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## Healthy Eating Policy

### **1. Introduction**

This policy was drafted by the Health Promotion Committee which consisted of parents, pupils, members of the teaching staff and a nutritionist with expertise in childhood nutrition. This review of the previous Healthy Eating Policy took place to take account of some general feedback and suggestions from staff and parents. Our Parents Body were further consulted with questionnaires before it was ratified by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_.

### **2. Rationale**

As part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E.) Programme we encourage the children to become more aware of the need for healthy food in their lives. In view of the recent media emphasis on obesity and life style trends we feel it of vital importance to educate the children in our school to develop healthy eating habits for life and a healthy attitude towards food. By having this policy we aim to encourage and develop these healthy habits and encourage our pupils to make healthy choices in their everyday lives. Research has shown that inadequate nutrition impacts negatively on children's ability to learn and benefit from education. Proper nutrition can improve children's ability to concentrate, improve disruptive behaviour and encourage children to attend school.

### **3. Aims and Objectives**

- a) To support and encourage healthy eating habits in children which it is hoped will become lifelong eating habits.
- b) To help the children understand the link between a healthy diet and a healthy, active lifestyle
- c) To encourage children to experience a wide variety of foods
- d) To improve oral/ dental health
- e) To support the school's environmental policy in insisting on reusable containers, minimum use of wrappers etc.
- f) To ensure the safety of children with allergies
- g) To enable pupils to accept some personal responsibility for making wise food choices and adopting a healthy, balanced diet.
- h) To raise pupils' concentration levels at school through the consumption of healthy food.

### **4. Health Promoting Schools Committee**

As part of the Health Promoting School Program, one element of school life we are focussing on is Healthy Eating. The committee which is made up of principal, teachers, students and parents will help to promote healthy eating initiatives in the school. The students on the committee will be responsible for communicating ideas from the committee meetings to their own classes.



## 5. SPHE Curriculum and Healthy Eating Initiatives

Formal lessons, which address nutrition, digestion, good health habits, hygiene etc. The Healthy Lunch initiative is an ongoing, habit forming process, whereby the children accept that certain foods are more suitable than others at lunch time. Young children enjoy showing and discussing their lunch box contents and provide encouragement for each other to make it a successful project.

The food Dudes and Storm Troopers initiatives may also be further explored to help reinforce healthy eating habits.

There will be various initiatives during the year to encourage and reward healthy eating. These may include: Lunch Detectives (spot checks by HPS committee), Crunch and Sip (fruit/veg and water break at 10am), Fruit/Vegetable of the Week, Summer Salads, Oaty October and Food Art. Rewards may be given to children who make a considerate effort to follow the healthy eating policy of the school.

A qualified and experienced nutritionist will deliver informative talks to parents, staff and pupils in the 2016/17 school year.

## 6. Guidelines & Recommendations

Lunch is an important meal for school-going children. It should provide one third of their recommended daily allowance of nutrients without being high in saturated fat, sugar or salt. It should also provide dietary fibre (roughage).

Children and their parents should be aware of the sugar content in foods/drinks. Parents and children should read food labels themselves and be aware of the recommended daily intake values. These values are guidelines and actual values will vary depending on the age of the child, activity level etc.

The traditional packed lunch of water/ milk and sandwiches is under attack from a range of convenience foods like crisps, sweets, biscuits, chocolate, soft drinks, processed juices and cereal bars.

Parents and teachers are concerned about this trend but some find it difficult to come up with popular healthy alternatives. We ask you to encourage a healthy lunch right from the start. In our school, on a trial basis, we are introducing an **optional** treat **on a Friday only** and it is up to parents to decide whether or not they wish to give their children a treat. As with all food groups, appropriate portion size should be considered regarding the Friday treat. For example, funsize chocolate bars compared to standard one.

Exceptions may occur for the following reasons (but should apply sparingly):

- Celebratory Days such as Halloween/ Easter/ Christmas holidays, sports day, school trip, collective achievements etc.

Unfinished lunches are taken home. Children will be asked not to swap lunches or share food utensils/ drink containers in the interest of health and safety.

The following recommendations are designed to help parents provide quick, appetising, and nutritious lunches for their children:

Bread and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bread, rolls, bagels, pitta breads, baps (preferably wholemeal)</li><li>• Rice, pasta, quinoa, cous cous</li><li>• Scones</li><li>• Quiche</li><li>• Crackers</li></ul>
Fillings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lean meat: ham, chicken, beef, turkey</li><li>• Cheese</li><li>• Salad</li><li>• Tinned fish: tuna, sardines, salmon</li></ul>

Fruit and Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh fruit: apple, orange, banana, plum, pear, peach, berries, grapes (always slice lengthways for younger children), pineapple, melon</li> <li>• Vegetables: carrot sticks, cucumber, peppers, sweetcorn, sugar snaps, broccoli</li> </ul> <p>The vegetable intake of students in the school is particularly low. In line with the new food pyramid recommendations of 5-7 portions of fruit and vegetables per day, we would encourage parents to make a greater effort to increase the vegetable content in lunch boxes.</p>
Drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water and milk are the most tooth friendly drinks</li> <li>• Dilutable squashes (No Added Sugar)</li> <li>• Homemade fruit/vegetable smoothies</li> </ul>
Dairy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure to give your child 3-5 servings of dairy per day</li> <li>• 1 serving is any of the examples outlined here:</li> <li>• 1 glass of low fat milk (200ml)</li> <li>• 1 small yoghurt/fromage frais (125ml)</li> <li>• 1 piece of low fat cheese (25g)</li> </ul>

### **7. Drinking Plenty of Water**

Water is essential for life. Through perspiration (sweating), the body uses water to lower body temperature when it is warm. Regular drinks are necessary to replace fluid lost during the day. Without enough water or fluid in the short-term, the dehydration that results causes tiredness. Water is a tooth friendly drink. The more active a person is, the more fluid is needed to replace fluid lost as sweat. In hot weather, or if playing sports, children should bring extra water to school. Please ensure your child always has a water bottle in school with them.

### **8. Special Dietary Requirements**

Parents of children with special dietary requirements are required to make an appointment with the principal to discuss the implications of this policy.

### **9. Health and Safety**

**Peanuts, nuts, nutella, chocolate spreads and any foods containing traces of nuts** are not allowed in school under any circumstances. There are a number of pupils in school who suffer from moderate to severe nut allergies and we cannot take a risk with a child's life. We earnestly request your support in this matter.

### **10. Prohibited Foods**

The following foods are **not allowed** in school, even on a treat day.

- **Nuts and any foods containing traces of nuts such as nutella or similar chocolate spreads.**
- **Cereal bars**
- **Chewing gum**
- **Fizzy drinks**
- **Lollipops**
- **Popcorn**
- **Processed fruit juices (Capri-sun)**
- **Fruit winders**

Parents have a responsibility to provide lunches which do not include any of the prohibited foods and, if possible, to include variety. If children bring any of the above prohibited food or drink into school, they will be encouraged by the class teacher to keep it for home time.

## **11. Friday Treat**

In an effort to improve the contents of lunch boxes from Monday to Thursday and to promote the idea of a healthy balanced diet, an **optional** “Friday Treat” initiative has been introduced **on a trial basis** for the school. The portion size of this treat is vital-equivalent to approximately 100kcal. These treats are only allowed on a Friday.

Some examples of a Friday Treat are:

- Savoury treats: pancakes, crepe, croissant
- 1 plain mini muffin
- 1 chocolate biscuit
- 2 plain biscuits
- 1 chocolate/yoghurt covered rice cake
- 1 small size fun bar/packet of sweets
- Small homemade baked treats

## **12. Packing the Lunch Box**

All new parents received a healthy eating booklet in their induction pack. There are many more lunchbox tips and suggestions on the HSE website-see our website for links and more details.

Children's portion sizes have gotten bigger over the last 20-30 years. Children should be able to eat their lunches in a reasonable amount of time. Children should be able to unwrap and eat their lunches by themselves. It is not possible for teachers to open lunches in a classroom full of children. Please help by not giving products that they cannot open themselves e.g. foods with wrappers, unpeeled oranges etc. To save time, **please ensure all food is well prepared (e.g. fruit peeled and chopped if necessary and sandwiches cut)**.

Parents must ensure that lunch boxes contain whatever utensils are required.

As we are trying to reduce the amount of waste in the school, parents are encouraged to reduce the amount of packaging in their child's lunch box.

## **13. Roles and Responsibility**

- Parents/guardians have a responsibility to provide lunches which do not include any of the prohibited foods.
- Children have a responsibility to eat their own lunch and not to share food or drinks with others. This is extremely important particularly with regards to children who suffer from severe nut allergies.
- Teachers have a responsibility to provide adequate time in which the children can eat their lunches.
- Each class teacher will co-ordinate the progress of this policy and can encourage the children to bring healthy lunches and will praise those who do.

**Ultimately the responsibility for ensuring that children eat healthily lies with the Parent /Guardian of each child.**

### **Implementation**

This policy will be implemented from 24<sup>th</sup> April 2017.

### **Review**

The policy will be reviewed biennially by the school in consultation with the Parents Association Committee and Staff.

The Friday Treat Initiative will be rolled out on a trial basis and will be reviewed at the end of Term 3 2017.

### **Communication and Ratification**

The policy has been discussed and amended by the Health Promoting School's Committee and ratified by the board of management. It is communicated to each parent by means of our school information booklet which is distributed to each family as the children enrol in the school and referred to in the September Home –School Links Newsletter. It will also be made available on the school website for parents and a copy has been made available to staff.