

St Thomas a Becket Nursery **Oral Health Policy**

Oral health in the EYFS framework:

3.51 Providers must promote the good health, including the oral health, of the children they look after.

Policy Statement:

Oral health is important, even with baby teeth. This is because children's baby teeth:

- help them to bite and chew
- support speech and language development
- help them feel confident when they smile
- make space for and help to guide adult teeth

Good oral health also keeps children free from toothache, infection and swollen gums.

Tooth decay overview and identification:

Children need to form good oral health habits from an early age to help avoid tooth decay. Tooth decay happens when sugars from food and drinks interact with bacteria in tooth plaque. This results in acid production, causing holes in teeth known as cavities.



If children have tooth decay, they may have yellow, brown or black marks on their teeth. They may also complain about their teeth hurting, particularly when eating or drinking.

Tooth decay is largely preventable, but it's still a serious problem among young children. Recent surveys have found that:

- nearly a quarter of 5 year olds in England have tooth decay, affecting 3 to 4 teeth on average
- children from more deprived backgrounds are more likely to have tooth decay
- 11% of 3 year olds in England have visible tooth decay, affecting 3 teeth on average

Having decayed teeth removed is also the most common reason for surgery under a general anaesthetic for children aged 6 to 10.

Looking after children's oral health

St Thomas a Becket Nursery work with parents and carers to promote good oral health in children.

Cutting down on added food sugars to prevent tooth decay:

We limit the amount of free sugars children eat or drink in our setting, as well as how often children consume them. We do this by:

- limiting sugars when we carry out cooking activities;

- Providing healthier no or low sugar breakfast cereals for those children who may sometimes have breakfast at nursery;
- Providing healthy snacks of fruit and vegetables and savoury snacks for those children who may sometimes have breakfast at nursery;
- Limit choices of drinks for children at their time at nursery to water and milk;
- Encourage the children to eat any sweetened lunch box items at lunchtime only, keeping snack time as non-sugary as possible;

Provide parent information about oral health and healthier lunch box items to provide not only oral health guidance but support parents to understand about dietary needs for a preschool aged child.

Advise parents that as well as limiting the amount of free sugars children eat or drink, we should also make sure that they only have food or drinks that contain sugar at mealtimes. This is because, the more often their teeth come into contact with sugar, the more likely they will be to get tooth decay. Encourage parents to understand that children should avoid food and drinks containing free sugars before bedtime and overnight.

Present parent information displays about hidden sugars in foods specifically marketed at children, such as:

- cakes, biscuits and chocolates
- processed foods - like some jarred sauces, jams and breakfast cereals
- some flavoured yoghurts
- honey and syrups
- fruit juices and purees
- smoothies

Drinking bottles and cups:

We provide guidance to parents where we feel support is needed to help them to understand that what children drink from can impact their oral health.

We provide information to help parents understand that from 6 months old, they help babies to learn to drink small amounts of milk and water in open-top, or initially one with a unvalved spout, cups with small cups with handles, gradually increasing the quantity offered over time. These are cups with no lids, which spill if knocked over.

We help parents to understand that this is because these cups can help children develop their sipping skills. This strengthens children's face muscles, which helps them to bite, chew and talk.

From 12 months old onwards, parents are encouraged to offer their children all drinks in open-top cups and from this point, avoid using any bottles or cups that need children to suck, like those with soft teats or valves.

Brushing teeth

We advise parents that as soon as a child's teeth start to come through, they are ready for tooth brushing to start and the best ways to look after young teeth.

We advise that for effective tooth brushing:

- use a child's toothbrush with a 2cm brush head.

- use a fluoride toothpaste that contains at least 1000 parts per million (ppm) of fluoride (information on packaging)
- use a smear of toothpaste for children under 3, and a pea sized amount for those aged 3 to 6
- brush in circles for around 2 minutes, making sure to cover the whole of each tooth
- brush twice a day, including once just before bed - this allows the fluoride to keep working while children sleep
- children should spit, not rinse, after brushing - this avoids washing away the fluoride
- adults should help children to brush their teeth until they are 7 years old to make sure they are brushing properly

How we promote good oral health in our setting:

We link oral health to other key topics, like self-care, healthy eating, and physical development.

We carry out a number of activities with the children to teach them about tooth brushing and care.

- Dentist role play
- Practicing tooth brushing on dolls and our giant set of teeth
- We model effective tooth brushing for the children to copy, ask questions and learn
- We offer free take home packs of toothbrushes and toothpaste
- We have oral health board games and talking tubs
- We invite 'people who help us' dentists visits in to talk to the children

Stories and discussion:

We read stories with children about visits to the dentist teeth and smiles. We discuss foods and drinks that do and do not help us to grow healthy, including growing strong teeth.

Talking tubs:

Items related to oral health are explored and discussed with the children such as:.

- toothbrushes
- pictures of dentists
- false or model teeth
- a selection of foods and drinks

Promoting good oral health at home

- We ask families if they are registered with a dentist and support parents to source an NHS dentist if they have not signed up with one by helping them to search on the NHS website.
- We encourage families to speak to healthcare professionals, like a dentist for specific advice.
- We advise parents that children should go to the dentist when they get their first tooth or from 1 year old, whichever comes first.
- We advise families that if a child needs urgent dental care, and their dentist does not offer emergency appointments, parents and carers can contact NHS 111.

Useful resources

This [Children's Oral Health healthcare e-learning](#) is aimed at parents, early years healthcare workers, teachers, nurses, GPs and the public.

The British Society of Paediatric Dentistry have created a series of [oral health videos for children](#), in partnership with Dr Ranj, Hey Duggee and CBeebies.

This [NHS video on baby bottles and cups](#) explains when to move babies from bottles to cups and why.

The [looking after your baby's teeth NHS page](#) explains how to brush and care for babies' and young children's teeth.

This BBC article explains key strategies for [showing a toddler how to brush their teeth](#).

This [healthy teeth video from HENRY](#) looks at what we can do to help children grow up with healthy teeth.

Dr Milad Shadrooh, known as The Singing Dentist, shares [advice and answers to common questions about taking care of children's teeth](#).

PACEY's [oral health advice](#) includes fact sheets for parents, and their [nutrition spotlight](#) encourages healthy eating habits.