

Supervised toothbrushing in practice at General Day Nursery, St Helens

How do you promote good oral health in your setting?

We do supervised toothbrushing sessions together twice a day at the same times, so it's part of our daily routine. We also share helpful information and resources with our children and families.

Why did you decide to do this?

We chose to take part in this programme for a couple of reasons. We did a similar scheme previously and the children and parents really enjoyed it, but it had to stop when funding ended. Tooth decay is very high in St Helens, and we want to help make a difference by encouraging good habits and sharing information with our children and parents.

How does it work in practice?

It works by building toothbrushing and oral health into our daily routine. As well as doing two toothbrushing sessions a day with our children, we give out free toothbrushes and toothpaste, and share displays, leaflets, guides, and a termly oral health newsletter with parents.

We take part in World Smile Day and Oral Health Day, send out parent questionnaires about dentists and dummy/bottle use, and run a swap-a-dummy or bottle scheme for a sippy cup that's better for teeth.

We also use fun activities like a role-play dentist area, visits from our Croc-o-Smile mascot, books, songs, and resources at parents' evenings. We promote local dentists, only offer water or milk to drink, serve fruit-based desserts, and carry all of this into our holiday club.

The children really enjoy it and love singing the song and brushing their teeth with friends.



What are the benefits?

Joining the supervised toothbrushing scheme has been one of the best things we've done. Children and parents love it, and we know it is helping children build healthy habits and understand why brushing teeth is important.

This scheme has helped our children a lot:

- Child A has always liked brushing, but since starting at nursery she asks to brush more often and sings the song at home. After a short phase of not wanting to brush, she now enjoys doing it every day again.
- Child B now loves brushing her teeth and the encouragement from nursery has helped greatly. She has become more independent and brushes on her own morning and night, often asking for toothpaste during the day.

It was easy for us to set up as a nursery, and 55 children now brush their teeth as part of their daily routine. Parents who once found brushing difficult say it is now much easier, and children are more willing to brush and talk about foods that are bad for their teeth.

We have had great feedback from parents and the local authority, and the Ofsted inspector was also impressed when we spoke about this during our inspection in December 2024.

What are the challenges?

Make sure everything is set up and ready before you start. Getting consent can take time at first, but we now include the forms in our induction packs so parents fill them in when their child starts.