

Scoil Mhuire gan Smál, Cill Choirle

Healthy Eating Policy



Policy Details

Name of Policy: Healthy Eating

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Ref Code:

Edition: 2

Signed by

Chairperson: *Perlene Kil*

Principal: *Donna Kirby*

Date commenced: *1/6/2021*

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 Good nutrition is known to be one of the key factors influencing long term health of school children and staff. The school day provides the opportunity for having at least one of the daily meals within the school. Food is often a feature of school celebrations. The curriculum provides an opportunity to learn and explore about food and healthy lifestyles.
- 1.2 Scoil Mhuire gan Smál is committed to helping all those involved in our school community, e.g. children, staff and parents in developing positive and responsible attitudes to eating and to appreciate the contribution that good food makes to health.
- 1.3 This policy should be read in conjunction with our Enrolment Policy, SPHE Plan, P.E. Plan, Administration of Medication and Health and Safety Policies.

2. Policy Purpose

The aims of this policy are:

- 2.1 To promote a whole school approach to healthy eating and nutrition
- 2.2 To understand the benefit of a healthy well balanced diet
- 2.3 To develop an awareness that good eating habits formed in early childhood influence health and wellbeing throughout our lives
- 2.4 To develop awareness of the importance of food for growth and development
- 2.5 To explore food preferences in a balanced diet

3. Benefits of a good diet

A healthy, well-balanced diet:

- 3.1 Ensures the development of healthy hair, skin, teeth, muscles and strong bones
- 3.2 Provides energy and aids concentration
- 3.3 Strengthens the immune system

4. Healthy Lunch

4.1 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. However, we cannot stress enough the importance of the children getting a good breakfast each morning before they come to school. Breakfast/ lunch should also provide dietary fibre (roughage).

4.2 Parents/guardians are encouraged to provide children with a healthy lunch, which helps to maintain their level of concentration in the classroom throughout the day.

4.3 A healthy lunch box should, where possible, include a variety of foods from the bottom four shelves of the Food Pyramid (see figure 1 below), namely:

- At least 2 portions from the bread and cereals group.
- One portion from the meat and the meat alternatives group.
- 2/3 portions from fruit and vegetable group.
- One portion from the dairy products group.

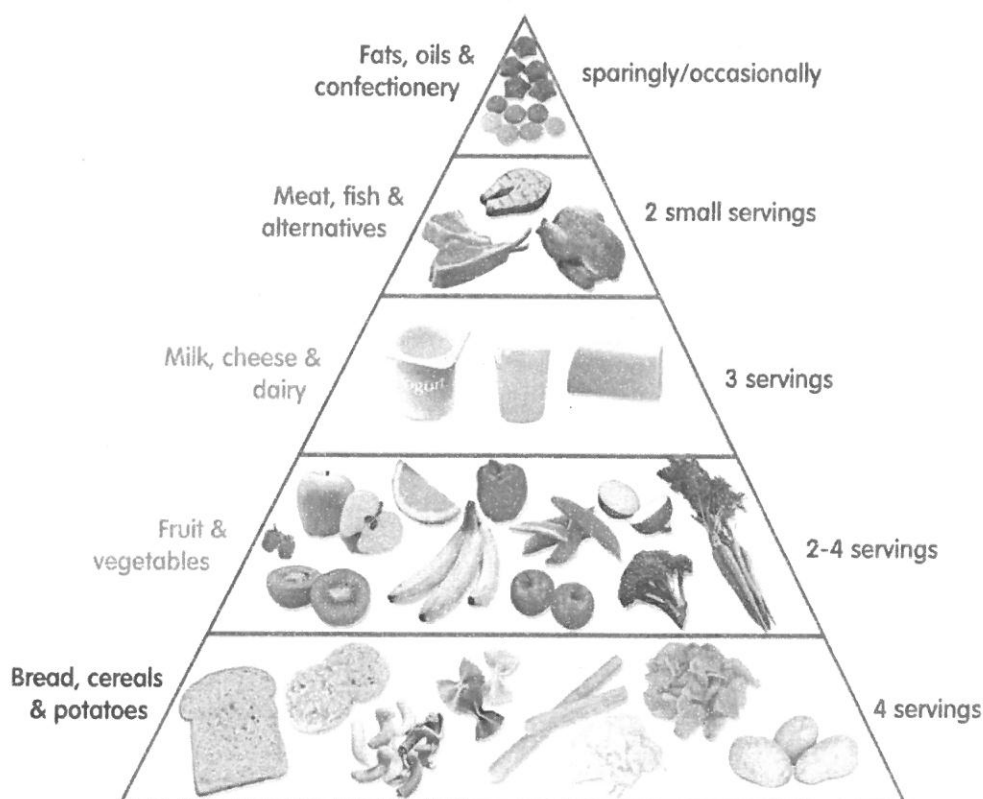


Figure 1: The Food Pyramid

Examples of healthy choices from the bottom four shelves of the Food Pyramid can be viewed in Table 1.

<u>Bread/Cereal</u> Bread or rolls, preferably wholemeal Rice – wholegrain Pasta – wholegrain Potato salad Wholemeal scones Bread sticks Crackers Pitta bread Wraps Rice cakes	<u>Meat/Savoury etc</u> Lean meat Chicken/Turkey Tinned fish e.g. tuna/sardines Vegetarian sausage Beans Chickpeas Hummus
<u>Fruit and Vegetables</u> Fruit & berries Seedless grapes cut Cucumber, sweetcorn Tomato, coleslaw. Seeds (Sunflower, pumpkin, sesame etc.) Carrot/celery sticks	<u>Dairy</u> Cheese Yoghurt

Table 1: Examples of healthy choices from the Food Pyramid

4.4 Healthy choices of drink include water, milk and unsweetened natural juice. Children are encouraged to use reusable containers for safety and litter reasons, as we are a participant in the Green Schools' initiative. Cans and glass bottles are not permitted.

4.5 According to the HSE; "there are no recommendations for the amount of water or other fluids children need. However, like adults, to stay healthy it is important for children to replace the water they lose to prevent dehydration. It is also important to remember that children will lose more water in hotter climates and when they have been physically active¹."

4.6 We participate in the "Food Dudes" Healthy Eating Programme, an award-winning curriculum-linked programme managed by Bord Bia, developed to encourage children to eat more fresh fruit and vegetables.

4.7 We also encourage that:

- All containers are labelled with the child's name and are easy for the child to open.
- As far as practicable, lunches are eaten in one place within the classroom. It is important to note that the health and safety of children with serious allergies will take precedence over other issues. It may, therefore be necessary to introduce additional precautions or restrictions in classes in which some children have serious allergies.
- Portion sizes are appropriate to the child's needs.

¹ <http://www.hse.ie/eng/health/az/D/Dehydration/>

5. Allergies

- 5.1 On admission to the school, any known allergies or special dietary conditions (e.g. diabetes, celiac etc.) will be recorded on the child's pupil file and made known to the class teacher.
- 5.2 In order to protect children who have serious food allergies, the whole school community will work together to implement age appropriate, responsible measures to minimise the risk of an allergic reaction.
- 5.3 All children in the school are made aware of the implications of food allergies and how they can assist in preventing allergic reactions.
- 5.4 We are a nut-free school due to a number of our pupils who have nut allergies. We create awareness around this, especially at school events such as bake sales when we encourage the parents/pupils to label content which may cause an allergic reaction.
- 5.5 For pupils who have a risk of developing an allergic reaction, the school will hold on site appropriate medication prescribed by their GP for the treatment of the allergy. (See Administration of Medication Policy.)

6. Prohibited Foods

- 6.1 In order to promote healthy, balanced eating habits among children in school, and to minimise the risk of allergic reactions, the following foods are prohibited:
 - Crisps/ corn chips, – high fat content
 - Chocolate/ nut spreads – high fat and sugar (allergy related)
 - Take away foods – burgers/ hot dogs/ chips/ wedges / hash browns/ fried chicken (high in fat)
 - Fizzy Drinks – (high sugar content)
 - Chewing gum
 - Chocolate/cream biscuits
 - Iced buns
 - Cereal bars covered in chocolate – very high in sugar can lead to hyper activity/ poor concentration
 - Nuts – possible allergy
 - Fruit winders – high sugar content

If such foods are brought to school, children will be asked to bring them home in their lunchboxes.

7. Treat Day

- 7.1 The school provides for pupils to take a treat to school on one day each week. Friday is treat day. The children are encouraged to eat the treat **AFTER** their lunch is eaten.

7.2 On this day, children can bring **ONE** of the following:

- Treat/ fun sized bar
- Treat/ fun sized bag of sweets
- Small biscuit
- Small cereal bar (preferably homemade)
- Small home bakes

7.3 On a treat day, teachers may give treats to their own class or to pupils as a reward.

7.4 There are also special occasions where treats are allowed, such as:

- End of term parties
- Halloween
- School trips and events
- A 'jelly' as a reward
- Award at assembly

8. Green School

8.1 In keeping with our green school code, children are asked to:

- Take home (in lunchbox) all uneaten food, silver paper, wrappings, containers and carton
- Put fruit peels into the compost bins
- Bring drinks in reusable containers. Cans and glass bottles should not be brought to school.

8.2 Compost from our compost bin is used in our school garden.

8.3 We have a bottle greenhouse which we use to germinate seedlings.

8.4 We grow a variety of fruit and vegetables in our school garden to encourage the pupils' interest in a healthy diet. Jam and chutney is made from our produce.

9. Physical Activity

9.1 All children are encouraged to participate in lunch time activities in the school playground.

The children will receive minimum-one hour of physical activity per week as part of the physical education curriculum. The school will provide physical and social environments that encourage and enable physical activity in a safe environment (see Whole School P.E. Plan for more).

10. Success Criteria

We will know if the policy is effective by:

- Observing what children have for lunch and during other break times
- Noting feedback from parents/guardians and school staff
- Closely observing concentration and performance of children in the class room

