

TRANSCRIPT: Group discussion (2) Feeding

Speaker 1: Feeding in the primary department, obviously some come in and they're not using knives and forks. So, we're very much into helping them to do that. That might be hand over hand to begin with to get them used to it. It's giving them time and allowing them to actually build up those skills. Some of them do have difficulty with their motor skills, so it isn't just a case of, you know, this is what you do and leave them to it. Some just need a lot of prompting to remember how to use it, but the big thing is, giving them time and helping them, showing them what to do, modelling what to do.

Speaker 2: We were just saying about not always remembering the hygiene side of it as well. Not remembering to wash their hands before they have their food after they've come out of the toilets and, sometimes, their hands go in inappropriate places as well when they're having their meals. We've got quite a few pupils that actually need a great deal with help with feeding. And those that have got very little control, you have to be conscious of the fact that they don't want to have dinner all over their face. So you have to think about the technique in feeding - that you're just giving them small amounts and keeping them covered up and making sure that they're eating in their own time. There is nothing worse than being sat there and somebody pushing food into your mouth. You have to make sure that they've swallowed their food before they go on to the next bit.

Speaker 3: I suppose once they've finished their food, as well, trying to get them to wash their faces.

Speaker 2: Yeah and also teeth cleaning. They all need help to do that as well. And, of course, feeding is the first part of learning to speak, so we do have to be very careful. We're very lucky that we've got speech and language therapists that can help us with the feeding techniques, which then lead on to the speech techniques.

Speaker 1: We have also got some staff who have to be specially trained for feeding because of the difficulties they've got. And staff get training from the speech and language therapist on how to feed the pupils. There's also some children who are, are fed through a tube, - PEG fed - and, that takes liaison with the parents as to whether they want that to be done in private, or whether they want that to be done at the table so that they're integrating with their peers. A child with whom I work, very much is at the table with a yogurt in front of her that she can eat, should she want to eat it. And I think that's all builds into helping them developing eating in public and mixing with each other.

Speaker 3: So is she PEG fed in front of the other children or not?

Speaker 1: Yes. She's just put at the table - it's just routine now - she's just PEG fed. Her parents, that's what they want her to do. Obviously, you would discuss that with parents before you took her into the atrium but they do that when they're out.

Speaker 3: Do the other children accept that then?

Speaker 1: They just accept that that is part of her routine. And we just try and encourage her with the eating side of things. And whenever we do tasting in class, she's always offered it and she does now put things to her mouth. But again, it's not pushing her, it's letting her do it in her time.

Speaker 2: It is a lot safer. At one time most of these children were actually being fed from a spoon and there was always that danger that it would go down the wrong way. And there are far more that are actually tube fed now, and so they're thriving whereas before they weren't.