

Health Eating Policy

➤ Introductory Statement

For several years we here in SS Peter & Paul JNS have been active in raising the pupil's awareness of the importance of healthy eating. The guidelines set out in this policy are based on research carried out by the HSE. The policy has been formulated in collaboration with the B.O.M, the parents, staff and children in the school and aim to promote positive and responsible attitudes to healthy eating.

We recognise that parents are the key to the success of this policy by encouraging healthy eating patterns at home and sending healthy foods for school snacks and lunches. A healthy food policy can also serve to remind and educate parents about the important role of nutrition in their child's health and well-being both at home and at school.

➤ Rationale

Healthy eating is an essential component of the overall health of children and as such is part of the holistic education that we advocate in our school. As a health promotion school, we strive to encourage a healthy lifestyle amongst our pupils.

It is now well recognised that fruit and vegetables have a protective effect against some of the wide range of chronic diseases affecting our society. Experts around the world recommend that eating **at least five** portions of fruit and vegetables a day promotes good health and helps to prevent cancer, coronary heart disease and other diseases. Researchers have found that eating fruit and vegetables seems to improve lung function and reduces the symptoms of asthma and bronchitis among children as well as adults.

Healthy eating in childhood:

- Can help improve performance in class and at play
- Can help improve concentration
- Meets children's nutrient needs for growth and development
- Encourages good eating habits for life

The children are made aware of the advantages of healthy eating in the course of their 'Health Education' programme.

➤ Aims

The aims of the policy are to:

- Promote nutrition awareness
- To develop positive and responsible attitudes to eating in our school community
- Raise levels of concentration within class through the consumption of healthy food
- Support and encourage healthy eating habits in children, which is hoped will become lifelong habits
- Protect the health and safety of children with serious food allergies.

Healthy Eating Guidelines

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.

A healthy lunchbox should include a variety of the following foods:

- **Fruit and Vegetables**-e.g. carrot/celery sticks, cucumber slices, sugar snap/mange tout peas, sweetcorn, broccoli florets, finely sliced peppers, cherry tomatoes (halved), pears, bananas, oranges, apples, melon slices, grapes (cut in half as they are a serious choking hazard)
- **Bread and Cereals** (preferably wholemeal) - e.g. sandwiches/rolls/pitta bread/crackers/rice cakes/bagels
- **Salad** – e.g. pasta salad, vegetable salad, egg salad/mayonnaise
- **Milk and Cheese** –e.g. cheese triangles, cheese cubes
- **Meat, Chicken, Turkey, Fish and Alternatives** – e.g. humus, chicken/turkey/ham/tuna sandwiches. Encourage your child to eat a variety of these sandwich fillings
- **Water**

Prohibited Foods

In order to encourage healthy, balanced eating habits among children in school the following foods are prohibited:

- Crisps, sweets, lollipops, biscuits and chocolate bars
- Spreads-Nutella, jam, honey, peanut butter
- Fizzy drinks & Fruit Juice *
- Cakes, croissants & buns
- Nuts-We are a “nut free” school.
- Cereal bars
- High cholesterol/high fatty foods e.g., sausage rolls/breakfast rolls
- Popcorn **
- Yoghurt Products **
- Raisins **

*Fruit Juice- New research has shown that fruit juices are a contributing factor to **tooth erosion** in young children. Almost half of Irish five-year-olds suffer from tooth erosion, which if left unchecked can lead to the chipping and eventual wearing away of the teeth. Children who consume fruit juices once a day are over three times more likely to suffer erosion, than children who do not.

**Although these items are healthy options, we at SS Peter & Paul JNS discourage them as most seems to end up on our school carpets and are difficult to remove.

On special occasions such as an end of term party, teachers may, at their discretion, give sugary items to their own class. Where possible though healthy alternatives are encouraged.

We would encourage all children to bring home any food wrappers they have left over from their lunch therefore reducing the school's waste intake.

➤ **Allergies**

Parents/Guardians are asked to inform the school on their enrolment form of any food allergy that their child may have. A list of children with food allergies is then kept on display in the office for all teachers to familiarise themselves with. Each class teacher will inform themselves, by speaking with the parent/guardian of the child, in relation to precautions, symptoms, and action to be taken if a child in their class does have an allergic reaction.

➤ **Implementation**

If children bring prohibited food or drink into school they will be asked by the class teacher to bring it home, and to eat an alternative food from their lunch. If a child persists in bringing unhealthy food to school the class teacher will meet with their parents/guardians to remind them of the Healthy Eating Policy and suggest alternative food choices.

➤ **Roles and Responsibilities**

- Parents/guardians have a responsibility to provide lunches, which do not include any of the prohibited foods and if possible include variety.
- Children have a responsibility to eat their own lunch and not share or trade food, or drink with others.
- Teachers have a responsibility to provide a good example through their own healthy eating habits.
- The whole school community – B.O.M., staff, parents/guardians and children – will continue to work together to promote the progress of this policy. All are encouraged to discuss and provide feedback on its performance, which will be reported back as appropriate to the Principal, Mrs Heffernan (SPHE coordinator) and staff.
- The overall performance of the policy will be regularly monitored and evaluated, if necessary, through staff meetings.

➤ **Success Criteria**

We will know if the policy is effective by:

- The level of concentration and performance of children in the class room.
- The level of engagement and enjoyment of physical activities, e.g. P.E, céilí dancing, GAA, yard activities and playtime.
- Observing what children have for lunch and during other break times
- The feedback from parents/guardians and school staff

➤ **Timeframe for implementation**

The policy will be implemented in September 2017.

➤ **Ratification and Communication**

The policy has been communicated to all staff. Parents are made aware of the policy during the enrolment procedure and a copy of the policy is available for parents, on request, to read in the school & also on our school website: sspeterandpauljns.ie/policies. It will be promoted in school through the SPHE Policy.

➤ **Useful Information:**

The Health Promotion Unit provides information on food and nutrition for children and is available to download at: www.healthpromotion.ie

The Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute has a vast amount of information on nutrition and diet and have suggestions on what to include in school lunch boxes: www.indi.ie

For lunchbox suggestions visit the following websites: www.safefoods.ie, www.irishheart.ie, www.ndc.ie and www.fooddudes.ie or contact your local health board.

The policy was ratified by the Board of Management on

Date: _____

Signed: _____ Chairperson, Board of
Management

It will be reviewed annually.