

## 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 after school and consists of fruit and two biscuits as well as encouragement to drink water.
- Children may also take turns to help set the table.
- 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.
- Children sit down to eat their snack and leave the table when they have finished.
- Staff join in conversation and encourage children's independence in selecting their snack.

#### **Mealtimes**

- Tables are never overcrowded during mealtimes.
- Children help staff set tables.
- Their food is brought to their room in serving dishes for each table.
- 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 do not eat with the children. Staff who eat during a session should 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. 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 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.
- After mealtimes children are encouraged to scrape their plates and help wipe the table and sweep the floor.
- Daily menus are displayed including identification of any foods containing allergens.