09 Early years practice procedures

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

Children are supervised during mealtimes and always remain within sight and hearing of staff.

**Snack times**

* A ‘snack’ is prepared mid-morning 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. Self-serve jugs are provided with choice of milk or water.
* Children wash their hands before snack-time.
* Fruit or raw vegetables, such as carrot or tomato, are offered in batons, grapes are sliced to minimise a choking hazard.
* Portion sizes are gauged as appropriate to the age of the child.
* 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, put fruit on the plate, tidy up after themselves etc.
* Weekly snack menu is displayed on the parent’s notice board

**Mealtimes**

* Tables are never overcrowded during mealtimes.
* Children help staff set tables.
* Children wash their hands before lunch.
* Children are encouraged to choose what they want and to take their own helpings.
* 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 but they are encouraged to try new foods.
* In order to protect children with food allergies or specific dietary requirements, children are discouraged from sharing and swopping their food with one another.
* Mealtimes are relaxed opportunities for social interaction between children and the adults who care for them.
* After lunch children are encouraged to tidy up after themselves (put the plate away, put lunchbox away, etc.)