## Appendix 30

## Volunteers – The Secret Ingredient

Volunteers helping with meal times

Meal times can be hectic or very calm, depending on the mood and health of the students on any given day. Some of our students need to be tube fed, and this activity is only ever done by trained staff.

We try to establish a family like environment at meal times, where by the students sit together to eat their meals and chat or interact with each other. We try to keep the noise level down and have 1 person talking at once. We encourage them to collect their own food if possible, to take it to their table, undo their own bits and pieces and eat as independently as possible. Older students should be expected to heat their own food. You can teach them how to do this. Other students should be offered a choice of what to eat first. Always remember to offer a drink and try to encourage students to drink as much as possible. This is one of the most important aspects of the whole meal. When students have finished eating ask them to pack up, put rubbish in the bin, put their lunch box away and wipe their table down with a wet cloth. More able students can take the trays back to the kitchen. They may then play quietly in the room until playground duty staff arrive.

DO

* Put bibs on some students to protect their clothes
* Ask student to wash their hands
* Wear gloves yourself
* Put their uneaten food back into their lunch box, it tells their family what they have eaten.

Don’t

* Let them share or eat each other’s food
* Worry if they refuse to eat, they may not feel well, they may have eaten a lot at a previous meal
* Let them walk around with food in their hands or mouth