

## Healthy Eating Policy

School of the Holy Spirit aims to help all those involved in our school community to develop positive attitudes to food and to promote wellbeing and healthy living.

As part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Programme, at *School of the Holy Spirit* we encourage the students 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 (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 introduced a Healthy Eating Policy in 2014. As part of our Active School and Health Promoting Schools Programme, we also introduced a Healthy Eating Week to continue on an annual basis. We are cognisant of a range of challenges faced by some of our students around dietary habits and preferences and aim to support students and their families to the best of our ability in this area. Individual situations will be taken into consideration at all times.

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. Nutrition is also taught in the Science Curriculum.

### **Aims**

1. To enable students to appreciate the importance of good nutrition for growing and developing and staying healthy.
2. To enable students to accept some personal responsibility for making wise food choices and adopting a healthy, balanced diet.
3. To promote the personal development and well-being of our students from a young age.
4. To promote the health of our students through a healthy diet.

5. To provide a foundation for healthy living in all its aspects.
6. To support parents through the provision of a policy, information sharing and appropriate training when available.

### Objectives

1. To encourage a positive attitude to food.
2. To educate about different foods.
3. To promote and model good eating habits.
4. To increase non-food rewards.
5. To allow appropriate time to eat and socialise at lunch time.
6. To inform the adults in school about healthy eating in school.

Lunch is an important meal for students. 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 fiber (roughage).

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. Parents and teachers are concerned about this trend, but it is challenging at times to come up with popular healthy alternatives. We ask you to encourage a healthy lunch right from the start.

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

<b>Bread &amp; Alternatives</b>	<b>Savories</b>
Bread or rolls, preferably wholemeal	Lean Meat
Rice - wholegrain	Chicken/Turkey
Pasta - wholegrain	Tinned Fish e.g. tuna/sardines
Potato Salad	Cheese
Wholemeal Scones	Quiche
Bread sticks, Crackers, Pitta bread	Pizza

<b>Fruit &amp; Vegetables</b>	<b>Drinks</b>
Apples, Banana Peach	Milk
Mandarins, Orange segments	Fruit juices
Fruit Salad, dried fruit	Squashes, i.e. low sugar
Plum, Pineapple cubes, grapes, various berries	
Yoghurt, Cucumber, Sweetcorn, Tomato, Coleslaw	

**A word about Milk**

Growing children should get approximately one pint of milk a day, or its equivalent as cheese, yoghurt or milk pudding. This ensures that they get enough calcium, which is essential for healthy bones and teeth. If a student does not drink a glass of milk at lunch, encourage him/her to have a carton of yoghurt or a small helping of cheese instead.

**We ask that students do not bring the following to school:**

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

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Crisps (including crisp-style snacks)</li> <li>● Fizzy drinks (including fizzy fruit-flavoured water, juices, etc)</li> <li>● Sweets</li> <li>● Chocolate biscuits/bars</li> <li>● Cereal bars</li> <li>● Fruit winders</li> </ul> |
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So as to take a proactive approach to healthy lunches, teachers will affirm healthy food choices in lunch boxes from time to time.

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

Fats, Sugar, Sweets etc.	Sparingly
Meat, Fish, Peas/Beans	2 portions per day
Milk, Cheese, Yoghurt	3+ portions per day
Fruit & Vegetables	4+ portions per day
Bread, Cereals, Potatoes	6+ portions per day

### **Treat Day, Special Days and Celebrations**

At the discretion of the class teacher, Friday can be a treat day. On this day, students can include **one** item from the top shelf of the Food Pyramid. Students may also have some treats to celebrate birthdays and other special occasions during the school year such as end of term, Hallowe'en and school trips. Teachers will stress on these days that it is a special occasion and we do not eat 'treat food' every day.

### **School Meals Programme**

Currently in our school, lunch is provided by School Food Company through grant assistance. They provide the students with best and healthiest lunch possible with the most variety. They are compliant with Healthy Ireland Nutrition standards and Department Audit requirements for schools.

### **Food Dudes**

Our school participates in the annual food and nutrition initiative - Food Dudes. This programme encourages students to eat more fruit and vegetables both in school and at home. It is based on positive role models, repeat tasting and rewards.

### **Incredible Edibles**

One junior class has taken part in this project for the last two years, growing fruit and vegetables and linking this to learning about healthy eating and nutrition.

### **Allergies**

Parents of students with food allergies or who are on special diets must inform the school and provide information on suitable foods for their child. This information will be shared with relevant staff.

### **Green Flag School**

Our school is a Green Flag School. As such management of rubbish and recycling is of importance to us.

With this in mind, students are also asked to:

- take home (in lunchbox) all uneaten food, silver paper, wrappings, containers and cartons
- not bring in cans and glass - for safety reasons.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **Role of Parents:**

- To become familiar with all aspects of the Healthy Eating Policy.
- To provide a healthy, well-balanced diet for their child/children.
- To encourage healthy eating.
- To inform the school of any special dietary needs or food allergies.

- To implement the school policy by not including crisps, chocolate, bars or sweets in their child's lunchbox Monday to Thursday.

**Role of School:**

- To promote and encourage healthy eating.
- To educate students by teaching the appropriate content from the curriculum.
- To be available to discuss a student's individual circumstances around diet, always with the aim of implementing the policy fully for all students.

**Role of Students:**

- To eat a healthy lunch.
- To bring home any uneaten lunch.
- To remind parents of the Healthy Eating Policy.
- To refrain from bringing crisps, chocolate, bars or sweets to school Monday to Thursday.

**Success Criteria**

- The policy is available to all stakeholders on the school website.
- Staff, parents and students abide by the Healthy Eating Policy.
- Parents and school work together to overcome dietary challenges.
- Staff report that students are eating a balanced, healthy diet in school.
- Treat days and special occasions are marked and treats are enjoyed as part of the celebrations.
- Students understand the importance of a healthy diet to their overall wellbeing and are able to make healthy food choices.

**References:**

- HSE 'Healthy Eating Toolkit for Primary Schools'
- HSE 'Healthy Eating Toolkit for Post Primary Schools'
- DES Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023.

**Implementation and Review**

This policy was written and implemented in 2014, reviewed in 2019 and reviewed again in 2024. It will be reviewed again in 2026.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Principal

