



Healthy Eating Policy

Scoil Chroí Ró Naofa

Ballymurn

Introductory Statement

As part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme, at Scoil Chroí Ró Naofa, we encourage children to become more aware of the need for healthy food in their lunchboxes. Good nutrition is essential for school children. What people eat is known to be a key factor in influencing health. Research indicates a strong link between diet and performance. For example, a low sugar intake promotes concentration, lessens hyperactivity, protects teeth and lessens the risk of Type 2 diabetes. A low salt intake reduces the risk of heart disease in later life.

Physical activity is integral to any healthy eating programme and hence should also be promoted and encouraged. At Scoil Chroí Ró Naofa, the teaching staff work diligently to support all children engaging in physical activity. A number of extra-curricular activities take place at the school i.e. Hurling 365, Be Active Before School, Operation Transformation.

This policy is the product of whole-staff collaboration in tandem with the Parents and Board of Management of Scoil Chroí Ró Naofa.

Rationale

Eating habits throughout life are established at a young age. Therefore learning to choose and enjoy different foods in childhood provides the foundation for healthy food choices in adulthood. Key healthy eating messages that are consistent and fact based assist children in decision making and forming of attitudes and beliefs around food for life.

Scoil Chroí Ró Naofa is fully committed to fostering a positive attitude towards healthy eating and nutrition in our pupils. As a school that strongly promotes health it is vital that we create an environment in which good nutrition and a well balanced diet are strongly encouraged. Good nutrition is important for school children and a variety of food is important for their optimum growth, development and health.

Healthy eating is an essential component of the overall health of children and as such is part of the holistic education that Scoil Chroí Ró Naofa advocates in its education philosophy and mission statement. The adoption of a whole school approach ensures that healthy eating messages are part of every aspect of school life.

Healthy eating is part of the SPHE food and nutrition curriculum programme for each primary school class. Research suggests that the provision of nutritious school food

enhances not only the child's health but also allows the child to take full advantage of the education provided by improving attention levels and concentration spans.

Parent/Guardians Role

We understand that as parents it can be difficult to prepare lunches especially if your child is a fussy eater. This policy aims to provide practical ideas to keep children's lunches interesting and full of nutritional value. It is recommended that children should have a practical experience in preparing their own meals and lunches.

A positive attitude to food should be encouraged and food should never be used as a reward. Children should enjoy their food and it is important to communicate the message that all foods have a place in a balanced diet.

Children may need 3 meals and 2 snacks a day to ensure that their appetite and energy needs are met. The size of meals and the number of snacks required will depend on the child's age and development. Physical activity is integral to any healthy eating programme, and should be strongly promoted in children from a very young age.

Aims

- ✚ To assist all involved in our school community – children, parents and staff to develop positive and responsible attitudes to eating and to appreciate the contribution that good foods make to health.
- ✚ To promote healthy eating habits and a healthy body image amongst our pupils and to improve opportunities for them to grow into healthy adults.
- ✚ To promote healthy eating as an integral part of a healthy lifestyle and understand it is linked to our holistic health model of promoting mental health, physical activity, personal hygiene and safety and protection
- ✚ To foster self discipline in maintaining a healthy and well balanced diet
- ✚ To improve levels of concentration within class due to consumption of healthy food.
- ✚ To encourage children to be aware, alert and responsive to litter problems caused by junk food, pre-prepared food, juice cartons etc.

Objectives

- ✚ To enable the child to appreciate the importance of good nutrition for growing, 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 fibre.
- ✚ 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 some find it difficult to come up with popular healthy alternatives.

- ✚ Parents are being asked to encourage a healthy school lunch from the moment your child commences their formal education in Junior Infants.

Benefits of healthy eating

- ✚ A healthy diet is essential for maintaining and protecting young people's health for ensuring they perform to their full potential during the school day, both academically and physically, for their growth and development.
- ✚ Eating a wide variety of foods is one of the best ways to help the body get the nutritional contributions it needs each day.
- ✚ Nutrition is central to health and diet can be an important influence on the life of young people now and in the future.
- ✚ Helps young people develop, grow and do well in school.
- ✚ Eating well at a young age is influential to continuing it throughout life.
- ✚ Eating healthily is one of the most powerful ways of enhancing or repairing health.
- ✚ Over time, the foods young people eat will affect their cholesterol levels, weight, blood pressure, insulin regulation, brain function, emotional health and self-esteem.
- ✚ Prevents childhood and adolescent health problems such as overweight and obesity, eating disorders, tooth decay and anaemia. Due to these factors being on the rise in today's society, it is important to maintain and reinforce healthy eating throughout the school.
- ✚ May help prevent health problems in later life, including stroke, cardiovascular disease, Type 2 diabetes and prevent certain cancers.
- ✚ Sitting down and eating with other young people is an important part of a young person's social education.

Consequences for unhealthy eating

- ✚ Avoiding breakfast can affect young people's performance in school, both intellectually and physically.
- ✚ Hungry children are more likely to have behavioural, emotional and academic problems throughout school.
- ✚ Overweight and obesity is a result of poor eating habits.
- ✚ A high percentage of children eat too much fat.
- ✚ Dental decay in children continues to be a significant public health problem. The main cause of tooth decay is related to the frequency and the amount of sugar consumed in both food and drink.

Guidelines for Teachers

- ✚ Healthy eating should be an integral part of the holistic health model being taught - not as an exercise in isolation
- ✚ Teachers should promote healthy eating as much as possible and promote body image in a positive manner
- ✚ Teachers are required to keep up to date with Healthy Eating guidelines in conjunction with the Department of Health
- ✚ Monitor implementation of the policy in their classroom.
- ✚ Support and promote 'Healthy Food Week' annually. Encourage children to try unfamiliar new dishes, fruit and vegetables.

Guidelines for Parents

A very simple approach to healthy eating is to use the Food Pyramid (See Appendix 1)

1. A healthy lunchbox includes food from each of the first four shelves of the food pyramid.
2. Healthy choice of drink include, water, milk and unsweetened fruit juices. Fizzy drinks are not allowed.
3. Parents should inform the school if their child is on a special diet or has an allergy to any foods.

Suggestions for lunch (See Appendix 2 – Guide to Healthy Eating Booklet)

- ✚ Encourage wholemeal or wholegrain varieties of breads, rolls, wraps, bagels and crackers
- ✚ Use butter or spreads sparingly and use those low in saturated fats
- ✚ Include salad vegetables in sandwiches and salad boxes, e.g. lettuce, tomato, cucumber, carrot and use vegetable sticks
- ✚ Include at least one piece of fruit at lunch, e.g. apple, orange, banana
- ✚ Encourage low fat milk or yoghurt with every lunch
- ✚ Ensure that meat, chicken, fish, egg or cheese is included as part of lunch
- ✚ Include a drink at lunch e.g. low fat milk, water
- ✚ Using low fat dressings, sauces and relish can add variety and taste to sandwiches rolls and salads
- ✚ Natural yoghurt can be used as an alternative to mayonnaise for a sandwich spread
- ✚ Wholemeal bread with cheese slice+ tomato+ 1 banana + milk/water
- ✚ Wholemeal Pitta bread with cooked ham, low fat mayonnaise lettuce and cucumber+ orange segments+ milk/water
- ✚ Wholemeal bread with cooked beef, tomato and cucumber+ small apple + milk/water
- ✚ Cooked pasta with tuna, lettuce and grated carrot+ dried fruit + yoghurt+ 2 mandarins+ milk/water
- ✚ Salad box with cooked rice, lettuce, tomato, cheese cubes, celery sticks, carrot sticks + handful of grapes+ milk/water
- ✚ Wholemeal bap/bagel with lean grilled bacon, tomato and sweetcorn + peach+ milk/water
- ✚ Crackers with cheese slices, sliced peppers, grated carrot + apple + orange segments + milk/water
- ✚ Cooked rice with cooked pea, carrot and chicken pieces + fruit+ milk/water
- ✚ Hummus sandwich + banana + milk/water

Drinks

It is important that children take in enough fluids during the day. Almost 2/3 of the body is made of water. If children do not drink enough water, they become dehydrated, thirsty, tired and weak. Drinks should always be encouraged for lunches and break-time. Water and milk are the best choices and milk is also a valuable source of calcium, which is important for healthy bones and teeth. Growing children should get approximately one pint of milk a day, or its equivalent as cheese, yoghurt or other healthy dairy products.

Foods Permitted at Scoil Chroí Ró Naofa – PUPIL lunches

Drinks

Milk
Water
Water diluted with cordial

Healthy Snacks

Fruit
Crackers
Cheese
Vegetable sticks
Unsalted popcorn
Hummus
Yoghurts

Main Lunch

Sandwiches, rolls, pitta bread, wraps, bagels with a variety of healthy fillings
Pasta/Rice
Homemade soup in a flask (3rd-6th class only)

Foods not permitted

All fizzy drinks (to include fizzy fruit flavoured water)
Chocolate products (to include Nutella/chocolate spread)
Chocolate bars (Fun size treat on Fridays only)
Biscuits
Cereal bars
Chewing gum
Fruit winders
Sweets
Crisps (or crisp type snack)

ALL

Snacks known to be high in sugar, saturated fat, salt, additives and preservatives are **not** permitted.

Treat Day

FRIDAY will be our treat day. On this day pupils are allowed to bring in **ONE** small treat.

Parent information

Please refer to the 'Healthy Lunch-boxes' leaflet attached for more ideas on healthy, nutritious lunches. (See Appendix 2). Keep food portions manageable for your child e.g. give a peeled orange, apple cut into bite size pieces. Avoid messy foods e.g. Frubes which spill easily when opened.

The following sites also provide many ideas and information about healthy lunches and the importance of healthy eating:

<https://healthpromotion.ie/health/schools>
www.safefood.ie

Sanctions

Unlike our behavioural policies, there are no sanctions applicable to pupils who breach the Healthy Eating policy. However, if pupils bring an item of the non-allowed food type, our teachers will ask him/her to take this food item home to be consumed there. In the rare event of a pupil having no healthy lunch with them at school, arrangements shall be made by the school to source appropriate food for him/her.

We are a Green School

With this in mind, children are also asked to do the following:

1. All uneaten food, silver paper, wrappings, containers and cartons are to be taken home in lunch boxes.
2. Only fruit peel to be put in the schools compost bins
3. For safety reasons cans and glasses are not permitted

To support our policy our pupils will receive lessons on healthy eating through our SPHE and SESE programmes. Lessons on healthy eating will be taught explicitly in all classes for the month of September. Healthy eating will also be enforced during our annual healthy lifestyle week each January and regularly throughout the school year.

Review

This policy will be referred to regularly to check that it is being consistently implemented by all staff. Policy will be reviewed by staff annually.

Our school promotes health.

This policy was ratified on: 26th April, 2016

Signed: *Matthew Kelly*

Matthew Kelly
Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 26th April, 2016