

Brook Acre Primary School, Warrington case study

Why did you decide to do this?

Brook Acre Primary School chose to take part in the supervised toothbrushing scheme because we are committed to giving every child the best possible start in life, both in terms of their health and learning. We recognise that good oral health is fundamental to overall wellbeing, confidence and school attendance, and that establishing positive habits early can have lifelong benefits. As a school serving a community with high levels of deprivation, we are also acutely aware that many families face significant financial pressures, and for some, buying toothpaste and toothbrushes regularly can be a real challenge. By participating in this scheme, we can help remove those barriers, ensure all children have access to the essentials they need, and support families in promoting healthy routines at home. This initiative reflects our commitment not only to improving oral health outcomes, but also to tackling inequality and supporting our community in practical, meaningful ways.

Approach and implementation

At Brook Acre Primary School, we actively promote good oral hygiene through a strong and consistent approach across our curriculum and wider school ethos. Children learn about the importance of oral health from an early age, with Early Years pupils being introduced to basic toothbrushing routines and healthy habits, while in Key Stage 2 they study teeth in science, developing a deeper understanding of how to care for them and the impact of diet on dental health. Across the school, we educate pupils about the effects of sugar in food and drink, helping them to make informed choices and understand the link between sugar consumption and tooth decay. As a water-only school, we reinforce the importance of healthy hydration, and our Gold Award for Tasty Tuck reflects our commitment to providing and promoting nutritious snack options. We have also worked closely with initiatives such as GULP and Everybody Counts to support families in recognising the importance of healthy lifestyles, ensuring that our messages about oral hygiene and wellbeing extends beyond the classroom and into the wider community.

We have taken part in supervised toothbrushing schemes for ten years. They have naturally become part of our daily timetable for children in Nursery and Reception. A couple of years ago, we began to pay for our Year 1 children, which has recently become funded for the next couple of years. If school wasn't under the immense pressures of diminishing budgets, we would gladly promote daily brushing in older year groups.



Children experience/ voice

Children very quickly become accustomed to brushing in school and it becomes our daily routine. It takes five minutes out of our day to support children's oral health and children quickly become very independent with brushing. More recently, we have utilised the SEND toothbrushes which work well for some of our neurodiverse learners. As all resources are delivered to school, we find the programme to be sustainable and easy to implement.

Parents are always grateful that we take part in the supervised toothbrushing scheme. Some parents find a struggle to maintain healthy habits and routines at home, therefore when they see their children brushing in school, we can work together to ensure children brush regularly.

There have been times where we have supported parents with sourcing a dentist or dental care for their children and help to educate families on the importance of monitoring sugar intake. Unfortunately, in some cases, by the time children start with us in Nursery, some have tooth decay already and we see a lot of cases where children require tooth extraction. We always try to share the message of good oral health and where we can, we buy toothpaste and brushes to put on our helping hands trolley – which parents can access for free food and hygiene products. It is harrowing to see how quickly toothpaste and brushes are taken from our trolley – therefore we fully appreciate the take home packs for our parents and families. One child in Year 1 told her class teacher that they have now got toothpaste at home and previously didn't have any prior to the take home packs being shared.

Results and impact

At Brook Acre we have three classes which take part in supervised toothbrushing (around 75 children). Through the programme, we have seen many children who were initially reluctant or unsure become confident and independent in their brushing routines. What may have started as hesitation quickly becomes a natural and accepted part of the school day, helping children to build positive habits that feel normal and manageable. Over time, we notice that pupils become more knowledgeable about why brushing is important and are able to talk confidently about the impact of sugar on their teeth and overall health. They begin to make more informed choices, showing greater awareness of the need to avoid high-sugar snacks and drinks. We also ensure that this message is shared consistently with parents and carers, reinforcing at home why good oral health matters, how it links to overall wellbeing, and how small daily habits can make a significant long-term difference.



Challenges/ lessons learnt

In ten years, we have only ever faced one challenge from a parent who didn't want their child to use fluoride toothpaste. The child still brushed daily without paste or using his own from home which was kept separately from their peers. In my opinion, we don't face any other challenges with the programme and feel fully supported.

Challenges for our families include the financial cost of sources paste and brushing and sourcing a dentist when many are without.

I would always recommend opting into the supervised toothbrushing programme. It is so simple to implement and really quick, not impacting on school day. We see oral health as part of a child's holistic needs and development, therefore would always support and encourage good health.

Next steps/ sustainability

We are keen to continue the work of the last ten years – continuing to implement the supervised toothbrushing programme and engage in initiatives such as GULP and Everybody Counts.

Supporting information

As we have a significant amount of pupil premium, toothbrushing supports our ethos of helping every child thrive in every way. We recognise that basic needs come first and children are not effective learners if this isn't our first priority.