



# *Angels on The Park*

## *Toothbrushing Policy*

### **Our approach**

At Angels on The Park, oral health is part of children's everyday health and wellbeing. Tooth decay is largely preventable, and we believe that helping children develop positive habits when they are young can make a real difference throughout their lives.

Our approach is practical and positive. We want children to understand that looking after their teeth is a normal part of looking after themselves. We do not want toothbrushing to feel clinical, frightening or like a punishment. It should be calm, familiar and enjoyable.

This policy supports the aims of Hackney's Oral Health Champion work: evidence-based prevention of oral disease, building staff confidence, promoting good oral health with families, signposting families to dental services and making every appropriate contact an opportunity to reinforce simple oral-health messages.

The Nursery's supervised toothbrushing programme supports, but does not replace, toothbrushing at home. Parents and carers remain responsible for ensuring that children brush twice each day, including last thing at night.

### **2. Why we promote oral health**

Hackney's oral health programme identifies tooth decay as an important local public-health issue and promotes early, preventative action. Good oral health affects much more than teeth: dental pain can affect eating, sleeping, speaking, playing, learning and a child's general wellbeing.

We therefore promote the simple messages that children should:

- brush their teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste;
- have sugary food and drinks less often and, wherever possible, keep them to mealtimes;
- choose water or milk as their usual drinks;
- move from bottles to an open or free-flow cup as they develop; and
- visit a dentist regularly and not wait until there is pain or a problem.

### **3. Oral Health Champion**

The Nursery will nominate an Oral Health Champion to help keep oral health visible within the setting.

The Oral Health Champion will:

- complete relevant oral-health training and keep their knowledge up to date;
- support staff to understand the Nursery's toothbrushing and infection-control procedures;
- promote consistent oral-health messages with children and families;
- share appropriate information and resources provided by Hackney's oral health service;
- signpost families to NHS dental and local oral-health support where needed;
- check that toothbrushing equipment and storage arrangements are safe and suitable; and
- support monitoring and review of the programme.

Responsibility for oral health is not limited to the named Champion. All practitioners should reinforce good oral-health habits as part of normal care, learning and conversations with children and families.

#### **4. Parental information and permission**

Parents and carers will be given clear information about the supervised toothbrushing programme. A child will only take part where the Nursery holds the required parental permission or consent for the programme.

Permission records will be retained appropriately and staff supervising toothbrushing will know which children are and are not taking part.

Parents may withdraw their child from the supervised programme by informing the Nursery. A decision not to take part will not affect the child's place, care or treatment within the Nursery.

Where a child is not taking part, staff will ensure that they remain positively included in the routine and are not made to feel different or singled out.

#### **5. Daily supervised toothbrushing**

Children taking part will be offered one supervised toothbrushing session on each day they attend, at a time that works sensibly within the Nursery routine.

Supervised toothbrushing is child-led. Children are encouraged to brush their own teeth while a trained adult closely supervises and supports them. Staff do not routinely brush children's teeth for them.

Children will never be forced to brush their teeth. If a child is reluctant, staff will use reassurance, modelling, songs, visual prompts and encouragement and will try again appropriately. Persistent difficulties will be discussed with the parent/carer, particularly where sensory, developmental or additional needs may be contributing.

Children with SEND will be supported to participate wherever possible. Reasonable, safe adjustments may include a different toothbrush, non-foaming toothpaste where appropriate, visual support, a quieter space, additional time or an adapted approach.

## **6. Toothpaste and brushing technique**

The supervised programme will follow current evidence-based guidance. Unless specific professional advice requires otherwise:

- fluoride toothpaste containing 1,350 to 1,500 parts per million (ppm) fluoride will be used;
- children under three will use only a smear of toothpaste;
- children aged three and over will use a pea-sized amount;
- toothpaste will not be reapplied if a child swallows it during the session;
- children will be encouraged not to swallow toothpaste; and
- after brushing, children will spit out excess toothpaste and will not rinse their mouths with water.

The Nursery will use suitable small-headed toothbrushes and will follow the products, equipment and procedures supplied or approved through the supervised toothbrushing programme.

## **7. Infection prevention and control**

Preventing cross-infection is essential. Each child will have their own clearly identifiable toothbrush. Toothbrushes must never be shared.

Staff will follow the current supervised toothbrushing infection-prevention procedure and training. In particular:

- children and supervising adults will wash or sanitise their hands before and after the session;
- toothpaste from a shared tube will not be dispensed directly onto children's toothbrushes;
- separate portions of toothpaste will be dispensed onto a clean surface or individual paper product so that brushes do not come into contact with the tube or with each other;
- toothbrushes will be rinsed individually under cold running water after use and will not be washed together;
- a toothbrush that falls onto the floor will be discarded and replaced;
- toothbrushes will be stored upright in an appropriate rack or ventilated storage system so that brushes do not touch one another and can air dry;
- storage racks, trolleys, cupboards, sinks and relevant surfaces will be cleaned in accordance with the current programme guidance; and
- toothbrushes will never be soaked in bleach, disinfectant or cleaning solution.

Toothbrush storage will be positioned and maintained to minimise contamination. Storage equipment will be replaced if it becomes cracked, damaged or difficult to clean.

## **8. Toothbrush replacement**

Toothbrushes will be checked regularly and replaced at least termly, or sooner where:

- bristles are splayed or the brush is visibly damaged;
- the brush has fallen onto the floor;
- there is concern that it has been contaminated; or
- replacement is otherwise advised by the oral health programme.

Children will always use the toothbrush allocated specifically to them.

## **9. Illness and medical considerations**

Children returning after ordinary childhood illness can normally rejoin supervised toothbrushing without delay. Where there is a suspected or confirmed notifiable infection, or another specific infection-control concern, the Nursery will follow current health-protection advice.

There are very few medical reasons for excluding a child from supervised toothbrushing. A child may be temporarily excluded where there is a relevant medical diagnosis, significant oral ulceration or specific professional advice. Parents will be informed where this applies.

Where a child has an allergy, swallowing difficulty, sensory need or other health condition that may affect toothbrushing, an individual approach will be agreed where necessary.

## **10. Food and drink**

Toothbrushing works best alongside a tooth-friendly approach to food and drink. The Nursery will therefore promote healthy choices throughout the day rather than treating toothbrushing as a way of cancelling out frequent sugar.

Water and milk are the Nursery's usual drinks for children. Menus, snacks and celebrations will be planned with children's overall nutrition and oral health in mind.

Staff will support families with practical, non-judgemental information about reducing the frequency of sugary foods and drinks. We recognise that families have different routines, cultures and circumstances; our role is to give clear, evidence-based advice and support rather than to lecture parents.

## **11. Learning about teeth**

Oral health will be included naturally within the curriculum and children's everyday learning. This may include:

- talking about teeth, bodies and self-care;
- stories, songs, role play and dental-themed activities;
- practising toothbrushing movements through play and modelling;
- talking about foods and drinks that help us stay healthy;
- helping children understand what happens when they visit a dentist; and
- using age-appropriate resources supplied or recommended by oral-health professionals.

Staff should use positive language about dentists and dental care. We will not use the dentist, injections, tooth removal or dental treatment as a threat to frighten children into brushing.

## **12. Working with parents and carers**

Good oral health is most effective when Nursery and home give children the same simple messages. Staff will use everyday opportunities to talk about oral health with families and will share reliable information where it is useful.

Where a parent tells us that they are struggling to find an NHS dentist, are worried about a child's teeth, or need additional support, we will signpost them to appropriate NHS and Hackney oral-health services. We will not diagnose dental conditions.

Where staff notice something concerning, such as apparent dental pain, difficulty eating, swelling, repeated complaints about a tooth or obvious deterioration, this will be shared sensitively with the parent/carer and they will be encouraged to seek appropriate dental advice.

## **13. Staff training and responsibilities**

Staff who deliver or supervise the toothbrushing programme must receive the relevant training before taking responsibility for a session. Training will include the practical brushing procedure and infection prevention and control.

The Nursery Manager and Oral Health Champion will ensure that:

- training is recorded and refreshed where necessary;
- new staff are trained before supervising the programme;
- equipment is checked regularly;
- parental permissions are current;
- the programme is delivered consistently; and
- any concerns about safety, infection control or the way the programme is being delivered are acted upon immediately.

If a concern cannot be resolved safely within the setting, supervised toothbrushing will be paused while advice is sought from the oral-health team.

## **14. Monitoring and quality assurance**

The Nursery will monitor the supervised toothbrushing programme to make sure that it remains safe, consistent and useful for children.

The Oral Health Champion or Manager will carry out periodic checks of practice, equipment, storage, permissions and staff knowledge. We will cooperate with monitoring, support or quality-assurance visits offered through the local oral-health programme.

The policy and procedure will be reviewed following any significant change to national or Hackney guidance, any infection-control incident, or any concern identified through monitoring.

## **15. Related policies and guidance**

- Health and Safety Policy
- Infection Prevention and Control / Illness Policy

- Healthy Eating Policy
- Safeguarding Children Policy
- SEND Policy
- Medication Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Current Hackney Oral Health Champion and supervised toothbrushing guidance
- Current national supervised toothbrushing guidance for early years setting

**Policy has regard for:**

**Theme 1 – Unique Child**

- Child development
- Health and safety
- Inclusive practice

**Theme 2 – Positive Relationships**

- The relationship between staff and children
- The role of parents as partners

**Theme 3 – Enabling Environments**

- The physical environment
- Children at the centre
- Working with a range of professionals

**Theme 4 – Learning and Development**

Please see the following website for additional details:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor>

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