



St. Finnachta's NS Sixmilebridge Co. Clare

# Healthy Eating Policy

## 1. Introduction

This policy was drafted by the Healthy Eating Policy Review Committee which consisted of parents, members of the teaching staff, an independent chairperson and a nutritionist specialising 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.

The re-drafted policy was made available to parents and school staff for further consultation before being 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. 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 help pupils establish a healthy lifestyle that we hope they continue into adulthood
- 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 reduce litter and encourage recycling by encouraging children to be aware, alert and responsive to litter problems caused by for example non-reusable drinks containers and tin foil.

- 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. 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 explored to help reinforce healthy eating habits.

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

#### **5. 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 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 and soft drinks.

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 allow a 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. **See nos. 8 & 9 below.**

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

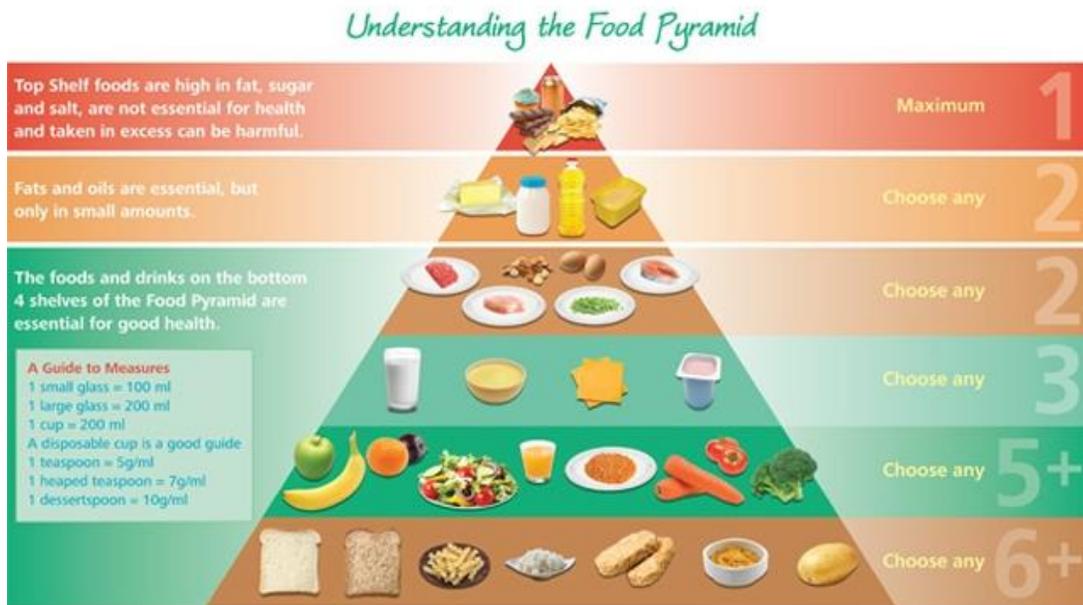
- Celebratory Days such as Hallowe'en/ Easter/ Christmas holidays, sports day, school trip etc.
- Reward treats may be given to pupils for collective/ individual achievements.

Unfinished lunches are taken home. Children will be asked not to swap lunches or share food utensils/ drink containers.

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

<b>Bread &amp; Alternatives</b>	<b>Savouries/ Savoury Fillings</b>
Bread or rolls, preferably whole meal Rice Pasta Potato Salad Wholemeal Scones Bagels Pitta Bread/ Baps	Lean Meat Chicken/ Turkey Cheese Tinned Fish e.g. tuna/ sardines Quiche
<b>Fruit &amp; Vegetables</b>	<b>Drinks</b>
Apple; Banana; Peach; Mandarin; Orange Segments; Fruit Salad; Dried Fruit; Plum; Pineapple Pieces; Grapes; Cucumber; Sweet Corn; Tomato; Carrot Sticks	Water or Milk are the most tooth friendly drinks Dilutable Squashes (No added Sugar)

A very simple approach to healthy eating is to use the Food Pyramid:



## 6. A word about Dairy

Primary school children aged up to 8 years should choose any three servings each day from the dairy shelf of the food pyramid. Children aged 9-18 years need five servings a day.

Depending on the age of the child, 1 serving is for example:

- 1 large glass (200ml) low fat or low fat fortified milk
- 1 small carton yogurt (125ml)
- 1 small carton fromage frais
- 25g/1oz (matchbox size piece) of low fat cheddar
- 1 portion of milk pudding made with a large glass low fat milk

This ensures that they get enough calcium, which is essential for healthy bones and teeth. If your child does not drink milk at lunch, encourage him/ her to have a carton of healthy yoghurt or a small helping of cheese instead. Milk is a rich source of protein, calcium, vitamins and minerals.

## 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.

## **8. Foods/ products not allowed in school**

- a) Crisps, chewing gum and fizzy drinks are not allowed
- b) Peanuts, nutella, chocolate spread or any foods containing nuts or traces of nuts are not allowed under any circumstances. There are a number of pupils in school who have a nut allergy
- c) Popcorn can create a big mess in classrooms and is not allowed
- d) Lollipops
- e) Chocolate products, cereal bars & sweets (except as a Friday treat)
- f) Coated rice cakes (except as Friday treat)
- g) Fruit juices (except as a Friday treat – to protect teeth)

If children bring any of the above prohibited food or drink into school they will be asked by the class teacher to bring it home.

## **9. Foods not recommended in school**

- a) Biscuits (except as a Friday treat)
- b) Cakes, buns and pastries (except as a Friday treat)
- c) Coated Rice Cakes (except as a Friday treat)
- d) Fruit winders
- e) Hot drinks – particularly younger pupils who may suffer spills and burns
- f) Other foods high in sugar, salt or fat.

## **10. Special Dietary/ Medical Requirements**

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

## **11. Packing the Lunch Box**

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 require.

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. School Meals Scheme**

The School Meals Programme operated by the Department of Social Protection provides funding towards provision of food services for pupils in participating schools.

The School Meals Programme aims to provide regular, nutritious food to children to take full advantage of the education provided for them. The School Meals Programme is an important component of policies to encourage school attendance and extra educational achievement by children, particularly those from the most disadvantaged background. The menus are changed regularly to bring children healthy, nutritious and tasty food.

When choosing from the menu children and parents should consider the following:

- Foods/ products not allowed at the school (see no. 8 above)
- Foods not recommended (see no. 9 above)

One small treat may be selected from the treat category on the Friday menu.

Updated menus will be made available to pupils and parents once this policy is ratified and ready for implementation.

## **13. Roles and Responsibility**

Each class teacher will co-ordinate the progress of this policy and can encourage the children to bring healthy lunches but ultimately the responsibility for ensuring that children eat healthily lies with the Parent /Guardian of each child.

## **Implementation**

This policy will be implemented from \_\_\_\_\_.

## **Review**

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

## **Communication and Ratification**

The policy has been discussed and amended by the parents association 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 enroll 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.

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