



Oral Health Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure *Oaklea Montessori nursery* places high importance on good oral health and hygiene. *Oaklea Montessori Nursery* strives to raise awareness of the importance of good oral health for all children. The nursery promotes high levels of oral care and education linked to the importance of making good choices about what we should be eating/drinking. These early years for children are when many routines are formed and are often carried through to adulthood.

We recognise that good oral health will positively impact an individual's ability to learn and their self-confidence.

We equally recognise the significant negative impact that poor oral health can have including:

- Pain, discomfort, infections, and potential damage to growing adult teeth
- Limited diet – leading to malnourishment and poor concentration
- Limited development of speech and language
- Low self-esteem – lack of confidence socialising with others
- Negative association with visiting the dentist – leading to further issues and possible avoidance.

EYFS Themes & Commitments

- Children learn best when they are healthy, safe & secure..
- Providers must take all necessary steps to keep children safe & well...promote good health..
- The provider must promote the good health, including the oral health of children attending the setting.
- Where children are provided with meals, snacks and drinks, they must be healthy, balanced and nutritious. Before a child is admitted to the setting the provider must also obtain information about any special health requirements. Fresh drinking water must be available and accessible to children at all times. Providers must record and act on information from parents and carers about a child's dietary needs.
- Providers must be confident that those responsible for preparing and handling food are competent to do so.

Vision and Values

At *Oaklea Montessori nursery*, we believe that oral health is a key health and wellbeing priority. We aim to support families in registering with a Dental Practice whilst also regularly sending out information regarding good oral health. We aspire to educate our children through activities, books, role-play, and circle times, which

promote regular dental visits and inform our children of the importance of good oral health and hygiene

Effective Practices

Food/Snacks

Oaklea Montessori Nursery is committed to ensuring that the food provided supports the development of healthy eating practices. We understand that early food experiences have an important effect on adult eating patterns and may influence attitudes to eating. Mealtimes are enjoyable social occasions which provide an opportunity to encourage good communication skills and language development. Mealtimes are also when children's natural curiosity for exploring new concepts will be extended to introduce new tastes and textures.

Staff

- Staff will be involved in the development and implementation of an oral health policy.
- Appropriate training and information about relevant resources will be available to staff prior to implementation of the policy guidelines.
- A balanced and healthy breakfast, lunch, tea and two daily snacks are provided for children attending a full day at the nursery
- Oaklea will provide nutritious food at all snack and mealtimes, avoiding large quantities of fat, sugar and salt and artificial additives, preservatives, and colourings
- Menus will include servings of fresh fruit and vegetables
- Milk and water only will be offered to children as drinks.
- Individual dietary requirements required for medical or cultural reasons will be respected and where possible catered for. We will gather information from parents regarding their children's dietary needs including any allergies. Where appropriate we will carry out a risk assessment in the case of allergies and work alongside parents to put into place an individual diet plan for their child
- When your child is ready to start weaning, the staff will allow them to experiment with different flavours and textures, based on their nutritional needs. Your child's key person will discuss with parents the individual needs for their child.
- Oral health will also be promoted through Montessori activities, stories, role play and circle time.
- Under the Food Safety Act, 1990, persons preparing food will hold a food hygiene certificate or have been given training in the food hygiene procedures of the nursery
- During meals, the nursery staff will:
 - 1) Make mealtimes an enjoyable, social occasion.
 - 2) Use meal and snack times to help promote children to develop independence through participating in the preparation of meal when appropriate, making choices, serving food and drink, and feeding themselves
 - 3) Encourage children to try a bit of everything, but not make a fuss if they don't want to
 - 4) Encourage children to eat the 'healthy' components of their meal before any 'treats'.
 - 5) Model good eating habits by sitting and eating meals with the children.

- 6) Encourage lots of conversation, table manners, and use of words such as 'please' and 'thank you'.
 - 7) Encourage the children to stay sat at the table until most of the children have finished
 - 8) Not rush children if they are slow eaters
 - 9) Encourage the older children's independence by letting them take turns to hand out plates, cups, cutlery etc., then wash up, dry up and wipe the table after the meal if appropriate to their age and development.
- For any celebrations where we provide food or food-based activities, such as celebrating Christmas, Pancake Day, Easter, Eid, Chinese New Year etc, we ensure that the food and drink is tooth friendly. For example, fresh fruit and vegetables and savoury items, with milk or water to drink. On the very rare occasion that less tooth friendly foods are provided/brought in, these are given alongside a healthy balanced meal or sent home for the children to eat with their tea, in order to limit any damage to a child's oral health.

Children

- Oral health / healthy eating will be included in nursery work and any learning opportunities where it is appropriate.
- Visits from a dentist, hygienist or someone who can talk about oral health will be arranged during the nursery year.
- Dental health will feature at nursery through role play, stories, songs, poems, art, Montessori activities and snack /lunch times.
- Good oral hygiene will be encouraged at all times.

Parents

- It is the responsibility of parents and carers to inform the nursery of any food preferences (allergies, intolerances, dietary, religious, or cultural requirements). We also ask that parents only provide food for sharing if it is for a special occasion, such as a birthday.
- Where possible, parents will be asked to provide details of the family dentist as well as doctor on enrolment.
- Parents will be provided with an information point, which will include information about oral health.
- Parents will be encouraged to continue the regular toothbrushing routine at home.
- Parents can access information and advice about toothbrushing and oral health from staff at nursery, with our 'help your child at home' leaflet.

Please also view Oaklea's Mealtime and Snack procedures.