09 Early years practice procedures

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

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. Small, lidded plastic jugs are provided with choice of milk or water.
* Children wash their hands before and after snack-time.
* 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 are encouraged to join our snack routine but do not have to leave their play if they do not wish to.
* Staff join in conversation and encourage children’s independence by allowing them to pour drinks, butter toast, cut fruit etc.

**Mealtimes**

* Tables are never overcrowded during mealtimes.
* Children are always within sight and hearing of staff at mealtimes
* There is a Paediatric First Aider present at children’s meal and snack times.
* Children help staff set tables.
* Children wash their hands and sit down as food is ready to be served.
* Children are encouraged to choose what they want and to take their own helpings.
* Staff who are always 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 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 adults.
* After lunch children are encouraged to scrape their plates and help wipe the table and sweep the floor.
* Children go to the bathroom and wash their hands after lunch.
* Daily menus including identification of any foods containing allergens are emailed to parents in advance.
* Information for parents/carers is 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>