

St Mary's Primary School Healthy Eating Policy

Introduction

As part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Programme, we at St Mary's Primary School encourage our children to become more aware of the need for healthy food in their lunch boxes.

What people eat is known to be a key factor influencing health. Research indicates a strong link between diet and performance. For example; 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.

We believe that adults (staff, parents and carers) should be good role models and should support the children in understanding how balanced nutrition contributes to a person's health, happiness and general well-being.

The school is aware that the primary role model in children's healthy eating education lies with parents. We wish to build a positive and supportive relationship with the parents of children at our school through mutual understanding, trust and co-operation. In promoting this objective we will:

- Inform parents about the school healthy eating policy and practice
- Encourage parents to be involved in reviewing school policy and making modifications to it, as required

The policy is guided by the Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum under the strand unit *Taking Care of My Body* alongside the HSE Healthy Eating Policy toolkit for Primary Schools,(2019). Both the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice and the Healthy Lifestyle Circular 13/2016 support the schools work in the area of promoting Healthy Eating.

School Vision

Our school values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. We recognise that SPHE is intrinsic to the learning and teaching that occurs both formally and informally in the school and in the classroom. This policy encourages children to be aware of what makes a healthy and balanced diet and encourages them to take some responsibility for their actions as members of the school and the wider community. Parents have the primary role in the social, personal and health education of their children so their involvement in the promotion of healthy eating amongst the children is significant.

The Team

This policy was developed by the special policy committee responsible for healthy eating, the SPHE postholder, the principal and deputy principal in consultation with the school staff, parents and the children of St. Mary's P.S

Aims:

- To take a whole school approach to healthy eating in school, in relation to: the Culture and Environment, Curriculum (Teaching and Learning), Policy and Planning, Relationships and Partnerships.
- To promote healthy eating across school life, consistent with national healthy eating guidelines and school curriculum
- To ensure that food provision in school reflects the ethical and medical requirements of staff and pupils, e.g. religious, ethnic, vegetarian, medical and allergenic needs.
- To make the provision and consumption of food an enjoyable and safe experience.

Objectives

- To enable each child to appreciate the importance of good nutrition for growing and developing and staying healthy
- To enable each child to accept some personal responsibility for making wise food choices and adopting a healthy, balanced diet

Curriculum/Education

There are many opportunities in the primary school curriculum for learning about the importance of living a healthy

The importance of balanced nutrition and healthy food choices is explicitly taught through the SPHE curriculum. Food and Nutrition is an important part of the Strand Unit: *Taking Care of My Body* at each class level and is taught each year.

These themes are also dealt with in other subjects such as Science and a copy of the healthy food pyramid is on display in every classroom and in central focal points around the school.

Healthy eating day/week is held regularly.

As part of our environmental awareness programme and in keeping with our Green schools status lunches should be packed in recyclable boxes avoiding the use of packaging. All litter and uneaten food are to be taken home.

External agencies will support us, in line with the guidelines in Department of Education and Skills Circular 0042/2018.

Participation in initiatives from outside agencies (e.g. Food Dudes etc) that promote healthy eating are regularly considered and adopted when suitable.

Postholders and staff with responsibility for leading SPHE and Healthy eating initiatives will attend and receive training from external agencies as required.

Guidance on Healthy Eating in general and on lunches

(Please see healthy eating guidelines at the end of this policy)

Pupils should be encouraged to have a role in preparing their own lunches and meals to promote responsibility or their own health and nutrition.

Water

We encourage children to bring in a water bottle (that can be recycled) so they can have access to water throughout the day. Hydration is important for concentration. Children are encouraged to drink water throughout the day. Drinking tap water is available in each classroom. Staff have access to drinking water in the staffroom.

We ask that children do not bring the following to school:

Snacks known to be high in sugar, saturated fat, salt, additives and preservatives, including the following:

- Crisps (including crisp-style snacks)
- Fizzy drinks (including fizzy fruit-flavoured water, juices, etc)
- Sweets or bars
- Cake/s
- Chocolate biscuits/bars
- Cereal bars (these can often contain as much sugar as chocolate bars)
- Chewing gum
- Fruit winders
- Fast food that would require reheating

In taking a proactive approach to healthy lunches, teachers will occasionally praise or positively reinforce children who can show a piece of fruit or other healthy foods in their lunchboxes.

If a teacher observes a child's lunch is frequently not in line with the school's healthy eating policy, the children will be reminded of appropriate lunch food and/or parents may be contacted.

Time for eating

Children are allowed a sufficient amount of time for eating in the classroom before going out on the yard. Eating time is always factored into official break and lunch times and a balance of eating time and social time is always encouraged.

Rewards and celebratory events

A Culture of healthy eating is promoted and there is positive modelling by adults in the school. Generally, non-food rewards are promoted in the classrooms e.g. stickers, dojo points etc. However, occasionally and if deemed appropriate, children may receive a jelly or small treat. At special occasions such as Hallowe'en, Christmas, Pancake Tuesday, Easter etc the children may make or receive treats promoting moderation. Birthdays are not celebrated with food in school and cakes from home are not permitted to be shared with other children while in school.

Communication and ratification- how so we share messages with others?

St Mary's PS Healthy Eating Guidelines sheet (which summarises best healthy eating practice) is given out to all parents of new children to the school and sent as a reminder electronically to all families at regular intervals

Other Considerations

Allergies

The school community is aware of the possibility of food allergies within the school population, particularly **nut** allergies. Parents or carers of children who are on special diets for medical reasons, or who have allergies, will be asked to provide as much information as possible about which foods are suitable or foods which must be avoided. This information will be relayed to all staff.

There is a total ban on nuts and nut products due to serious allergies of some pupils.

Children with Additional Needs

All pupils are required to engage with the school's healthy eating policy. However, the school recognises that children with additional needs may have sensory needs or aversions to certain flavours and textures. Cognitive development is considered and professional advice from outside experts will be invaluable in supporting children's dietary needs.

The teachers will work closely with home to ensure that every measure and effort is continuously made to support a child with healthy eating. (tasting plates, baking and food making, lessons on food groups etc)

Roles and Responsibilities:

Role of Parents:

- Provide a healthy well-balanced lunch for children
- Encourage healthy eating
- Inform the school of any child's special dietary needs
- To implement school policy by not allowing their children to bring chewing gum, crisps, chocolate bars or sweets to school except on treat day.

Role of Children:

- To eat their lunch
- To bring home any uneaten lunch
- To help make their lunches and remind parents of the Healthy Lunch Policy and Guidelines
- Not to bring chewing gum, crisps, chocolate bars or sweets to school except on treat days.

Role of School Staff

- To promote and encourage healthy eating.
- To educate children by teaching the appropriate content from the curriculum.

Ratification

This Policy was ratified by the BOM on 17/05/2023

Review and Evaluation

The policy will be reviewed regularly using a variety of sources -for example, 'Policy Review Checklist', group surveys and focus groups to help decide what changes (if any) may be needed over time.

St. Mary's P.S. Healthy Eating Guidelines

- St. Mary's is a **NUT FREE** school. Please **do not** include nuts or nut-related products (e.g., **Nutella or Peanut Butter**) in any child's lunch for the health and safety of children who have allergies.



- A healthy lunchbox includes a helping of food from the first four shelves of the **food pyramid**. (see overleaf for suggestions on lunchbox items)
- Children will be encouraged to have **PLASTIC** water bottles **WITH LIDS ATTACHED** for water breaks throughout the day. At breaktime and lunchtime, water or healthier choices of drink are allowed. Sugary, fizzy drinks are **not** permitted in school
- Sugary foods, sweets, crisps, chewing gum and processed hot fast food are **not permitted** in lunchboxes. The class teacher should be informed if your child has specific or restricted dietary requirements.
- Parents should involve the children in the creation of interesting and varied lunches.
- A "Healthy Eating Awareness Week" will be held regularly, and healthy eating is discussed in class lessons each year as part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum
- Food should be manageable and presented appropriately for the child's age, e.g., fruit cut into small pieces.
- Any uneaten food and wrappers should always be taken home each day

While all pupils are required to engage with the healthy eating policy, the school recognises that children with additional needs may have sensory needs or aversions to certain flavours or textures. Cognitive development is considered and professional advice from outside experts will be invaluable in supporting children's dietary needs.

The teachers work closely with home ensuring every measure is put in place to support a child with healthy eating (tasting plates, baking and food making where possible and lessons on food groups etc.)

Bread & Alternatives	Savouries
<p>Bread or rolls (preferably whole-meal, whole-grain or whole-wheat varieties)</p> <p>Wraps</p> <p>Pitta bread</p> <p>Bread sticks</p> <p>Rice – wholegrain</p> <p>Pasta – wholegrain</p> <p>Wholemeal Scones/ Crackers.</p>	<p>Lean Meat (e.g., chicken/turkey, ham)</p> <p>Eggs</p> <p>Tinned Fish e.g. tuna/sardines/salmon</p> <p>Potato Salad</p> <p>Hummus</p> <p>Drinks</p> <p>Water or Milk are the ideal choice</p> <p>Fruit juices - <i>without added sugar.</i></p> <p><i>Pure fruit juice also contains natural sugar and should be diluted with water) for breaktime and lunchtime.</i></p>
<p>Fruit & Vegetables</p> <p>Apples, Banana, Peach Mandarins, Plums, Orange segments</p> <p>Fruit Salad, dried fruit</p> <p>Pineapple cubes, Grapes</p> <p>Cucumber, Sweetcorn, Tomato, Pepper slices</p> <p>Carrot batons</p>	<p><i>Water only for breaks throughout the rest of the day</i></p> <p>Dairy</p> <p>Yoghurt</p> <p>Milk</p> <p>Natural Yoghurt</p> <p>Cheese (triangles/slices/ small blocks of cheddar/gouda/edam etc)</p>