

# Bunscoil Clochar Mhuire St Mary's Primary School

## HEALTHY EATING POLICY

### Rationale

As a health promoting school, this policy was formulated to promote healthy eating in our school. Healthy eating is an essential component of the overall health of children and, as such, is part of the holistic education that we advocate as part of our education philosophy. We wish to promote 'the personal development and well being of the child and to provide a foundation for healthy living in all its aspects'. (SPHE Guidelines)

Our aims are to :

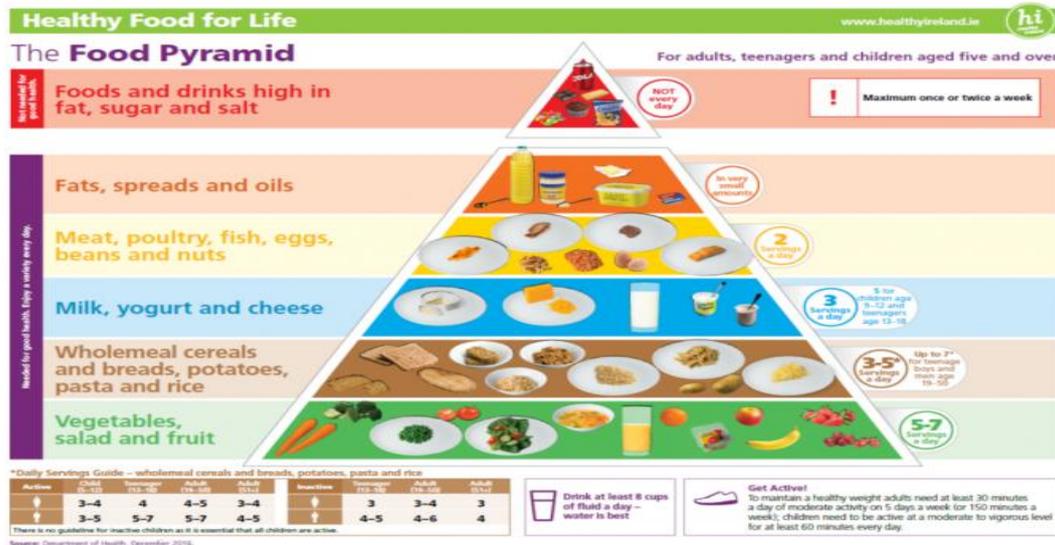
1. Educate the pupils on the types of food that they need to eat to achieve a healthy balanced diet
2. Encourage the pupils to make healthy food choices
3. Support and guide parents in their role as the main provider of food for their children

### Healthy Lunch Guidelines

Healthy food is important for the following reasons:

- Food is our only source of energy
- Children are growing and developing and need a good diet
- Food helps children to work well and improves concentration at school
- A balanced diet is important for our children's health
- Children who develop good eating habits will have them for life.

A third of the day's nutritional needs should be provided at lunchtime without being high in fat, sugar or salt.



**A healthy lunch box includes:**

- At least 2 portions from the bread, cereals group ie pitta bread, bagels, tortilla wrap, whole meal bread, crackers
- One portion from the meat and the meat alternatives group- cooked meat, eggs, hummus, tuna, salmon
- 2/3 portions from fruits and vegetables group
- One portion from the dairy products- cheese, milk, low fat yoghurt or natural yoghurt.

More ideas- [www.safefood.ie](http://www.safefood.ie)

The following “discouraged” foods **do not support** a healthy eating policy and should be excluded from your child’s lunch box:

**crisps, chewing gum, sweets, bars including cereal bars, cakes, biscuits, lollipops, chocolate, chocolate spread, winders, rice crispie buns and especially peanuts.**

## Nuts/ Nut Allergies

Due to the incidence of severe allergy to peanuts and mixed nuts amongst some pupils in our school, we ask parents/ guardians to be vigilant in the following:

- Avoid peanuts or any other type of nut in school lunches
- Avoid giving peanut butter sandwiches, chocolate spreads containing nuts such as Nutella, and nut based breads and cereal/health bars containing nuts
- Ask children not to share their lunches.

**A strict” Nut Free Zone” policy will be in place in classes with specific pupils with nut allergies .** This will be communicated to the parents/guardians concerned through our imlitr and email.

St. Mary’s cannot guarantee that all parents / guardians in our school will comply with the above and, for that reason, our school does not purport to be a “nut free school”.

## Healthy Snacks

Healthy snacks should be low in fat and sugars. Here are some ideas.

- Fruit (for example, an apple or banana, handful of grapes)
- Washed, raw vegetable pieces (for example, sticks of carrot, celery, pepper and cucumber.
- Half a tin of fruit (in its own juice)
- Plain breadsticks, unsalted plain or wholewheat crackers, crispbreads or water biscuits served with fruit or cheese.
- Plain rice cakes (not chocolate flavoured)
- Natural or low fat yogurt with fresh fruit (fresh, frozen or tinned in its own juice)
- Wholemeal or plain scones.
- Pot of custard or rice pudding.
- Pasta or rice
- Cheese
- Hummus
- Olives

Healthy snacks as listed above are encouraged in St. Mary’s throughout the whole week.

“**Try it Friday**” is a new initiative in our school where children are encouraged to try different healthy food, fruit or vegetables for lunch on Friday. The aim of this initiative is to support parents/ guardians in exposing their children to new healthy food.

Junior Infant children are advised against bringing yoghurts to school as they can be messy and difficult to manage.

## Healthy Drinks

Healthy drink choices include water and milk. Water is the most suitable drink for children to bring to school. Drinks are allowed throughout the day as required. Children should be encouraged to use re-useable containers for safety and recycling reasons ie flasks or plastic bottles. Cans and glass bottles are not permitted. Cartons are not recommended for junior classes.

## Environment

- Lunches are eaten in the classroom
- On sunny days they may also be eaten outside on the picnic benches/ outdoor classroom
- Food is not allowed to be consumed in the yard at break time
- Water fountains are also provided in the school both internally and externally for additional access to drinking water
- Unhealthy foods ie sweets, crisps are not permitted to be consumed in the yard before school
- The school garden will be used to educate children on cultivating herbs and vegetables

- The Health Promoting Board will display nutritional advice.

## **Curriculum and Learning**

Educating children about food and nutrition through consistent and age appropriate delivery of healthy eating messages is essential, and the SPHE curriculum plays a key role in this. The empowerment of children with knowledge, understanding and skills is important so that children will be enabled to make appropriate food choices and develop a positive attitude to food and diet related issues (Butriss, 2002).

### **S.P.H.E**

- Strand Unit: Taking Care of my Body; Food and Nutrition  
(Curriculum: J.Infants-6th Class)

- Making Choices (see Teacher Guidelines pp11-13)

The SPHE curriculum, over an eight year continuum, introduces children to the key concepts of nutrition, food choices, healthy eating, and hygiene. A whole school approach ensures that messages conveyed in the classroom are reinforced in practice and translated into healthy food choices within the school setting and beyond.

### **SCIENCE:**

- Strand: Living Things ; Strand Unit: Myself: Human life Processes  
(Curriculum: J.Infants -6th class) ( see Teacher Guidelines p.10-11)

**Be Healthy Week** – will focus on healthy eating and nutrition.

Each class teacher will display their copy of the food pyramid in the classroom. Each teacher will discuss the food pyramid with their class and brainstorm ideas for healthy lunches.

The food pyramid will be referred to regularly during the school year.

Education on food and drink labels will take place in senior classes to enable pupils to make informed nutritional choices between different products.

Information for parents/guardians on healthy lunches will be displayed on the school website. Safe food healthy lunch leaflets will be distributed to every family.

The school will participate in available suitable healthy eating programmes.

### **Oral Health**

Oral health education will be taught as part of our SPHE curriculum under the Strand- Taking Care of my Body.

Children will be explicitly taught the link between unhealthy food/ sugary drinks and poor oral health.

The school will participate in Oral Health programmes available eg Mighty Mouths School Programme.

## **Rewards**

The goal of rewarding is to help children internalise desirable behaviour so external rewards are not needed.

The Most Effective Rewards are:

- **intrinsic** (the behaviour itself results in good feelings)
- **extrinsic**, the rewards
  - Are related to the behaviour
  - Fit naturally into the context and **mission of a classroom**
  - Are given promptly after the positive behaviour occurs

In St Mary's healthy non food class rewards will be given to pupils. See appendix attached for suggestions.

On Sports Day healthy refreshments will be provided by the Parents' Association.

## **Exceptions**

Exceptions to our Healthy Eating Policy can be made if a child has specific dietary requirements that have been brought to the attention of the class teacher.

Class parties at the end of school terms, treats on school tours and celebration days are permitted at the discretion of the class teacher. However a limit should be placed on the amount of treats the child will be allowed to bring in. Fizzy drinks should be excluded.

## **Monitoring and Implementation of Policy**

A consistent whole school approach will be used to monitor and implement our Healthy Eating Policy. If a child, brings any “discouraged” food or drink already listed to school (fizzy drink, crisps, sweets, chocolate bars, chewing gum etc) it will be taken away from them for the duration of the school day. The item will be returned to the child at the end of the day and the child will be reminded of our policy. The parents/guardians of the child will also be informed through a note in the child’s diary or orally. If a child has no other food to eat, they may be permitted to eat the food or the school will provide a scone and drink.

If a child persists in bringing unhealthy food to school a letter will be send home. This will include information on what food is not permitted as part of a child’s lunch, the reasons why a healthy lunch is important and also information on healthy lunch ideas for the parent/guardian of the children.

## **Responsibilities**

The designated Healthy Food Policy coordinator is Sinéad Minogue.

### **Role of the coordinator:**

- Ensure that staff and parents are informed about the healthy eating policy, and that the policy is implemented effectively
- Liaise with external agencies regarding the healthy eating education programme and ensure that all adults who work with children on these issues are aware of the school policy and work within this framework
- Encourages positive role models amongst the staff by encouraging healthy options for staff lunches and celebrations.

### **Role of the Parent/Guardian**

- Provide a healthy, well-balanced lunch for their child. Maybe plan for the next day’s lunch the day before to avoid compromising on nutrition
- Encourage healthy eating
- Inform the school in writing, of any child’s special dietary needs
- Assist in the implementation of school policy by not allowing their child to bring fizzy drinks, crisps, sweets, chocolate bars, chewing gum, “Fast Food” or other junk food to school
- Avoid sending in party bags or treats when birthdays occur
- To follow the Green-Schools guidelines, reduce packaging and re-use bottles and lunchboxes where possible.

### **Role of the Child**

- To eat their lunch.
- To bring home any uneaten lunch.
- To help make their lunches and remind parents of the Healthy Eating Policy.
- Avoid bringing in fizzy drinks, crisps, sweets, chocolate bars, chewing gum, “Fast Food” or other junk food to school.
- To follow the Green Schools guidelines by keeping wrappings to a minimum and to bring home their rubbish and all uneaten food.

### **Role of the School/ Teacher**

- To promote and encourage healthy eating.
- To act as a good role model with their own healthy lunches and food choices.

- To provide a consistent programme of cross-curricular nutrition education.
- If a child brings a “discouraged” food or drink to school, they will not be allowed to eat them while in school.
- To teach lessons advising pupils on diet, lifestyle, fitness etc.
- If a child presents at school without a lunch parents/guardians will be contacted by phone.
- If a child presents at school without lunch consistently then the class teacher should :
  - i. Keep a record of the incidents.
  - ii. Write a note in the child’s diary to inform the parents/guardians.
  - iii. Orally inform the child’s parents/guardians through a phone call or meeting.
  - iv. Inform the D.L.P. Mrs Nally.

## **Resources**

www.safefood.ie  
 www.dentalhealth.ie  
 www.healthpromotion.ie  
 www.agriaware.ie  
 www.fooddudes.ie  
 Walk Tall Programme

## **Health Promoting Schools Committee**

**Teachers:** Cólín O’ Coigh, Siobhán Nally, Sinéad Minogue, David Galligan, Eimear Murray, Elaine Magiure, Lorraine Cullinane, Barbara Mulvihill, Rebecca Marmion, Méabh Coakley, Joanne Kennedy.

**Student reps. :** Alexandra Leech, Katie Travers, Sara Harten, Kate Rogers, Aimee Corcoran, Gabriela Dudek, Aoibhinn Diamond, Odiosa Lynam, Aidan Williams, Cian Buckley

**Parent reps. :** Denise Watson, Gráinne Kelly, Deirdre McDermott

## **Success Criteria**

Evaluation of the effectiveness of the policy will be conducted through:

- Continued observation
- Reduction in the number of incidents where children are bringing “discouraged” foods and drinks to school
- Increased awareness among children on healthy eating
- Children making healthy food choices
- Feedback from parents / guardians
- End of year review and recommendations.

## **Timeframe for Review**

This policy has been revised by Sinéad Minogue after consultation with staff, parents students and external training. This policy will be referred to regularly in individual classrooms. Teachers will monitor the progress of the policy in their own classrooms. It will be reviewed every two years and updated as necessary.

## **Ratification and Communication**

This policy will be communicated to the parents/guardians of pupils in St. Mary's through email, our school intranet, our school website and through the Health Promoting Schools Board. Information will also be included in the handbook for new parents/guardians and in the Homework Journals.

This policy will be communicated to all pupils by each class teacher and referred to regularly during the course of the school year.

Comments and suggestions are invited from the pupils, parents/guardians, staff and Board of Management .

# Alternatives to Food as a Reward

## Recognition

- Recognise the student's achievement during assemblies or on the school website
- Create a photo recognition board
- Give a certificate of recognition/achievement

## Privileges

- Go first
- Choose a class activity
- Help the teacher
- Enjoy extra break with a friend
- Make deliveries to the office
- Have a teacher read a special book to the class
  
- Get "free choice" time at the end of the day
- Select a book from the library
- Sit with a friend

## Rewards for a Class

- Allow extra playtime in the playground
- Provide extra PE, art, music, or reading time
- Dance to music
- Play a game (i.e., reading or phonic board game)
  
- Eat lunch in a special place
- Go to the yard first
- Hold class outdoors
- Show a fun video