

Supervised Toothbrushing in Practice at Ducklings Nursery, Leeds.

How do you promote good oral health in your setting?

During circle time and carpet time sessions, we discuss toothbrushing with the children. We talk about how many teeth children have, ten at the top, and ten at the bottom and talk about how children grow and lose teeth naturally at different ages but that when you lose a tooth you will grow one in its place.

We took our nursery's puppet, Carlos, to the local dental surgery and photographed his process of going to the dentist - the chair moving up and down, the bright light, the x-ray machine, the bowl to spit in to and staff in their surgery clothing. We've maintained good relationships with the local dental surgery and they have provided workshops at the nursery for our practitioners, as well as free dental packs to promote oral hygiene.



Why did you decide to do this?

During parent and caregivers evenings, and online on the nursery's Learning Journey platform, our staff discussed thoughts on introducing toothbrushing at nursery. With such a positive response from parents, we introduced toothbrushing sessions in September 2024 and have been doing them daily with the children ever since.

How does it work in practice?

The nursery run a daily toothbrushing club and has bought supporting resources to use in the setting for various age groups up to 5 years. The resources include two minute mini sand timers, small puppets with teeth, a big toothbrush, mirrors, and mini dentist dressing up clothes. These resources are kept in a basket where children can access them throughout the day.

- The children respond well to visual prompts, so the nursery uses sand timers to help them understand the concept of time, when waiting for a turn of a favourite toy, and to measure two minutes for toothbrushing. Each child turns their timer as they begin brushing, and know it's complete when the sand reaches the bottom.
- The nursery uses a key person approach and takes groups of three children at a time to the bathroom to brush their teeth. The nursery bathrooms have three sinks and mirrors, so each child can watch as they brush their teeth.
- Staff supervise all of the children, adding the toothpaste to each brush and encouraging them all to begin their toothbrushing independently, and may support them by making sure all areas are cleaned if the child finds it a little tricky. During the brushing, the practitioner talks about the technique and the importance of not swallowing and not rinsing afterwards. The nursery displays toothbrushing tips on the bathroom wall for guidance.
- The nursery involves parents by asking them to share posts of visits to the dentist on their online Learning Journal, and encourages families to share their experiences.

What are the benefits?

- Children are excited about brushing their teeth!
- The sessions are a selling point for prospective parents wanting to join the nursery.

What are the challenges?

- Time! Things can crop up and the staff are unable to meet the needs of the toothbrushing sessions. Opportunities for development, when a child is engrossed in play are sometimes more important!

The **BRUSH** toolkit provides expert information for practitioners and guidance on how best to supervise toothbrushing and making the sessions an opportunity to develop children's social, physical and mental skills.



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