

Supervised Toothbrushing in Practice at Park Lane Preschool, Bradford

How do you promote good oral health in your setting?

We talk about oral health regularly and we have introduced supervised toothbrushing twice a day.

Why did you decide to do this?

We want to help children feel comfortable and confident in brushing their own teeth. We are familiarising them with brushing their teeth. Our sessions make teeth brushing a fun activity, so that hopefully at home it does not upset children when they are asked to brush their teeth.

We also want our children and families to understand the importance of why we brush our teeth and what will happen if they don't, including all the health issues associated with not brushing their teeth.

How does it work in practice?

In the morning the class have their toothbrushing time after snack time. In the afternoon it happens in the middle of the session.

The children brush their teeth with a timer and once this finishes they stop and talk about the importance of brushing. We have a song 'Put the paste on the brush and brush your teeth...' which encourages the children to keep going, in a fun way.

We have a toothbrush holder in the shape of a "bus" with seats in for each child's toothbrush to make the experience more playful.

- Two children each session hand out the toothbrushes and mirrors to each child. The mirrors are important so that the children can see themselves and make sure they're brushing their teeth and not anywhere else on their face.
- The practitioner puts the toothpaste on each toothbrush and passes them over to the child helper, who gives out each toothbrush one by one.
- The practitioner brings out a big timer so children can watch the time go down as they brush their teeth. The practitioner will call out time stamps throughout the 2 minutes to bring children's attention back to the timer and keep them engaged. This includes a halfway mark and a last 5 seconds countdown to make sure the children don't lose interest and disengage with brushing.
- When the timer finishes the practitioners call the child helper back up to gather everyone's toothbrushes and mirrors.
- The practitioner frequently asks the children some questions:
 - Why do we brush our teeth?
 - Do you brush your teeth at home?
 - How many times a day do we need to brush our teeth?
 - Who goes to the dentist? What does a dentist do?



What are the benefits?

- Children build positive tooth brushing habits
- Enables children to learn about good oral health
- Builds children's confidence
- Encourages children's independence
- Supports parents with toothbrushing

What are the challenges?

- The toothbrushes and paste can be expensive to purchase regularly.
- Some parents feel it is their role to teach their children about brushing their teeth and might not want them to do it in these sessions.