

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

### **Snack times**

- A 'snack' is prepared mid-morning and mid-afternoon and can be organised according to the discretion of the room leader e.g. picnic on a blanket, at the picnic benches in the playground.
- Children may also take turns to help set the table. Small, lidded plastic jugs are provided with choice of milk or water. Milk alternatives provided by a parent will be offered to their child as long as the milk alternative is not nut based.
- Children wash their hands before and after snack-time.
- Children are offered semi-skimmed milk as a main drink, as long as the practitioner team feel that each child is eating a varied and balanced diet.
- 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 or cakes should not be offered with the exception of a birthday celebration provided by a parent. Toast, rice cakes or oatcakes are good alternatives that provide more complex carbohydrates.
- 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 but they should be actively encouraged to have a drink of milk or water at least once in each session.
- Practitioners 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. Some social distancing is encouraged even though it is acknowledged that children will play in close proximity for the rest of the session.
- Children can help practitioners set tables up for lunch/snack times.
- Children wash their hands and have opportunities to sit with their friends where possible.
- Children are encouraged to choose the savoury/healthier foods in their lunchbox first but practitioners use this approach flexibly to meet the needs of the child.
- Practitioners do not eat their lunch with the children.
- Children are given time to eat at their own pace and are not hurried to fit in with practitioner routines. 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.

- Food is not used as a reward or punishment.
- Mealtimes are relaxed opportunities for social interaction between children and the practitioners who care for them.
- There are sometimes opportunities for Blue Dragons children to join Green Dragons children for lunch, providing they do not find this unsettling or distressing.
- After lunch children are encouraged to put their lunchbox back on the trolley and put any cups, plates or cutlery in the washing up box.
- Children go to the bathroom and wash their hands after lunch.
- The pre-school will work to support parents to understand the benefits of a healthy diet for their child. A child's key person will be responsible for working in partnership with a parent to implement agreed strategies to support a child who may struggle with snack/mealtimes.

Information for parents is shared on the pre-school website that includes:

- Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers

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