09 Early years practice procedures

**09.8 Prime times – Snack-times and mealtimes (older children)**

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.
* Children are only offered semi-skimmed milk. After the age of two, children can gradually move to semi-skimmed milk as a main drink, as long as they are 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 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 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, butter toast, cut fruit etc.

**Mealtimes - children provide their own packed lunches**

* Tables are never overcrowded during lunch club.
* A member of staff should be appointed to monitor each table or a group of children
* Wipeable cloths are used on tables where practical and children’s places are personalised with a card that has their name on.
* Children wash their hands select their own lunch box and sit down.
* Children are encouraged to open their own lunch boxes and packages, but a member of staff on hand to help them.
* Staff may have their lunch with 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.
* There are sometimes opportunities for children to eat with friends on other tables. Nemo children may be invited to the Simba room for lunch, to join a sibling or be with their previous carer if they have just moved up into the older group. There should also be opportunities for Simba children to join the older children for lunch, providing they do not find this unsettling or distressing.
* After lunch children are encouraged to put everything, including empty packets back into their lunchbox and help wipe the table and sweep the floor.
* Children go to the bathroom and wash their hands after lunch.
* Children are then given a drink of water to rinse their teeth.
* Information for parents is displayed on the parent’s notice board / parents Whatsapp group, including:
* Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers <https://infantandtoddlerforum.org/media/upload/pdf-downloads/HR_toddler_booklet_green.pdf>
* Ideas for healthier packed lunches