



Nutrition Policy

Adopted by Board of Management: 31st May 2016

Reviewed on: 23rd January 2023

Signed: Margaret Lennon (Chairperson)

1.0 Introductory Statement

The focus of this policy is to support parents and pupils in relation to eating and drinking healthily from an early age.

Aims

The overall aim of this policy is to promote the consumption of healthy food and drinks.

Specifically, the policy aims:

- to develop healthy eating habits
- to help pupils improve concentration, learning and energy levels through consumption of nutritional food and drinks in school
- to support parents and children to make healthy decisions around food and drinks
- to develop nutritional awareness, i.e. ingredients in food
- to improve dental hygiene and raise awareness of how food choices influence dental health
- to enable the pupil to accept some responsibility for healthy lunch choices.

2.0 Healthy Lunch Guidelines

Snacks: Try fruit, chopped raw vegetables, seeds, hummus, wholemeal muffins, scones, standard yogurts (natural or greek preferably), fromage frais, **plain** rice cakes, crackers, sugar free jelly.

Drinks: Pupils are encouraged to bring a bottle of water to school. Pure unsweetened juices or well- diluted sugar free squashes may be included, but only as part of the main lunch meal. Pupils are encouraged to drink the milk provided by the school.

Lunch: Try whole grain breads, rolls, bagels, tortilla wraps, pitta bread, oatcakes, crackers, pasta, rice. Sandwich fillings include: cheese, cold meats (chicken, turkey, ham), fish, salad.

Note: Where possible try to give children **WHOLE** food, i.e. preferably unprocessed and natural without added sugars, Read the food labels, avoid high sugars and trans fats.

We ask that children **NEVER** bring the following to school:

- crisps
- fizzy drinks
- chewing gum
- chewy/sticky bars
- popcorn
- lollipops

2.1 Optional Friday Treat

Pupils have the option of a small treat on Fridays only. Treats should be small in size, as it is known that treat foods are high in sugar, fat and salt.

Sample treat foods/Size guide: 2 biscuits/mini muffin/fun size treat/home baked confectionary/cereal bar/ 2 chocolate or yoghurt covered rice cakes.

If treat foods are included as part of a pupil's lunch Monday to Thursday pupils will be asked to bring them home and the milk and fruit, already provided by the school, will be made available to them where possible.

2.2 Special Occasions

Sweet treats are permitted on special occasions such as the class school tour and end-of-term parties. Occasions for sweet treats are decided at the discretion of the class teacher and school. These are kept to a minimum.

When refreshments are provided at school-related events, the school should ensure that healthy choices are also on offer – e.g. Holy Communion party, Graduation party.

Sweet treats for birthdays such as cakes, buns, sweets, party bags, etc. should be kept for home celebrations. In the school setting, there may be so many birthdays that sweet treats would be available nearly every day and it puts undue pressure on parents.

2.3 Food Allergies

There are a number of pupils presenting with nut or fish allergies. At the start of the school year parents of the particular class in question will be advised of this and asked not to include fish or nut products in their daughters' lunchboxes. These classrooms where pupils have allergies will be kept nut or fish free.

3.0 Green School

As we are a Green School and also to assist parents to gauge how much lunch is being eaten, children are asked to take home all uneaten food in their lunchboxes and put fruit peels only in the compost bin.

4.0 Implementation

This policy will be communicated to all parents. It is recommended to be read in conjunction with our information leaflet on healthy eating (see attached)

5.0 Review

This policy will be reviewed in January 2025 and every two years thereafter. The policy will be communicated to the school community. It will also be available for download from our school website.

Appendix 1

Information Sheet for Parents

Research indicates a strong link between diet and performance and that healthy young people are more likely to learn more effectively.

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). We ask you to encourage a healthy lunch right from the start.

We provide fruit free of charge to the pupils in our school three days per week.

DRINKS

Milk and water are tooth-friendly. These are the best drinks for children and should be given during and between meals. Try to keep unsweetened fruit juice for meal times. Remember to look at labels when buying drinks to make sure you are making a tooth-friendly choice.

Did you know there is a big difference between fruit 'juices' and fruit 'drinks'? Fruit 'drinks' contain a fruit flavour only and lots of added sugar. Pure fruit 'juices' have lots of healthy fruit juice and no added sugar.

BE SUGAR SMART

Harmful sugars hidden in foods are not easy to identify. If you look at ingredient labels you might be surprised that products saying 'no artificial additives', 'low fat', or 'healthy' may contain a large amount of added sugar. The sugar names are: sucrose, glucose, corn syrup, fructose, maltose, dextrose and fruit sugar. Products labelled as being 'low in sugar' may only be low in sucrose sugar and high in other sugars! Some products saying 'no added sugar' may contain fruit sugars instead of sucrose and can still be harmful.

Extracted from Mighty Mouth Infant Curriculum which was developed by the Dental Health Foundation of Ireland in collaboration with HSE.

Did you know? Raisins should be eaten as part of the main lunch only. They contain too much sugar to be eaten without other food.

Sugar is now widely recognised as the number 1 cause of obesity and T2 diabetes as it completely dysregulates appetite. Children and young adults are becoming obese at a much younger age than 10 and 20 years ago. Added sugar is widespread in the food that is marketed at our children and should be reduced if at all possible. Even very active children cannot outrun a bad diet. The number one cause of mild and severe pain in young children is from tooth decay which is caused by sugar exposure.

CALCIUM

Growing children should get approximately one pint of milk a day, or its equivalent as cheese, yogurt, etc. This ensures that they get enough calcium, which is essential for healthy bones and teeth. A cheese sandwich, yogurt or yogurt drinks or homemade milkshakes can help provide important calcium. Rice pudding and custard can also be a source of milk.

We provide milk free of charge to the pupils in our school.

NOTE: Updates on new Food Pyramid include a change to the milk, yogurt and cheese shelf: **now 5 servings daily for 9-18 years and 3 servings up to age 9 years.** .

Research tells us... National Children's Food Survey (5-12 year olds)(2003-2004) 37% of girls had inadequate calcium intakes. National Teens Food Survey (2005-2006) 42% of girls had inadequate calcium intakes.

Extracts of this leaflet reproduced from:

Healthy Toothy Drinks produced by Community Nutrition and Dietary Service & Dental Service, H.S.E., Dublin Mid –Leinster

HI – Healthy Ireland - HealthPromotingSchools: Information for Schools – Schools for Health in Europe and HSE

Healthy Eating Policy Development Training – hi (Healthy Ireland) and HSE.

Useful Website Links

www.healthpromotion.ie

www.safefood.eu

www.irishheart.ie

www.dentalhealth.ie