

HEALTHY EATING POLICY

Healthy Eating Policy Statement:

St. Patrick's Loreto Primary School aims to develop positive attitudes and habits in relation to healthy eating. We seek to improve our knowledge about the effects of our dietary habits on our overall health. We also look to expand participation and promote positive behaviours within our whole school community.

This policy is in accordance with the **Mission Statement** of our school, which reads:

Our school seeks to foster a welcoming environment in which the dignity of every child will be valued, respected and equally cherished. Our aim is the pursuit of excellence through a holistic education, based on Gospel values. We strive to develop children's self-esteem and to motivate them to achieve their full potential in a spirit of friendship and belonging.

This healthy eating policy was developed following consultation with all members of the school community; including staff, management, students and parents. It forms part of our programme for a **Health Promoting School**, a component of the '**Healthy Ireland**' agenda which is committed to supporting everyone's efforts to improve their health and wellbeing. This is also part of the World Health Organization's **Global School Health Initiative**, which seeks to mobilise and strengthen health promotion and food education activities at local, national and regional levels.

Rationale:

The Department of Education and Science supports the view that good nutrition is central to a child's educational development, (Circular 0013/2016). Good nutrition is important as it impacts on children's physical and mental wellbeing now and in the future. Evidence from existing studies shows that there is a significant positive relationship between improved dietary status and school performance.

Recent research (The Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative, 2017) has highlighted disturbing trends, including an increase in childhood obesity and diabetes, so therefore our policy is both timely and critical for the health and development of children.

Healthy eating is an essential component of the overall health of children and as such is part of the holistic education that we advocate in our school. As a Health Promoting School, we strive to encourage a healthy lifestyle amongst our pupils. Developing good eating habits, together with regular physical activity and a positive approach to mental health, will help us to live longer, healthier and more productive lives.

Aims and Objectives:

Our aim is to help all those in our school community to develop positive attitudes and habits in relation to healthy eating and healthy living. We aim to establish good nutritional practices based on a healthy balanced diet. **The focus will be on positive reinforcement as a way of encouraging healthier lunches.**

Our main objectives include:

- Through a whole school approach and within the context of SPHE, the students, staff and parents will learn about nutrition, healthy eating and healthy living.
- To understand how good nutrition helps us grow, develop and stay healthy.
- To develop the skills and confidence to make healthy choices.
- To develop an awareness of the importance of a balanced diet based on the food pyramid.
- To develop an awareness of the importance of drinking water for hydration.

Guidelines:

S.P.H.E. (The Social, Personal and Health Education) programme is a planned programme which is consistently taught throughout our school. It provides particular opportunities to foster the personal development, health and well-being of the individual pupil. Under the Strand “Myself”, there is a particular focus on:

- Health and Well-being
- Knowing about my body
- Food and nutrition
- Making choices

The Food Pyramid is an education tool used nationally and internationally to communicate the healthy eating message. It will be used to teach children about the different food groups and the nutrients in each group.

Healthy Ireland is the national framework developed by the Irish Government for action to improve the health and wellbeing of people living in Ireland. The key messages from this national framework are:

- Eat more vegetables, salad and fruit - Up to seven servings a day
- Limit intake of high fat, sugar, salt (HFSS) food and drinks
- Size matters: Use the food pyramid as a guide for serving sizes

- Increase your physical activity levels
- Small changes can make a big difference. Start TODAY!

As a **Green School**, we aim to reduce the amount of waste we produce. We encourage parents to reduce the amount of packaging in lunchboxes. Every pupil is encouraged to bring home their lunch litter to maintain a clean and healthy school environment.

Helpful Websites: The following websites contain guidelines, resources and practical support for individuals and families to make healthier food choices. They include the food pyramid, daily meal plans, guidelines on portion sizes and fact sheets.

- <http://www.healthofireland.ie/health-initiatives/heg/>
- <http://hse.ie/eng/about/Who/healthwellbeing/Our-Priority-Programmes/HEAL/Healthy-Eating-Guidelines/>
- www.safefood.eu/Healthy-lunchboxes

What should be in a healthy lunch box?

A piece of food from the lowest 4 levels of the food pyramid

Food Pyramid Level	Some Suggestions
Fruit and vegetables	Small apple, banana, mandarin orange, pear, berries, grapes, carrot sticks, cucumber, sliced pepper, fruit salad, tomato etc.
A portion of starchy food	Wholemeal bread, wholegrain bap, bagel, wrap, pitta pocket, rice, pasta, crackers, oat-cakes, plain rice cakes etc.
A portion of dairy food	Piece of cheese, natural or very low sugar yogurt
A portion of lean meat, fish or alternative	Chicken, turkey, ham, tuna, egg, hummus
A drink	We recommend water

Cans and glass bottles are not permitted

- Healthy fillings for sandwiches are encouraged.
- Keep the food manageable. Peel and cut fruit.

The following are **not permitted**

- **Chewing gum**
- **Crisps**, including crisp-style snacks e.g. Snax, Hoola Hoops, Pringles, tortilla chips etc.
- **Fizzy drinks**
- Milk – due to lack of refrigeration space
- Snacks high in sugar, saturated fat, salt, additives and preservatives e.g. sweets, fruit winders, chocolate, cereal bars

Some healthy snack suggestions

Fruit	Vegetable sticks, slices
Plain rice cakes	Plain popcorn
Plain breadsticks	Sugar free jelly pot
Unsalted plain or whole wheat crackers	

Please note:

Due to the large number of children in the school who are at risk of anaphylaxis, we ask parents' co-operation in making the school a **nut-free zone**.

Please avoid the following lunch items:

- Peanut butter or other nut butter sandwiches
- Chocolate spreads containing nuts e.g. Nutella
- Nut based breads and cereal/health bars containing nuts or labelled "may contain nut traces"

In addition, we ask children NOT to share lunches.

Treats:

All children are encouraged to adhere to our healthy eating policy from Monday to Thursday. Any child who brings sweets or sweet treats to school on these days will be requested to keep them in their bag and bring them back home.

On **Fridays**, parents may allow their child to bring **one, small** treat to school, along with their usual healthy lunch. This sweet treat could be a minisize bar, a bun or two biscuits. It could also be a special fruit, smoothie or homemade treat. **Given the number of children who have food allergies and intolerances, parents are respectfully asked not to send in treats for the class, regardless of the occasion.**

Treats may also be permitted on special occasions such as Christmas Colours Day, the last day of term, on school tours etc. Chewing gum is not allowed in school or on school related activities, at any time.

Promotion and Implementation of the Policy:

Our **Health Promoting School Team** (HPS Team) was set up in 2016 and includes members from staff, parents and pupils as well as a representative of the HSE. Through their links with the HSE, the team will access the latest food and nutrition guidelines and information to promote healthy eating habits within the whole school community.

The HPS team will collaborate with staff, students and parents to ensure the successful implementation of the Healthy Eating policy. They will do this through the following measures:

- Copies of the Healthy Eating Policy will be provided to:
 - all school staff
 - all families
 - all Board of Management members
- The healthy eating policy will be displayed prominently on the HPS notice boards.
- The healthy eating policy will be available on the school website.
- Reference will be made to the policy at the annual meetings for parents of infant children.
- All teachers will outline the contents of the policy at the start of the new school year.
- All teachers will reinforce the guidelines of the policy at regular intervals.
- Copies of the food pyramid will be displayed in classrooms and on the HPS notice boards.
- Integration, where appropriate, with other areas of the curriculum such as History, Science, SPHE, Geography, Art, English, Gaeilge and PE is encouraged.
- Each year, in October, the school is involved in Be Well Week. There will be a particular focus on healthy eating during that week.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

The effective implementation of this policy will be monitored by the Principal, the HPS team and staff. Monitoring and evaluation will be carried out formally and informally throughout the year to measure the progress, effectiveness and any constraints of the desired outcomes of the policy. **The focus will be on positive reinforcement as a way of encouraging healthier lunches.**

Formal:

The Lunchbox Audit and The Healthy Lunch Survey carried out before the policy was launched will be carried out again each year during Be Well Week. The results will be compared to previous years.

Informal:

Monitoring of more general aspects of healthy eating such as break time snacks and drinking water, will be carried out informally through observation, discussion and consultation with staff (both teaching and non-teaching), parents, the HPS team and the Student Council.

We will use the following success criteria to monitor and evaluate our work on healthy eating:

- Greater proportion of healthy food in lunchboxes.
- Reduction in the amount of high fat, high sugar and high salt food being consumed during the school day.
- Greater understanding and awareness by students of the need to eat a nutritious and balanced diet.

Methods of data collection will include:

- General observations
- Healthy Lunch Surveys
- Audit of packed lunches
- Feedback from Suggestion Boxes placed around the school

The policy will be officially evaluated every 2 years by the HPS team.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 10/10/2017

Signed: _____

Mr. Robert Dunne
Chairperson