

Little Adventurers Nursery

Silver case study 1

Oral Hygiene

We decided to undertake this area for our universal case study having attended a meeting with the local authority about the dangers of poor oral hygiene and the consequences for young children's health and wellbeing. Some startling statistics were divulged and, having spoken subsequently with my staff team, we decided we needed to make this a top priority.

Our nursery ethos sets great value on the health and wellbeing of every child and we already had teeth cleaning in place in all our age groups. However, we knew there was a still lot to learn in this important area so I, as manager, undertook the oral hygiene training offered by the local authority. The staff then gathered to undertake the online training, especially in the area of supervised tooth brushing. Together we made an action plan of all the aspects we felt we needed to improve on and appointed an oral champion to lead both practice and the case study. She ordered the resources we would need, including paper towels, tooth brushes, toothpaste, storage racks, shelves in each room to store the racks and two minute timers.

While the children already brushed their teeth at nursery, the training showed us that we needed to change our practice in two areas: staff were not always supervising each child, resulting in some younger children simply sucking the toothpaste off the brush, without always brushing their teeth. We also recognised that we were encouraging children to spit out excess toothpaste, which the dentist on the training video specifically said was not a good idea as the fluoride needs to remain on the teeth. These changes we put in place immediately and informed parents of this best practice the following week.

When the new tooth brushes arrived, a model mouth and large model tooth brush were part of the resources and so senior staff spent time with each age group, showing them on the model how to brush properly. Children showed great fascination in the model and loved to have a go at brushing the large teeth. Children were taught to rinse the toothbrushes after use and store their own brush in the rack, learning to recognise their brush by the number or shape over time. Our oral hygiene champion supported new staff as they started with us so that the whole team were supporting best practice ([appendix 1](#)).



Along with the tooth brushing, we also wanted to ensure our nutritional provision supported strong teeth, with optimum calcium provision in our menus. We consulted our nutritionist, who assured us that with the homemade rice pudding, daily yoghurt and milk drinks offered the daily recommended intake of calcium for children under 5. One area we felt we needed to address was the provision of squash to drink by a few parents as their child doesn't like to drink water. Staff chatted with these parents and explained the need for limited sugars to be part of a healthy diet and encouraged the parents to model drinking water and milk to demonstrate their benefits.

We are ever aware of the importance of the home learning environment, and so wanted to ensure that sharing the messages we were learning about strong oral hygiene was a priority. This we accomplished in a number of ways. Children created their own posters and displays in our preschool rooms to inform parents of what the children were learning ([appendices 2 and 3](#)).



Photos of these were also sent to monthly Parents Forum so that parents had the opportunity to ask questions, see the resources and take home the link to supervised tooth brushing website. Parents were also informed via our monthly newsletter so that all were receiving the same message and could promote strong oral hygiene at home ([appendix 4](#)).

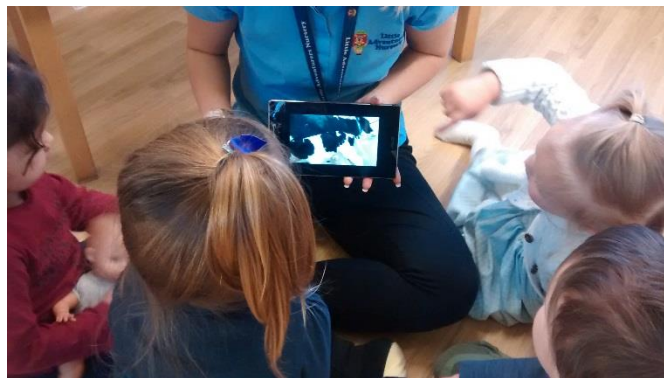
Staff planned activities that would help the children learn about the need to keep their teeth clean and strong. They taught the children the word calcium and made collages of foods with calcium in them. X-rays of teeth were borrowed and shown to the pre-schoolers, who showed a great fascination in them! ([appendix 5](#)).



Staff also supported children in unpacking the Tesco delivery on several occasions, playing a game where children had to find the food which contained calcium ([appendix 6](#)).



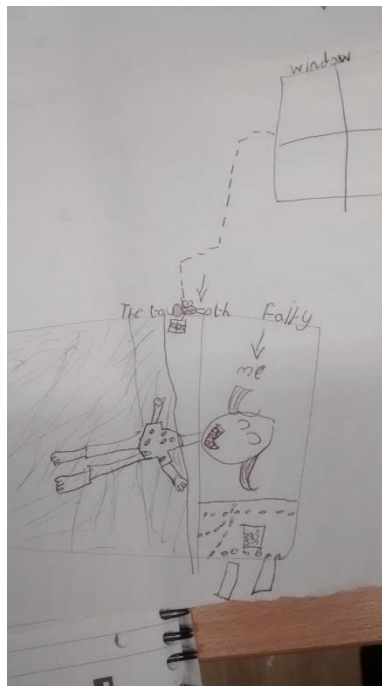
One tea time a pre-schooler showed his understanding when I offered him milk or water to drink and he pointed at the milk jug saying "I'd like calcium please!" Younger children made cow pictures and accessed videos on YouTube to show how a cow is milked by a farmer or a machine. This too was fascinating to them and they made their own udders with water placed in tied up rubber gloves to simulate the action so they could have a go of "milking" ([appendix 7](#)).



Children in our two year old rooms were especially fascinated by the role play dentist set that accompanied the resources from the training course and all the dolls and soft toys had their teeth checked, especially our large lion mascot puppet who sits in reception ([appendix 8](#)).



His teeth were checked many times as his mouth opened wide. Children made pictures to go on the displays and one older sister brought a picture she had drawn of the tooth fairy visiting her one night when her tooth came out at school ([appendix 9](#)).



This was talked about for ages by the pre-schoolers, who also found in the nursery library a story about a tooth fairy.

Books were a great source of information and delight, both non-fiction and story books and the children's favourite book in preschool was "The shark who bit things he shouldn't" whose teeth got stuck to a toffee apple which taught him to only bite food and stick to things without sugar!

Photos of the children learning about strong oral hygiene were placed on our photo talking board in the corridor and when putting their coats on for the garden they often stopped and chatted together about what they had been learning. All the activities above gave staff and children opportunities to revisit the important topic and reinforce the learning about healthy lifestyles which definitely supported their personal health and wellbeing (appendix 10).



Along with the tooth brushing, the staff team worked together to identify areas of nursery life that could be strengthened or developed. For example, the Calpol kept on site was checked to ensure it was sugar free. Use of dummies has been reduced to only bedtimes and times of distress wherever possible and staff actively look for other ways to distract children from crying. Staff recognised that one child went to sleep sucking her milk from a bottle and, having learnt on the training that this was not good for her teeth, spoke to the mother and took the bottle out of her mouth as soon as she was asleep. In this way she was prevented from constantly having food in her mouth which could compromise the work of saliva in cleansing the mouth.

Cooking recipes made from milk became a favourite with the children and staff did lots of research to facilitate this. Even the youngest children were involved and loved to use the kitchen blender to make smoothies (while licking the spoon at the end!) (appendix 11).



The only aim that we are not able to implement in time for the end of the case study was a visit from a local dentist, which has been arranged for March 2018 (due to workload of the local dentist). Instead children who were visiting the dentist were encouraged to tell their friends all about it, as well as their sticker to show how clean their teeth are.

The case study has been beneficial in a number of ways:

- Children have learnt more about the importance of having strong oral hygiene and are better able to look after their teeth
- Children have a better knowledge of foods that contain calcium
- Parents are more aware of the importance of supporting children with strong oral hygiene
- One child was more confident when visiting the dentist having been part of the group discussions about how important dentist checks are- he returned to nursery full of the positive comments of the dentist
- Staff have developed their understanding and practice and are more able to support children towards good oral hygiene
- The nursery menu has been developed as a result of the reduction in sugar and increase in milk products on offer
- Siblings outside of nursery have had important messages about oral hygiene supported and reinforced and have been able to reinforce this with younger siblings as we all chatted about teeth!

As a nursery team, we have developed our knowledge and practice in this important area and are now confident that we are following the NICE (National Institute of Care and Excellence) guidance document- Oral Hygiene: Local authorities and partners produced in 2014, by

working with the local authority to improve oral hygiene for the children in our care. The resources we received from the local authority as part of the training have helped us to offer guidance and information to all the families at nursery.

We hope that our ongoing work will help to counter the disturbing statistics of child tooth decay in young children (2013 Oral Health Survey found that 12% of 3 year olds had experienced tooth decay, which was largely untreated) and that a precedent has been set in our children for a lifelong awareness of the need for strong oral hygiene. We have seen an improvement in the confidence of some children to visit the dentist- we think, due to the increased discussions on the topic. Staff will continue to support children to develop this area of self-care and personal development, which will in turn support school readiness in our oldest children in line with the EYFS.

Report written by Ginny Andreas, Nursery Manager, Little Adventurers Nursery
February 2018

6 month update- July 2018

Tooth brushing and strong oral health continue to be key aspects of the nursery's wider provision for each child's health and wellbeing. In the past year it has become firmly established within our flexible daily routines, being carried out after the healthy main meal at lunch time and is a happy time of stillness in our busy day in all age groups. Our cooking activities feature many milk and yoghurt based recipes and it has been noted with pleasure that staff have decreased the number of recipes for cakes and biscuits in favour of healthy ingredients which indicate that the message of healthy nutrition has filtered throughout the setting.

Our oral champion visits each room monthly to work closely with staff to ensure children learn positive messages about the importance of tooth brushing, the need to eat good food and how calcium-based foods help our bodies. The model mouth (named Mr Teeth by the children) and giant toothbrush are used at this time to remind children how to brush teeth well and children readily chat together.

Staff in our under twos report that over time many of the children don't suck the toothpaste off the tooth brush in the way they used, instead brushing more and allowing staff to support them in the process.

Staff have noticed that two year old children have become more independent in their self-help skills, always being eager to rinse and return their brushes to the rack. They clearly enjoy anticipating the tooth brushing as they find their chairs and place in a semi-circle shape. Even maths skills have been supported as children find their numbered toothbrush, with a few being able to identify the numbers on others' brushes.

Over the past months the oldest preschool children have developed a greater understanding of ways to look after their own body, along with new vocabulary like calcium, decay, gums and other teeth related words. They look after the resources well and chat together about being healthy.



All parents have been exposed to regular articles about ways to support children's nutritional health via the monthly newsletter, often written by the nursery nutritionist (including the benefits of vitamin D and ways to reduce sugar). New parents have been pleasantly surprised when they hear about the children brushing their teeth at nursery and in this way all parents are being informed about strong positive oral hygiene messages.

The nursery will continue to find ways to support children's oral health along with broader aspects of healthy lifestyles to encourage optimum physical and emotional wellbeing.

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