



Healthy Eating Policy

1. Introduction

This policy was revised by a committee consisting of parents, pupils and members of the school wellbeing team. This review of the previous Healthy Eating Policy took place to take account of some general feedback and suggestions from staff, pupils and parents. Our Parents Body were further consulted with questionnaires before it was ratified by the Board of Management on the 30th May 2023.

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. SPHE Curriculum and Healthy Eating Initiatives

Formal lessons, which address nutrition, digestion, good health habits, hygiene etc. are covered in all classes. These lessons encourage 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.

The Food Dudes initiative is also further explored to help reinforce the healthy eating habits which have prevailed for many years in the school.

5. Guidelines & Recommendations

- LUNCHES

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 we have 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. We kindly ask parents not to send in cake, party bags, sweets on their child’s birthday.

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

- Celebratory Days such as Halloween/ Easter/ Christmas holidays, sports day, school trips, 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">• Bread, rolls, bagels, pitta breads, baps (preferably wholemeal)• Rice, pasta, quinoa, cous cous• Scones• Quiche• Crackers
Fillings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lean meat: ham, chicken, beef, turkey• Cheese• Salad• Tinned fish: tuna, sardines, salmon

Fruit and Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh fruit: apple, orange, banana, plum, pear, peach, berries, grapes (always slice lengthways for all children), pineapple, melon • Vegetables: carrot sticks, cucumber, peppers, sweetcorn, sugar snaps, broccoli <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"> • Water and milk are favoured and are the most tooth friendly drinks. No fizzy drinks allowed. • Dilutable squashes (No Added Sugar) • Homemade fruit/vegetable smoothies • No smoothies/juice cartons/frubes (these are not ideal as children find these very difficult to open independently)
Dairy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure to give your child 3 servings of dairy per day 1 serving is any of the examples outlined here: • 1 glass of low fat milk (200ml) • 1 small yoghurt/fromage frais (125ml) • 1 piece of low fat cheese (25g)

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. Prohibited Foods

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

- **Nuts and foods containing traces of nuts such as nutella or similar chocolate spreads.**
- **Chewing gum**
- **Fizzy drinks**
- **Lollipops**

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.**

10. 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 is in place in 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:

- Bag of crisps
- Chocolate rice cakes
- funsize bar/jellies
- muffin/chocolate buns
- Biscuits

11. 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 following websites – www.healthpromotion.ie www.healthyireland.ie.

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. frubes, cartons of juice with straws, 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.

12. The Lunch Bag

The Lunch Bag is a healthy school delivery lunch service which is operating in our school. It is designed to empower children to make educated, healthy food choices. Using the Lunch Bag App parents can pre-order healthy varied lunches for their children.

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 June 2023.

Review

The policy will be reviewed every 3 years by the school in consultation with the Parents Association Committee and Staff.

Communication and Ratification

The policy has been discussed and amended following consultation and input from parents, pupils and staff. This policy was ratified by the board of management. It is communicated to each parent on our school website and regularly referred to in our termly 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.

Signed: _____ Chairperson BOM

Date: _____