to be served.
* Extra food is always provided, this is put into bowls in the middle of the table for children to help and serve themselves.
* Bread and butter is always provided alongside meals. Plates with bread and butter will be put on the tables for children to help themselves.
* Some staff have their lunch with the 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 swopping 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.
* After lunch children wash their hands and face.

**Baby and toddler mealtimes**

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.

**Toddler mealtimes**

* For the most part, older babies and toddlers who are feeding themselves have their meals in their space, with their key person.
* Staff who are eating with the children must role-model hygiene, healthy eating and best practice at all times, for example not drinking cans of fizzy drinks in front of the children.
* Food is brought to their room on plates or in dishes.
* Staff arrange the table before toddlers sit down; there should be no waiting time. Songs are sung and meals are brought out immediately.
* Babies’ and toddlers’ hands are wiped/washed clean before their meal.
* Extra food is always provided, this is put into bowls in the middle of the table for children to help and serve themselves. Staff recognise that 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. Staff do not put food on plates if the toddler indicates that they do not want it.
* Bread and butter is always provided alongside meals. plates with bread and butter will be put on the tables for children to help themselves.
* Babies and 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.
* If children do not eat their main course, they are not denied pudding. Food is not used as a reward or punishment.
* Babies and toddlers 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 babies and toddlers 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 swopping their food with one another.
* After meals toddlers are encouraged to scrape their own plates.
* After meals babies and toddlers are supported to wash hands and face.