

Healthy Food Policy

Introduction

This policy was developed following a survey carried out among pupils, parents and staff. The focus of this policy is to support parents and pupils in relation to healthy eating habits from an early age. The policy is in operation with the agreement and support of parents and staff to ensure our pupils are provided with an environment that promotes healthy eating and enables our students to make healthy food choices.

Rationale

By working to promote the health of pupils, we are contributing toward the provision of a healthy learning environment. For children to achieve their full potential it is essential that they eat healthily. The encouragement of healthy eating practices from a young age will help to provide a basis for lifelong health and well-being. This policy will further aim to promote the holistic development of students in a caring environment, in accordance with the mission statement of St. Mary's NS.

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.

Objectives

- To help all those involved in our school community, children, staff and parents, to develop positive attitudes to eating and healthy living.
- To enable children to attain their optimum growth, development and health potential by increasing awareness of the need for healthy food choices.
- To enable the children to develop and understand healthy living, and develop an ability to implement healthy behaviour and willingness to participate in activities that promote and sustain health.

Implementation

Curriculum and Learning

As part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (*S.P.H.E.*) Programme, we encourage the children to become more aware of the need for healthy food choices. In addition, the Physical Education Programme 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.

1. At the beginning of each school year, the class teacher will outline the school policy on healthy eating. The class teacher will reinforce these guidelines on a regular basis through class discussions and the teaching of the curriculum.
2. Students will learn about healthy eating through the formal curriculum as part of SPHE, PE and Science. All classes will receive at least one lesson on healthy eating each term.
3. School staff will provide positive modeling and supportive attitudes to encourage healthy eating. A positive emphasis will be put on the importance of healthy eating; we aim to teach pupils the benefits of healthy nutrition and steer away from using negative terms e.g. *obese, fat etc.*
4. When planning cooking activities in school, staff will aim to involve pupils in the preparation of healthy food options, e.g. fruit salads, smoothies, fruit kebabs etc.
5. Pupils will be involved in planting and growing their own food in our school garden.
6. Staff will attend Health Promotion training where available.
7. Staff will liaise with outside health promoting agencies and initiatives e.g. Health Promoting Schools, PDST, Incredible Edibles etc.
8. Healthy eating information materials will be made available to children, parents and staff.
9. Visits from health professionals e.g. dentists, doctors and nutritionists will be organised.
10. Parents will be supported in their role as Primary Educators by providing them with up-to-date information on healthy eating habits from the Dept. of Health.

Physical and Social Environment

1. Health Promotion notice boards will be on display in the school building and a Healthy Eating Week will take place each year.
2. Healthy lunches are advised. Junk food is discouraged. Crisps, chewing gum, lollipops and fizzy drinks are not allowed and treats are only permitted on Friday. During lesson time, pupils will be allowed to drink only water. We advise that juice is kept to a minimum at break/lunchtime.
3. Parents/Guardians will be encouraged to provide moderate food quantities/portions.
4. Pupils will remain seated while they are eating and will not be allowed to share or swap lunches. They will also be discouraged from commenting on the contents of other children's lunches.
5. Pupils will be reminded of the importance of good hygiene around food and will be encouraged to wash hands before eating.
6. With regard to health and safety, staff will be made aware of any food allergies that children may have.
7. Healthy Eating will be encouraged on Sports days, school tours and school celebrations.
8. Staff will be advised to consider non-food alternatives as rewards.

Evaluation

Evaluation of the effectiveness of the policy will be conducted through:-

- Continual observation
- Consultation with members of the school community
- Regular review

Success Criteria

- Reduction in number of children bringing sweets and non-healthy snacks
- Increased awareness among the children of healthy eating practices

Communication

Communication of the policy and regular updates will be given via newsletter, Parents' Association and through the website.

Review

We believe that, in developing the policy, parents, children, teachers, school staff and the BOM should be involved in a collaborative way. We aim to review these guidelines every two years.