

Healthy Eating Policy

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

Aims

1. To promote the personal development and well-being of the child
2. To promote the health of the child and provide a foundation for healthy living in all its aspects.

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.

Rationale

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).

Children form their eating habits for life from an early age. A good *diet* and plenty of *sleep, fresh air and exercise* are essential to the growing child. We ask parents to allow plenty of time in the morning for a healthy breakfast. Breakfast is perhaps the most important meal of the day. Not only does breakfast break the child's long overnight fast and help concentration, it also lays down the foundation for healthy eating for the rest of the day.

Children's lunches sometimes tend to be low in fibre and high in fat and sugar. The food pyramid will offer a guide for a healthy and varied diet for your child. Sandwiches and fruit are healthier than sweets and biscuits. Check with your child that he/she has the right amount to eat.

Lunch suggestions from *Food & Nutrition Guidelines for Primary Schools* available from www.healthinfo.ie

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
- Sweets, chewing gum Chocolate biscuits/bars
- Due to the incidence of severe allergy to peanuts and mixed nuts amongst some pupils, we ask you to avoid peanuts or any other type of nut in school lunches.
- popcorn

To encourage independence, we ask you to choose lunch boxes children can open and close easily. Children should be able to manage food as well, e.g. oranges should be peeled at home and children should be able to open/ close all other wrapping themselves. Children should not bring in cans and glass – for safety reasons. We discourage pupils from swapping or sharing lunches. If your child has a food allergy please inform teacher.

○ Promotion of the Policy:

- All members of the teaching staff promote this policy through regular verbal reminders and good example to the children.
- ***If children bring "discouraged" food / drinks to school:*** - They will be allowed to eat/drink them but asked not to bring them on other days. If they persist in bringing unhealthy food to school, the teacher will inform parents re healthy eating Policy throughout the school

○ Exceptions

- Exceptions are allowed:
 - End of term parties
 - School trips

N.B. Parents/guardians of any child with a medical condition which requires a special diet should contact the school.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management & Parents' Council on _____. It will be reviewed on _____.