

Supervised Toothbrushing in Practice at Tinsley Meadows, Sheffield

How do you promote good oral health in your setting?

We implement regular supervised toothbrushing sessions in the setting. Our staff received training and supplies to begin the sessions through a member of the oral health promotion team involved in their local authority. The team also ran a workshop to explain how the toothbrushing sessions would be helping their children, what they entail and the importance of promoting good oral hygiene for young children.

Why did you decide to do this?

One of our teachers was aware of the impact tooth decay was having on children in his class in terms of toothache, and its impact on the children's development of speech and their learning generally. He wanted to introduce an initiative to prevent tooth decay that would fit in with the day-to-day running of the class and the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum would also be fun for children.

How does it work in practice?

Our teacher contacted the local authority who put him in touch with the oral health promotion team. They had a meeting, discussed the options and the teacher sought approval from the school's senior leadership team to set up a toothbrushing club. A member of the oral health promotion team provided our staff with training, a protocol to follow and all the toothbrushes, toothpaste and toothbrush racks the school would need to run the club for a term. They also ran a workshop to explain to parents what it would involve and answer any general oral health questions. They then followed up a month later to see how the sessions were running. Following this visit, they regularly got in touch to provide additional supplies and check that our staff were correctly following the protocol. The club has been running successfully for over 5 years now.

What are the benefits?

- The teacher has seen benefits of the sessions with how much our children enjoy brushing their teeth and learning from each other.
- Parents have given feedback that their children are being more co-operative with brushing at home, since starting the sessions.

What are the challenges?

- Some school staff were initially worried the toothbrushing club might be hard to manage or too messy, but they soon saw it was easy to run and no messier than other activities.
- The main challenge was suspending the club during the pandemic, but it restarted in 2022 and is now growing with more children joining.

David Yates, teacher at Tinsley Meadows says:

"Because at first I did think... we're going to do toothbrushing now and we've got 60 children, what if it is chaos and they're all brushing each other's hair, you know, things like that, or they all share... But they are really, really good at it... I am proud of them. The children seem to enjoy and engage with it. It's a whole group experience so it's something that we do as a shared thing."

At the school, the toothbrushing club is linked to healthy eating and role-playing visiting the dentist with props and stories.

For other nurseries or schools wanting to do similar, the teacher advised finding someone locally to provide support and training, then give it a try.

On the Supervised Toothbrushing website, the **BRUSH toolkit** provides practitioners with resources to support their sessions and ensure they are following the right protocol.



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