



Healthy Eating Policy

Introduction

Health education is important in that it enables people to obtain information and skills that will help them in making good decisions in relation to their health. When education is combined with appropriate policies, structures and support systems, the healthy choice becomes the easier choice.

St. James' National School is committed to developing an understanding of healthy living, an ability to implement healthy behaviour and a willingness to participate in activities that promote and sustain health. We believe that this is most effective if based on a consistency in approach and where responsibility is shared by parents, teachers, children, Board of Management, health professionals and relevant members of the community.

Education about healthy eating is provided in the broader context of the S.P.H.E. curriculum, which is spiral in nature and delivered with the support of a health promoting school ethos.

Rationale

This policy is a response to the fact that we accept that one of the aims of education as outlined in the White Paper is

“To promote physical and emotional health and well-being”

We take cognisance of reports of growing concerns over childhood illnesses related to poor diet and the acknowledgement of the link between healthy eating and learning. Our school aims to provide a happy, secure, friendly

learning environment where all partners are valued and facilitated to reach their full potential. A balanced diet provides the nourishment and energy to maximise life's opportunities.

Health habits adopted in early childhood will influence health and well-being both now and in the future. Developing health-promoting practises throughout his/her time in school can encourage the child to take increasing control over his/her own health and help to establish and maintain healthy behaviour from an early age. (Primary School Curriculum S.P.H.E. teacher Guidelines p.3) Our school ethos is central to this eating policy.

Content

This policy is delivered in the context of the S.P.H.E. curriculum.

- Curriculum resources include the Walk Tall Programme and charts and literature provided by the Health Board and outside agencies.
- Lunch and break timetabling is adequate to allow children to eat lunches provided.
- A short break is scheduled from 11am-11.10am. Children have a small snack at this time.
- Lunch break/eating time is from 12.30 – 1.00pm. Children have their packed lunch at this time.
- The school acknowledges the special dietary needs of some children and strives to support them in any way possible. Staff are made aware of pupils that may have specific allergies and we do our best look after these pupils.
- Fizzy drinks, chewing gum, crisps, confectionery, sweets, bars and biscuits are not allowed. They may be given by class teachers on occasions as special treats.
- The importance of a wholesome breakfast in relation to memory and concentration is acknowledged.

Hot Lunch Scheme

Our school was approved under the Hot School Meals Programme. This commenced in April 2024. The service is currently being provided by a company called Gourmet Kids. The food arrives hot to our school in insulated boxes daily. Parents use the online platform to order the meals. For more information please see link below:

'Gourmet Kids'

Speaking during a visit to St David's Primary School in Artane, Co. Dublin, Minister Humphreys said:

“Providing nutritious meals to our children at school is about so much more than food. It helps a child make the most of their education and their childhood.

“It does wonders for our children's wellbeing, their concentration and their physical and mental health. We know this because we have gone out to schools and asked the children about the difference it makes.

“We also know from talking to parents and teachers that a hot meal in the middle of the day holds its weight in gold.

Packed Lunches

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 (roughage).

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.

We will ask you to encourage a healthy lunch right from the start. Also, please, only give your child something you feel he/she can easily manage to eat.

The following guide is designed to help you provide quick, appetising, and nutritious lunches for your children.

Bread & Alternatives

Bread or rolls

Rice

Pasta

Potato Salad

Scones

Savouries

Meat

Tinned Fish e.g. tuna/sardines

Cheese

Quiche, Pizza



Fruit & Vegetables

Apple, Banana, Peach, Plum, Pineapple cubes, , Orange segments, Grapes, Fruit Salad, Dried fruit, Tomato, Cucumber, Sweetcorn, Coleslaw, Celery.

Drinks

Milk

Fruit juices

Soup

Yoghurt (Frubes are discouraged as they tend to be messy)

Start with the Basics

A healthy packed lunch should contain bread or an alternative, a savoury filling which provides protein, a suitable drink and some fruit and/or vegetables.

Nuts/Kiwis

I would like to bring everyone's attention to the fact that we have pupils in our school with serious nut & kiwi allergies. Our school needs to be a safe place for all children to attend. Because of this it is imperative that our whole school is kept as a nut & kiwi-free zone. Please be mindful of the ingredients in certain food items eg. protein or cereal bars.

Roles and Responsibilities

Teachers will be responsible for delivery of formal lessons and informal guidance in the area of health and nutrition.

Parents of St. James' National School as partners in education are asked to support and encourage this healthy eating policy. Suggestions and comments in relation to this policy are encouraged in the spirit of democracy and ownership.

Food Dudes

As we endeavour to keep healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle at the core of school life and policy, this year we will participate in the Food Dudes Programme.

In Ireland, the EU School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme is delivered through the Food Dudes Healthy Eating Programme. It works by changing children's attitudes towards healthy eating, allowing them to cultivate a liking for fresh fruit and vegetables. Built and developed on three pillars of scientific merit, (1) repeated tastings, (2) rewards and (3) role modelling, Food Dudes has proven itself as an effective evidence-based school-based healthy eating programme.

Phase 1: School-based - 16-day intervention

Phase 1 is a 16-day school-based intervention with repeated tastings of fruits and vegetables. During this time, children receive one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetable on each day, are read a letter or watch a DVD-episode featuring the heroic Food Dudes and are rewarded with stickers or small prizes for eating their fruit and vegetable.

Phase 2: Home-focused - Post-intervention

Phase 2 aims to maintain long-term consumption and extends to the home whereby children/parents are encouraged to bring their own fruit and vegetables to school every day in their special Food Dudes lunchbox. Classroom wall charts are used to record progress and children receive certificates upon reaching milestones at their own pace over time.

Phase 3: Maintenance - Tasting days and specially designed educational materials

Tasting days accompanied by educational materials such as a passport to healthy eating and short informative video clips in years 2 and 3, encourage a listening whilst eating approach to learning. This phase maintains long-term programme engagement post-intervention and continued increase in consumption throughout entire school year. This allows children to develop healthy eating habits for life!

Junior Cycle

- Junior infants, senior infants and 1st class (4 to 8-year olds)
- Each pupil will receive 16-days of classic intervention affording each child the opportunity to taste each fruit and vegetable four times

Intermediate Cycle

- 2nd, 3rd and 4th class (7 to 10-year olds)
- Each pupil will receive 8-days of classic intervention affording each child the opportunity to taste each fruit and vegetable twice
- Maintenance Phase

Senior Cycle

- 5th and 6th class (10 to 13-year olds)
- Each pupil will receive 8-days of classic intervention affording each child the opportunity to taste each fruit and vegetable twice
- Maintenance Phase

In years 2 and 3 of the programme the maintenance phase will be introduced to all schools. This will involve a series of additional tasting days (up to 5), offering a varied selection of fruits and vegetables during tastings, as well as including new accompanying measures i.e. passport to healthy eating, with specific focus of health and general wellbeing.

Timeframe for Implementation

This policy was updated in June 2024 and will be reviewed in June 2027 or when necessary.

Ratified by the Board of Management on _____

Signed: _____

Chairperson B.O.M.

Principal