



Scoil Náisiúnta Mhuire,
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Healthy Eating Policy

Introductory Statement

Scoil Náisiúnta Mhuire, Bawnmore, aims to help all those involved in the school community to develop positive and responsible attitudes to eating, and to appreciate the contribution that good food makes to one's health. As part of the Social Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E.) Programme and in consultation with the HSE we encourage the children to become more aware of the need for healthy food in their lunch boxes.

Rationale

The food we eat has a major effect on our general health and well being and especially so in the case of children. Healthy eating enhances health and allows children to take advantage of the education provided and to engage fully in daily activities. Research indicates a strong link between diet and performance (e.g. a low sugar intake promotes concentration, lessens hyperactivity, protects teeth and lessens the risk of diabetes. A low salt intake reduces the risk of heart disease in later life). To promote healthy eating habits in our school, we are introducing this healthy eating policy which is based on existing good practice.

Aims

1. To improve the nutrition standard and eating habits of all in the school
2. To provide a foundation for healthy living by encouraging healthy eating patterns and thereby educating children for later life
3. To clarify the school's position on foods encouraged /discouraged
4. To ensure that parents and teachers are giving consistent messages about healthy eating
5. To act as a guideline for any new staff or families joining the school.

Objectives

1. To enable the child to appreciate the importance of good nutrition for growing and developing and staying healthy.

2. To enable the child to accept some personal responsibility for making wise food choices and adopting a healthy balanced diet.
3. To encourage the child to eat a variety of healthy foods.

Guidelines

Establishing good eating habits in childhood is extremely important, as this will establish life long patterns – and with childhood obesity on the increase, we as parents and educators must promote a healthy message about food. Healthy eating habits begin at home but we can support and encourage good eating habits at school too. Making healthy food choices enables children to take full advantage of the opportunity to learn and play during the school day.

The traditional packed lunch of milk and sandwiches is under attack from a range of convenience foods like crisps, sweets, biscuits, chocolate and soft drinks. We ask you to provide a healthy lunch from the time your child first starts school but realize that it can be difficult to come up with popular alternatives.

The following guide is designed to help you provide quick, appetising and nutritious lunches for your children.

Foods Encouraged in School

Bread and Alternatives - Bread or rolls, preferably wholemeal or wholegrain, rice, pasta – wholegrain, potato salad, fruit or wholemeal scones and pitta breads. These foods provide carbohydrates which are converted into energy and help sustain the child throughout the day. They provide essential dietary fibre (roughage).

All Fruit and Vegetables – carrot sticks, apples, banana, peach, mandarins, orange segments, fruit salad, dried fruit, plums, pineapple cubes, grapes, strawberries, kiwis, cucumber, sweet corn, tomato, coleslaw and lettuce. (Fruit and vegetables with skins should be peeled for younger children) This group of foods provides vitamins necessary for healthy hair and skin and helps fight infections.

Savouries - lean meat, chicken/turkey, tinned fish e.g. tuna/sardines, salmon, cheese sticks, quiche. This food group is referred to as the dairy group and provides protein and calcium for growing bones and strong teeth

Drinks - Milk, water, fruit juices, low sugar squashes, unsweetened fruit juices. Intake of liquid is important to keep the body hydrated.

Try to vary foods selected from each group for a varied and well balanced diet. As a general guideline one item may be selected from each food group. The food taken to school is an important meal for school going children. Lunch should provide one third of children's daily allowance of nutrients.

Food discouraged in school:

Foods that have a lot of artificial additives and colouring or lots of sugar content are not recommended for school lunches. As a general rule try to avoid processed foods which contain high sodium content (check ingredients). Here are some specific foods we discourage:

- Fizzy drinks/ sports drinks
- Crisps, sweets, chewing gum
- Processed cakes, buns, biscuits, bars

Treat Foods

Parents and teachers may give treats to the children on special occasions such as-

- End of term parties
- Halloween
- School trips or events
- Teachers may choose to give a sweet treat to their own class on special occasions also. Sweet treats to reward children's progress and good behaviour when used with discretion will not interfere with the health of the children.

Benefits of Healthy Eating:

Healthy eating can ensure healthy living by providing for the child's nutrient needs leading to stronger growth and development.

Healthy eating can help improve the personal development of your child through improved performance in class and at play.

Success Criteria

The success of this policy will be evident from the contents of the children's lunches.

Roles and Responsibilities

Role of Parents

- Provide a healthy well-balanced lunch for children
- Try to be aware of your child's likes and dislikes regarding food
- Encourage children to eat healthily
- Involve you child in discussing, preparing and selecting healthy foods for their lunch the night before
- Provide manageable portions and easily opened packaging and prepare food for eating for very young children e.g. peel oranges, segment and seal grapes etc.
- Support the school in implementing this policy by not placing chewing gum, crisps, chocolate bars/biscuits or sweets in the lunch box
- That lunch be part of a well balanced diet at home
- Consider the nutritional content of food – examine packaging and labeling
- Inform the school if your child has a medical condition which requires a special diet

Pupils' Suggestions for Parents:

- Tell parents to eat healthily

- Tell parents to buy healthy food
- Tell parents to cut down on buying sweets
- Remind parents to give good lunches with healthy foods in them

Role of Children:

- To eat their lunch and bring home any uneaten lunch
- To help make their lunches and remind parents of the Healthy Eating Policy
- Not to bring foods to school such as chewing gum, crisps, chocolate bars or sweets
- To bring home all wrapping, cartons and drinks' bottles etc.

Pupils' Suggestions for Pupils:

- Eat healthy food
- Bring in healthy food in their lunch boxes
- Help Mum prepare their lunch box
- Don't bring food to school that is not allowed
- Tell other children about healthy food

Role of Staff:

- To promote and encourage healthy eating, food pyramid information and food tasting (S.P.H.E. curriculum)
- To lead by example by bringing healthy lunches to school
- To provide praise and affirmation for pupils with healthy lunches by making suitable positive comments on such lunchboxes.
- Where children have consistently poor lunches parents will be contacted with a view to arranging more nutritious food.

Pupils' Suggestions for Staff:

- Put up posters telling about healthy foods
- Have a healthy eating motto "Eat healthily and be fitter"
- Have food tasting day

Implementation:

This policy is being implemented on the basis of existing good practice in relation to healthy eating in school.

Review, Ratification and Communication:

This policy will be reviewed periodically. It will be ratified by the Board of Management following consultation with all the partners.

Signed: _____ **Chairperson, BOM**

