



Healthy Eating Policy Review Update

Thank you to everyone for taking the time to respond to our consultation survey regarding our school healthy eating policy. It is valuable feedback and we really appreciate it. As parents and educators, we are all very conscious of the importance of our children's diet and how it impacts on their health, development and wellbeing.

By having this policy we aim to encourage and develop healthy eating habits and help our pupils achieve their full potential. Healthy eating provides the building blocks for lifelong health and wellbeing. Children spend a significant part of their day in school and therefore it is important that they eat healthy and nutritious lunches.

Our Healthy Eating Policy is formulated in consultation with pupils, parents and staff. The staff members involved underwent training with the HSE on school healthy eating policy formation and best practice.

Please also note the following that may help answer some questions that arose during the parental feedback process.

- We acknowledge it can be frustrating for children if their peers continue to bring lunch to school not in line with our policy. However, it is only through the partnership with parents that our policy can make a difference. We approach this policy with the understanding that ultimately children's appetites and tastes differ and it is the parents' responsibility to ensure that his/her child eats healthy at all times. If treats are brought to school Monday to Thursday, the children will be asked to keep them in their lunchboxes until home time.
- We will continue to ensure children are given adequate time to eat their lunch.
- The initial introduction of the Friday treat was introduced following consultation with the Health Promoting Schools committee of parents, pupils and teachers. It was to promote the idea of balance and healthy lunches by only bringing one small treat on Friday. This did help to improve healthy lunches throughout the rest of the week. Please note that this treat is "optional" and you should not feel obliged to give it. If you do give one, we recommend a treat sized portion (a mini size chocolate bar, small pack of jellies).
- We would kindly ask that you would avoid sending in sweets to mark your child's birthday.
- Children are taught about the importance of healthy eating and an active lifestyle in the curricular areas of SPHE and other subjects. The food pyramid is used to communicate the healthy eating message and it is a fun way to teach children about the different food groups and nutrients in each group.
- Food Dudes is a healthy eating programme supported by the Department of Education and the Department of Health. We have participated in this programme for many years. We can only take part in it when we are notified and it is our turn. As a whole, we have found it has encouraged the children to try a variety of fruit and vegetables.

We were very impressed with the valuable feedback we received from our pupil focus group. A number of elements from our healthy eating policy were discussed such as the Friday treat, time allocated for lunch, sweets used as rewards by teachers and there was a great debate over what food they consider to be healthy and nutritious.

During the next step of the process, we will redraft the policy taking all feedback into consideration. Once completed, the policy will be ratified by the Board. Thanks to everyone for their valuable input.