

09 Early Years Practice Procedures


09.08 Snack times and mealtimes (older children)


Our Approach

Snack-times and mealtimes are important opportunities for learning, social interaction and wellbeing. Children are always supervised, supported and encouraged to develop independence, confidence and healthy eating habits.

At all food times:

- Children remain within sight and hearing of staff
- Where possible, staff sit facing children while they eat
- This ensures:
 - Safe eating and choking prevention
 - Food sharing is avoided
 - Allergic reactions are noticed quickly

 A Paediatric First Aider is always present and all qualified members of staff at peekaboo are fully first aid trained

 A named member of staff is responsible for ensuring food meets each child's individual needs

Students/unqualified staff

Can supervise meals alongside qualified members of staff and can help prepare food, however only a qualified member of staff must serve at mealtimes.

Snack-Times

Snacks are offered morning and afternoon as necessary and may be organised flexibly, for example:

- Picnic on a blanket
- During outings
(At the discretion of the setting manager)

Preparing for Snack

- Children may take turns to help set the table
- Small, lidded plastic jugs are provided with:
 - Milk
 - Water
- Children wash their hands before and after snack-time

Milk & Nutrition

- Full-fat milk is offered until children are at least two years old
- After two, children may gradually move to semi-skimmed milk, provided they eat a varied and balanced diet

Healthy Snack Choices

- Fruit or raw vegetables (e.g. carrot, tomato) are served in batons
- Children are encouraged to help prepare snacks
- Bananas and similar foods are sliced (not cut into rounds) to reduce choking risks
- Portion sizes are appropriate to the child's age
- Biscuits are not offered
- Healthy alternatives include:
 - Toast
 - Rice cakes
 - Crackers

Child-Led Snack-Time

- Children are asked if they would like snack
- They leave when they've had enough
- Children are not made to stop playing if they do not want a snack
- Staff talk with children and encourage independence by allowing them to:
 - Pour drinks
 - Butter toast
 - Cut fruit

Mealtimes

Mealtimes are calm, social and inclusive.

Seating & Supervision

- Tables are never overcrowded

- Some social distancing is encouraged at tables, even though children may play closely at other times
- Children are always within sight and hearing of staff
- Where possible, children sit facing staff while eating
- A Paediatric First Aider is always present
(All qualified staff at Peekaboo Childcare are first-aid trained)

Table Preparation

- Children help staff set tables, arranged by key person groups where possible
- Cloths are used where practical
- Children's places may be personalised (e.g. laminated mats if they have an allergy/intolerance)
- Placemats are always used for children with allergies or intolerances

Serving Food

- Food is brought to rooms in serving dishes on trays
- Dishes are not kept in food warmers or ovens, so they are not too hot to touch
- Children wash their hands and sit down as food is ready
- Children are encouraged to:
 - Choose what they want
 - Take their own helpings

Healthy Habits & Choice

- Staff eating with children role-model healthy eating
 - No fizzy drinks in front of children
- Children are:
 - Not made to eat foods they dislike
 - Gently encouraged to try new foods at their own pace
- To protect children with allergies or dietary needs:
 - Food sharing and swapping is discouraged

Food Is Never a Reward or Punishment

- Children who do not eat their main course are not denied pudding
- Food is never used as a reward or punishment
- Only fruit is served as pudding

Social Mealtimes

- Mealtimes are relaxed opportunities for:

- Conversation
- Social interaction
- Building relationships
- Sometimes children may:
 - Eat with friends at other tables
 - Join siblings or previous carers in another room
 - Invite babies and toddlers to join older children
(*Only if all children are comfortable and settled*)

After the Meal

- Children are encouraged to:
 - Scrape their plates
 - Help wipe tables
 - Sweep the floor

Information for Parents

We share information via the Family Newsfeed, including:

- Healthy meal and recipe ideas
- Tooth-brushing tips
- Termly menus
- A rolling 3-week lunch menu
- Parents can select their child's lunch option each half term

In Summary

Snack-times and mealtimes support:

- ✓ Safety
- ✓ Independence
- ✓ Healthy choices
- ✓ Social development
- ✓ Enjoyment