

Social Eating Groups

What are social eating groups?

Social eating groups take place for a range of pupils and students during lunchtimes. These are facilitated by Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists and Therapy Assistants with an overall focus on developing functional and social communication skills at mealtimes.



Therapy staff liaise directly with members of the care team, teaching team and parents/carers to share observations and suggest strategies to support the ongoing development of related life skills.



Social Eating Groups

What are the aims of Social Eating Groups:

To increase awareness of appropriate eating and drinking skills.

To develop cutting skills and appropriate use of cutlery.

To encourage effective posture and positioning while eating.

To increase awareness of safe eating by reinforcing appropriate pace of eating and bite size.

To encourage and promote self-awareness and self-appearance with the use of a mirror.

To promote appropriate table manners and encourage generalisation of skills.

To enhance turn-taking and topic maintenance skills.

To support topic specific vocabulary development.

To encourage appropriate exchanges amongst peers while eating.

To develop awareness of healthy eating.

To support the ability to make choices.

continued overleaf...

Social Eating Groups

What are the aims of Social Eating Groups continued...

To encourage pupils and students with self-restricted diets to increase their options.

To trial adaptive equipment in context e.g. caring cutlery, non-slip place mats, foot blocks.

How you can support at mealtimes?

- Model appropriate topic of conversation
- Use topic specific vocabulary
- Model good manners
- Ensure use of appropriate equipment
- Follow safe eating and drinking guidance
- Increase self awareness by using a mirror.
- Offer healthy eating choices
- Making sure that the pupil/student is given enough time to choose his/her food e.g. at the servery
- Introduce new foods in a safe and unpressurised environment

Social Eating Groups

Key principles

- Development of social skills
- Development of safe eating skills
- Development of healthy eating skills.



Social eating at mealtimes connects our pupils and students together and supports their learning, language development, social interaction and emotional development, as well as encouraging a wide and varied diet in a safe and nurturing environment.

St Marys School and College

St Mary's School & College provides residential and non-residential education, care and therapy for children aged 7-19. Our pupils and students have speech, language and communication needs and may also have associated physical and learning difficulties.

Our therapy, health and personal development teams and on-site facilities enable us to deliver provision across the waking curriculum. Our model of integrated therapy means that the pupils' and students' needs are planned, provided, and assessed in natural and functional settings. There is the opportunity to develop high levels of trust and familiarity leading to strong therapeutic relationships. We work as a multidisciplinary team to maximise independence levels and the development of 'tools for life'.

The ultimate aim is for every pupil and student to achieve as much independence as possible, so they can live a fulfilled life.

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Social Eating groups at
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