

MEALTIME ASSISTANCE POLICY

RATIONALE:

- To ensure consistency in mealtime support for students requiring additional assistance.

AIMS:

- To provide education to all staff providing mealtime assistance to students.
- To ensure staff and student safety during mealtimes.
- To ensure a consistent approach to providing mealtime support across the school.
- To ensure that students are supported during their mealtimes in a manner which maximises their independence and development of gross motor, fine motor and oro-motor skills.
- To ensure students' nutritional requirements are met.
- To ensure that students' IEP goals are met.

GUIDELINES:

MEALTIME PLANS

- Students with additional mealtime needs will be reviewed by Speech Pathology/Occupational Therapy (Physiotherapy if required). Following this review a mealtime plan will be devised.
- Mealtime plans will be re-issued annually, or as indicated. Re-issued mealtime plans are signed by the child's carer. A copy of this is provided to the classroom and plans are to be displayed in a hinged binder. in the classroom behind the yellow mealtime plan front page to ensure student privacy and ease of access/consistency.
- - An additional copy is maintained in the CRT folder



- Mealtime plans must be displayed in the classroom. Classroom staff must follow the guidelines for each indicated student as recorded in their mealtime plan.
- Students with a mealtime plan will be reviewed by Speech Pathology once per term, or as referred, to ensure suitability of current mealtime plan.
- If classroom staff observe changes to the mealtime or think a review is indicated, they must inform Speech Pathology/Occupational Therapy. Students referred will be reviewed within 24 hours. These may include changes to positioning, changes to utensil use and signs of laryngeal penetration/aspiration (e.g. coughing, choking, gurgly voice, throat clearing, something stuck in throat, chest infections, shortness of breath etc.)

MEALTIME SUPPORT

- All staff must engage in appropriate hand hygiene before and after providing mealtime assistance.
- Disposable gloves must be worn during mealtime support and food handling.
- Crockery, cutlery, food and other utensils should not be shared during mealtimes. At the end of each mealtime, all utensils should be rinsed and washed in hot soapy water and left to air dry.
- Staff must follow mealtime plans to ensure safety of students and maximise student eating and drinking skill development.
- When providing full assistance to a student (i.e. feeding a student, nil co-active support) please provide the student with a cue for each mouthful. This may be a physical or a verbal cue. Ensure the student is attending to their meal. Hold the spoon/fork of food near the student's lips and allow the student to open their mouth or come forward and take the food from the spoon/fork.
- When providing co-active assistance (i.e. assisting with scooping or spoon-to-mouth action) please ensure that you are not doing the task for the student. Rather, you are supporting the student as they develop new skills. If this is something that you are



unsure about, please review the student's mealtime plan, or speak to Occupational Therapy/Speech Pathology about how you can assist to maximise the student's skill development.

- Staff should ensure their safety at all times when providing mealtime support. Staff should avoid bites, cuts, abrasions and putting their fingers in students' mouths.
- If a staff member or student is cut/sustains an injury/bleeds during mealtime assistance, the mealtime must be immediately abandoned. Mealtime must only resume once bleeding has stopped, the injury/wound is appropriately covered and all blood is appropriately cleaned up.
- Where a staff member sustains an injury during mealtime assistance, the appropriate channels should be taken to report the incident (eduSafe).
- If a student experiences choking during mealtime, staff are to administer appropriate First Aid.
- Enteral feeds (i.e. PEG feed) are to be administered by School Care Program trained staff **only**.

Policy implemented- November 2022

Principal

Date of review : November 2025

