

## Oral Health Policy

Good oral health habits need to be formed from the earliest age. Tooth decay is a serious problem among young children but can be prevented. Since September 2021, oral health is now promoted as part of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

### **Food and drink**

At St. Michael's we are proud of our health snacks and mealtimes, with a balanced weekly menu provided by our own catering team. Puddings/ biscuits are served only at mealtimes / snacktime and not as rewards or at other times of day.

Fruit is served for morning snack and children are offered milk or water.

Water is accessible throughout the day and we do not offer juice/squash. Water or milk are the only drinks offered at nursery, as in line with NHS re

Topics in our nursery include Healthy Food and where our food comes from – children are involved in sorting foods into healthy and unhealthy.

Our nursery woodland area has a vegetable patch where children engage in planting and growing their own healthy produce and then take it home to share with their family.

Sugar free recipes will be shared on our Chatter monthly magazine and links to these recipes will be shared on our website and FB page.

### **The family dentist ( and a dentist at nursery)**

Our Entry Pack is updated to include details of the family dentist (or if not yet registered) and we invite the Dental Hygienist (usually Torrington Dental Practice) in to our setting to show the children how to care for their teeth. They often bring samples of toothpaste and brushes for the children to take home.

### **Resources**

We have a collection of resources to promote good oral health in between our visits from the Dentist. With the use of Charlie the Crocodile and our model skull with teeth, we demonstrate how to brush, we count teeth and use mirrors to look at our own teeth. A variety of books also help to cover this important subject with the children.

Posters are displayed for parents and also on our Facebook Page and Website

Staff are offered appropriate training by our local NHS, giving them up to date information about children's oral health.

At St. Michael's we recognise that a dummy can be a source of comfort for a child who is settling and/or upset, and that it may often form part of a child's sleep routine.

We also recognise that overuse of dummies may affect a child's language development as it may restrict the mouth movements needed for speech. As babies get older they need to learn to move their mouths in different ways, to smile, to blow bubbles, to make sounds, to chew food and eventually to talk. As babies move their mouths and experiment with babbling sounds they are learning to make the quick mouth movements needed for speech. The more practice they get the better their awareness of their mouths and the better their speech will be.

Our nursery will:

- Discuss the use of dummies with parents as part of babies' individual care plans
- Only allow dummies for comfort if a child is really upset (for example, if they are new to the setting or going through a transition) and/or as part of their sleep routine
- Store dummies in individual hygienic dummy boxes labelled with the child's name to prevent cross-contamination with other children
- Immediately clean or sterilise any dummy or bottle that falls on the floor or is picked up by another child.
- Dummies will be disposed of if they become damaged and/or when they are required to be disposed of.

When discouraging the dummy staff will:

- Make each child aware of a designated place where the dummy is stored
- Comfort the child and, if age/stage appropriate, explain in a sensitive and appropriate manner why they do not need their dummy
- Distract the child with other activities and ensure they are settled before leaving them to play
- Offer other methods of comfort such as a toy, teddy or blanket
- Explain to the child they can have their dummy when they go home or at sleep time.

We will also offer support and advice to parents to discourage dummy use during waking hours at home and suggest ways which the child can be weaned off their dummy through books and stories (when appropriate).

**Bottle feeds**

- Babies who are bottle-fed should be held and have warm physical contact with a key person while being fed. This key person should feed them whenever possible
- Babies should never be left propped up with bottles, as this is both dangerous and does not meet their emotional needs
- It is important that bottles only contain milk or water
- It is recommended that babies and young children do not 'feed to sleep' (use a bottle to settle them down to sleep), prolonged exposure to milk can cause tooth decay to develop.
- 5. It is recommended that from 12 months bottle use is reduced with the aim of making a complete withdrawal as soon as possible after this

**Safeguarding**

Staff will be aware of children's oral health and notice any obvious signs of tooth decay, or tooth pain, and discuss with parents, advising their concern and that a dentist appointment is needed.

Prolonged pain/decay without any action by parents will be passed on to our Designated Safeguarding Leads to follow up as a safeguarding concern.