

Healthy Eating Policy April 2019

Whitechurch National School

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Healthy Eating Policy

Introductory Statement:

This Healthy Eating Policy was drawn up to review the existing policy in consultation with teachers, parents and pupils.

It is school policy that healthy eating is encouraged by pursuing both **education** for pupils and **guidance** for parents/guardians. We approach this policy with the understanding that ultimately children's appetites and tastes differ and it is a parent's/guardian's responsibility to ensure that his/her child eats healthily at all times, including during school activities. As a primary school following the Department of Education and Skills prescribed curriculum, we are aware of our responsibility to encourage the children to implement the good practice that they have been taught across the curriculum in relation to healthy eating. To this end we have developed this Healthy Eating Policy and Guidelines for Parents and Guardians.

Studies have shown that children who eat a well-balanced lunch often do better in school and are more alert. As part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E.) curriculum, we encourage the children to become more aware of the need for healthy food in their lunch boxes. In addition, the Physical Education curriculum supports the physical development and fitness of the children. The Science curriculum also looks at the development of the body, and deepens the children's understanding of how the body grows and develops.

Aims:

- ☺ To promote the personal development and well being of the child.
- ☺ To promote the health of the child and provide a foundation for healthy living in all its aspects.
- ☺ To enable the child to appreciate the importance of good nutrition for growing and developing and staying healthy.

- ☺ To enable the child to accept some personal responsibility for making wise food choices and adopting a healthy balanced diet.

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 fiber (roughage).

In Whitechurch National School two lunch breaks are timetabled:

- ☺ A fifteen minute break at 10.30 am (Sos Beag)
- ☺ A thirty minute break at 12.20 pm (Am Lóin)

The children will be given five minutes, where possible, to sit at their desks and eat their lunches before going outside to play. All teachers will encourage the children to eat their lunch however, teachers cannot monitor each child's lunchbox closely. If your child is returning home with uneaten food, you should chat to them and encourage them to eat their lunch in the time provided. You may need to review the amount of lunch given, what food your child is given (children's tastes can change rapidly as they grow), and if your child can manage their food independently. Some children may be assisted by lessening the preparation or packaging involved with their lunch eg. start to peel an orange, think about how much packaging is actually required in the lunchbox.

Drinks

To ensure good concentration, it is important for children to drink lots of water. One carton of fruit juice is not sufficient for a full day in school and children should always have a bottle of water available to them. This bottle may be refilled at the water fountain if it runs out during the school day. Parents should be aware that not all drinks advertised as drinks suitable for lunchboxes are healthy and balanced. In fact, many fruit drinks are high in sugar. Fizzy drinks are never allowed as part of a school lunchbox, even on a Friday.

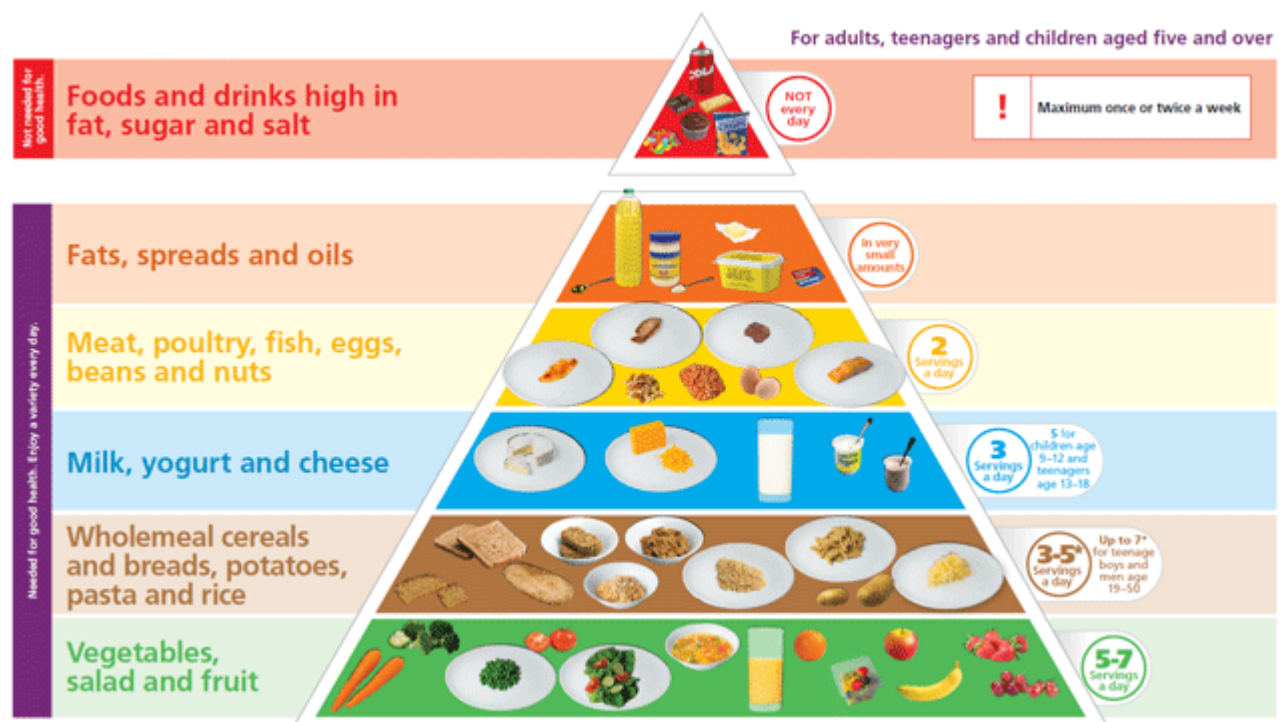
All children are encouraged to eat balanced and proportionate meals at all times, including those meals eaten while in school. The food pyramid outlines an excellent common sense approach to healthy and balanced eating. All children's lunches should contain a majority of items from the three lower food groups. Foods selected

from each level should be in decreasing amounts (starting from the bottom and progressing upwards).

The Food Pyramid

The Food Pyramid can be used as a guide for choosing the right foods in the right amount. For more information on the Food Pyramid and eating a healthy and balanced diet visit:

<https://www.safefood.eu/Healthy-Eating/What-is-a-balanced-diet/The-Food-Pyramid.aspx>



Treats on a Friday

While we would encourage lunchboxes that contain healthy food all week long, *one small treat* will be allowed on a Friday. It is up to each parent to decide what may constitute a 'treat' for their child. This treat does not necessarily need to be chocolate or crisps, it may be a special fruit treat or other healthy treat eg. mango and raspberries. Parents and pupils should be aware that it is not compulsory to have a treat in school on Fridays- by allowing one small treat on a Friday, the school is not saying that parents must send in a treat in their child's lunchbox- that final decision is still up to them. Recent feedback from the pupils show that they themselves believe

that we should work towards thinking that treats include some fruits that they especially like.

The following foods will **not** be allowed in lunchboxes Monday to Thursday:

Sweets, crisps, chocolate, cereal bars, buns, cakes, bars, biscuits.

Guidelines for Healthy Lunches

Following recent consultation with the pupils, favourite lunches identified by them include a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, bread and crackers, pasta, rice and sandwich fillers.

What is a healthy lunch?

‘Foods that provide fibre, vitamins, calcium.’

‘Give you energy.’

‘Makes you fit and energetic’.

‘Helps you grow strong bones’.

‘Helps you focus, concentrate’.

What might be in a healthy lunch?

‘Apples, strawberries’.

‘Sweetcorn, carrot sticks’.

‘Yoghurt’.

‘Sandwiches’.

‘Smoothies’.

‘Salad, fruit, vegetables’.

‘Water’.

What should not be in a healthy lunch?

‘Crisps’.

‘Chocolate bars’.

‘Jellies, lollipops’.

‘Fizzy drinks’.

‘Marshmallows’.

‘Chocolate spread’.

What encourages you to eat your lunch?

‘It’s fast and easy to eat outside’

‘Something I actually like’

‘Different things each day- I hate the same thing every day’

‘Time to eat quietly in class before going out to play’

What drinks could we include in a healthy lunch?

‘Water is best’.

‘Fresh fruit juice’.

‘Smoothie’.

What drinks should not be allowed?

‘Fizzy drinks’.

‘Hot chocolate’.

‘Milkshake’.

‘Lucozade’.

Who should make sure we follow these guidelines?

‘Us’ (pupils).

‘Teachers’.

‘Parents’.

Any other comments?

‘It is not fair if someone brings in junk food and we all follow the rules’

‘It is not a kid’s fault if there is junk in their lunchbox that their Mum or Dad has put in’

‘I think I go hyper when I eat junk so I can’t concentrate properly on maths’

‘I like having a treat on Fridays- it makes the end of the week fun’

The following is a list of **suggested** foods for a healthy, balanced school lunch from Safefood, the HSE and Healthy Ireland. Please note these ideas are not exhaustive.

5-day lunchbox planner

We often end up putting the same things in the lunchbox everyday. Keeping lunchbox contents varied makes lunch more enjoyable. The following planner shows you some examples of snacks and lunch items.

Monday

1 medium wholemeal bread roll with tomato and cheese

+



+

Handful of carrot sticks

+

Pot of low-fat yoghurt

+



Tuesday

Small pitta bread with tuna and sweetcorn

+



+

½ wholemeal scone

+



+



Wednesday

2 tablespoons of pasta with 1 tablespoon of tomatoes and vegetables

+



+

2 crackers with low-fat cheddar cheese

+



+



Thursday

2 slices of wholemeal bread with cooked ham and lettuce

+

Slices of pepper, cucumber, sugar snap peas or mangetout

+



+

Yoghurt

+



Friday

Tortilla wrap with chicken, sliced peppers and lettuce

+



+

Small tub of stewed fruit

+

6 cherry tomatoes

+



Remember:

1. Use low-fat spread, low-fat mayonnaise or relish instead of full-fat options
2. Smaller portions for smaller children

Seven steps to creating healthy, varied and interesting lunchboxes

<https://www.safefood.eu/Publications/Consumer-info/Healthy-lunchboxes.aspx>

- ☺ Include a wide variety of foods - starchy foods, protein, dairy, and fruit and vegetables
- ☺ Try to offer different foods every day - no one wants to be eating a ham sandwich five days a week!
- ☺ Vary the types of bread e.g. pitta bread, bagels, wholemeal rolls - keep a stock in the freezer
- ☺ Cook extra rice/pasta in the evening - these can make interesting salads
- ☺ Theme your lunchbox on a different country, e.g. Italian - try a pasta salad, Mexican fill flour tortillas
- ☺ Home-made soup (in a Thermos flask) is great for cold days, while salads are light and refreshing for warmer weather. Both are packed with essential vitamins and minerals
- ☺ Fluids are important for children - up to 6 cups of fluid should be encouraged daily. Milk and water are the best options.

First Break/ Sos Beag:

All children will be given time to eat their lunch at their desks inside the classroom. Children should stay seated while eating their lunch and may not walk around the classroom. Children may take a small amount of lunch outdoors to eat. Younger children may be allowed some extra time to eat indoors before going out to play. This can be particularly important for Junior Infants in the first term who often eat more slowly.

Lunch Break/ Am Lóin:

All children will be given a short period of time to commence their lunch before going outside to the yard. Children should stay seated while eating their lunch and may not walk around the classroom. **Children should not exchange food** for health and safety reasons or save food to be eaten on the way home after school.

Storage of Lunchboxes:

There is an area in each classroom for lunch boxes. Lunch boxes and drinks should not be stored in schoolbags for the day. On hot days and following P.E. lessons or

other physical activities individual teachers may allow pupils to have a drink when they return indoors. Drinking plenty of water is encouraged. In the winter months (between Halloween and February mid-term holidays) children are permitted to bring warm soup to school in a flask. **It is not possible or safe to provide hot water in school for children to make instant soup.**

Packaging:

As a Green School, trying to actively reduce the amount of waste in school, we would encourage parents/guardians to try and reduce the amount of packaging in their child's lunchbox. We would greatly appreciate your co-operation with this matter. Reusable containers and wrappers and flasks are encouraged and are also more economical. All containers and flasks should be named.

Dissemination:

A copy of this Healthy Eating policy will be placed on the school website and all new parents will be directed to read it. Teachers will observe lunches brought to school and encourage pupils to bring healthy food in their lunchboxes.

Conclusion:

The teaching staff at Whitechurch National School greatly appreciates the support of parents in our efforts to implement this Healthy Eating Policy. The focus should be a positive one, with an emphasis on the benefits of eating healthily and setting up good habits early in a child's formative years.

Review and Implementation:

This Healthy Eating policy will be reviewed as necessary. This policy will take effect from April 2019.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____[date]

Signed: _____ Signed: _____

Chairperson of Board of Management Principal

Date: _____ Date: _____