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**

* Children wash their hands before and after snack-time.
* Children are only offered full-fat milk until they are at least two years old because they may not get the calories they need from 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.
* Children all bring from home fruit or vegetables for morning snack.
* All grapes must be cut lengthways quarterly to avoid choking. Any grapes not cut like this wil be sent back home.
* Hard vegetables e.g. carrots should be cut thinly into batons to avoid choking.
* Blueberries should be cut in half
* 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 their own milk, bring their snack box from their tray and put it back when finished.

**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 help staff set tables which are arranged for key person groups.
* Their food is brought to their room in serving dishes for each table on a trolley. Dishes are not kept in a food warmer or oven so will not be too hot to touch.
* Children wash their hands and sit down as food is ready to be served.
* Staff can eat their own lunch with the children as long as it promotes our healthy eating policy.
* 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 swapping their food with one another.
* If children do not eat their main course, they are not denied dessert. 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.
* 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 in their key groups.
* Information for parents is displayed on the parent’s notice board, including:
* Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers <https://infantandtoddlerforum.org/media/upload/pdf-downloads/HR_toddler_booklet_green.pdf>
* Daily menus including identification of any foods containing allergens