

Healthy Eating Policy

**Drimoleague N.S.
Uimhir Rolla
18296A**

Introduction and Rationale

Schools and the wider education sector have a vital role to play in contributing to the 'Healthy Ireland' agenda that is being led by the Department of Health and is supported by the Department of Education and Skills and other Government Departments. Schools are contributing to the overall physical, mental health and well-being of our young people. But there are many challenges for our young people if they are to adopt a healthy lifestyle and enjoy positive health and wellbeing to their full potential. We can, in collaboration with parents and families, all do more to address these challenges." - (Circular 03/2016 Promotion of healthy lifestyles in Primary Schools)

As part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Programme, at Drimoleague National School, we encourage the children to become more aware of the need for healthy food in their lunch boxes.

What people eat is known to be a key factor influencing health. Research indicates a strong link between diet and performance (e.g. a low sugar intake promotes concentration, lessens hyperactivity, protects teeth, and lessens the risk of diabetes. A low salt intake reduces the risk of heart disease in later life).

To promote healthy eating habits in our school, we introduced a healthy eating policy starting from February 2017.

As part of our School Self-Evaluation in Wellbeing in the 2023/24 school year, staff identified the need to review our healthy eating policy. While healthy eating does not form part of our School Improvement Plan in this cycle of SSE, teachers felt it would be beneficial to review and modify our policy given the link between healthy eating and the other aspects of wellbeing. This policy was reviewed in March 2024.

Aims and Objectives

- To encourage the belief and attitude that having a balanced and healthy diet is important for your well-being.
- To ensure that all reference to food and nutrition at a school level promotes healthy habits in our pupils.
- To adhere to nutrition guidelines and recommendations issued by the Department of Education/ Health
- 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.
- To highlight the link between physical and mental wellbeing and how one affects the other

The Food Pyramid

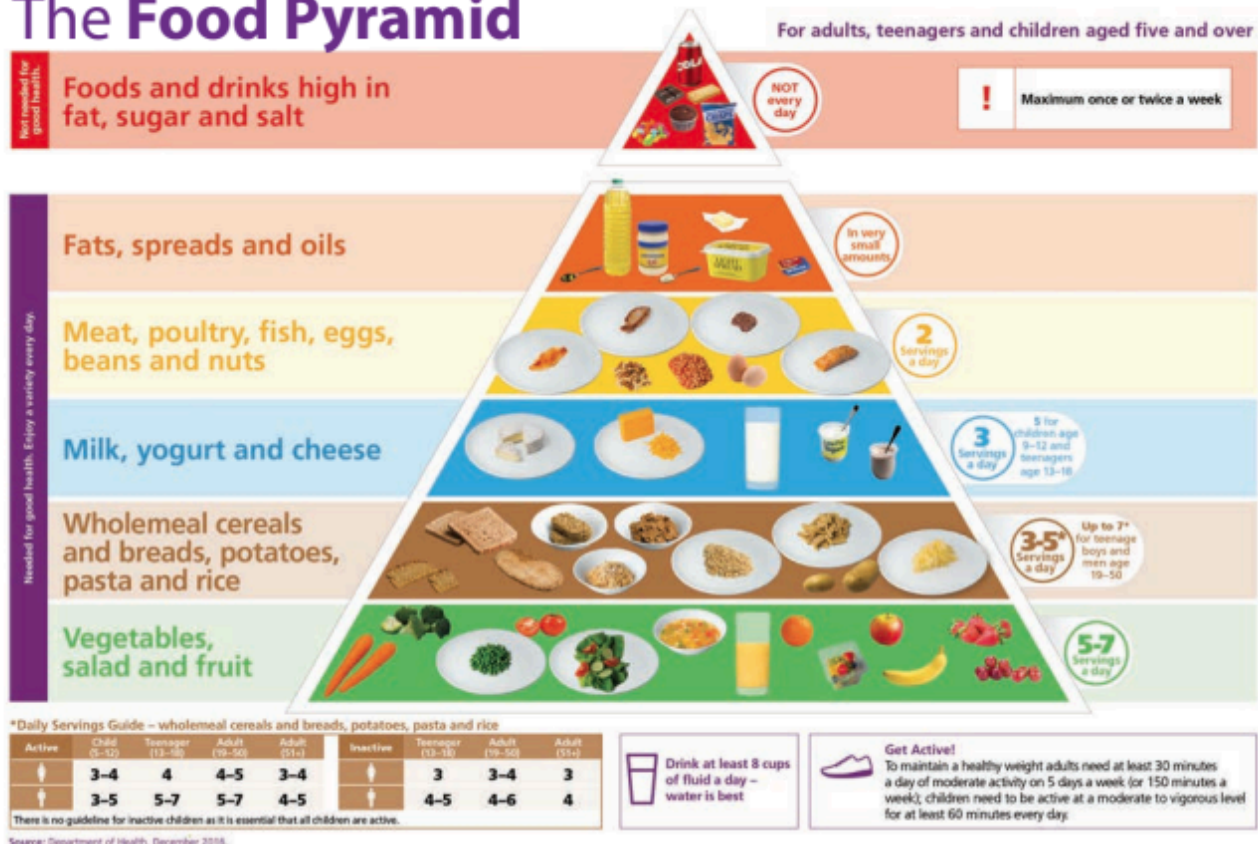
The food pyramid is designed in a very simple way to show us the foods that we should eat lots of, and the food which should be eaten sparingly. Using the food pyramid and promoting the food pyramid will lead to children having a more healthy and balanced diets ensuring all nutrition requirements are met.

- The bottom of the pyramid contains the foods you should eat lots of.
- The middle of the pyramid contains foods you should eat some, but not too much of.

- The top of the pyramid is the smallest part of the pyramid. It contains foods you can eat once in a while. When consuming, should be done sparingly.

A child's Lunch should provide one third of that child's food requirements for the day. The most effective way to plan a healthy lunch is to include one food from each of the 4 lowest food groups - one piece of fruit, milk/yoghurt, two slices of bread and meat/poultry/cheese.

The Food Pyramid



Lunch and Breaks

A healthy lunchbox should contain some or all of the following: (safefood.net/healthyeating)

- **Bread and Cereals:** Sandwiches / wrap / roll / pitta / crackers etc. (wholemeal is healthier)
- **Meat / Meat alternatives:** 2 slices of cooked meat / eggs / fish / hummus etc.
- **Fruit and Vegetables:** 1 medium sized fruit (apple etc.) / 2 small fruits (plum) / dried fruit / carrot sticks
- **Dairy:** low fat yoghurt, cheese
- **Drink:** water only to be consumed throughout the day (unsweetened fruit juice / milk may be consumed with food only at break times)

Parents should ensure that their child has an appropriate portion size for their needs and time available as per Dept. of Education guidelines. We would ask that parents ensure their child's lunch is packed in an appropriate and secure container and that **ALL** uneaten foodstuffs, wrappers and cartons are returned home in the lunch box. Children are not permitted to dispose of food waste in school due to pest control measures. This also enables parents to monitor the food that is and is not being eaten by their children.

We would encourage parents to ensure that their child's lunch is nutritious and covers a variety of the categories mentioned above. Lunches that are sufficient in amount, but only of one type will not be sufficiently nutritious. For example, containers of plain pasta, or plain slices of brown bread, while healthy, do not provide enough nutrition on their own.

Pupils in Drimoleague N.S. get two breaks during which they can eat:

- 11:06
- 12:30

Children are encouraged to tidy their spaces in advance of eating their lunches and good food hygiene is encouraged.

We encourage natural foods as much as possible and discourage food that comes in packages/wrappers that may be marketed as being healthy but is not. We encourage parents to check the ingredients of processed foods for its nutritional value.

Allergies

From time to time some children in our school may have very serious and sensitive nut allergies. All nuts and nut containing products including Nutella, some cereal bars and nut butters are not permitted in school as they can be very dangerous to these children. We ask that parents be mindful of other products that may have been produced in a factory handling nuts. All such information will be clearly printed on food wrappers. There will be no sharing of lunches to limit the possibility of allergic reactions.

Foods to be Discouraged

Any foods known to be high in sugar, saturated fat, salt, additives & preservatives, including, but not limited to, the following:

- All chocolate spreads
- Chocolate bars
- Pastries with a very high fat content, such as (chocolate) croissants
- Sweets
- Cakes
- Biscuits
- Sweetened fruit juice
- Crisps & similar products
- Lollipops
- Fast food eg. sausage rolls, nuggets, hot dogs etc.
- Fizzy drinks
- High sugar cereal bars
- Chewing gum

These items are not permitted to be consumed in school.

Too much sugar in a child's diet can lead to tooth decay, hyperactivity, increased risk of obesity and Type 2 Diabetes - We therefore ask that parents are mindful of the sugar content in so-called 'healthier' snacks and we discourage their inclusion. Such foods include cereal bars, yoghurt drinks (eg. 'Frubes') and fruit corner products, jams, jelly, custards, icings etc.

Treats

Drimoleague N.S. **does not permit treats** that are brought into school as part of school lunches, even on Fridays. We believe that treats are best given at home at the parents' discretion. Friday treats can often lead to children comparing treats and there can be a large discrepancy between the types of treats that different children receive. It is also difficult for teachers to monitor. Instead, the school will provide occasional treats from time to time to celebrate special events or mark occasions, such as Christmas, end of term parties, Pancake Tuesday, Easter, etc. This makes it fair on everyone as **each child in the class receives the same treat**. Treats may be sweet (chocolate, marshmallows, hot chocolate) or savoury (popcorn, pizza) and will be small in amount.

Sometimes, a whole class achievement may be rewarded with a class treat if deemed appropriate by the class teacher (e.g. a film with popcorn and hot chocolate). However, it is the policy of this school to first and foremost reward their class in other healthier ways, such as extra yard time, a game, extra physical activity or PE time, or a homework pass.

Promotion of this Policy

In Drimoleague N.S. our aim is to promote and encourage healthy eating in a positive and supportive way - by praising and complimenting healthy lunchboxes as opposed to highlighting the unhealthy ones. The children will learn about healthy eating and foods in class when aspects of the Science and SPHE curricula are being taught. Class teachers will draw attention to healthy foods being sent in at lunch times – giving praise and encouragement in a positive manner for healthy lunchboxes.

From time to time, initiatives may be undertaken in the school to promote healthy eating amongst children. Examples of these are Food Dudes and Incredible Edibles.

School Garden

We encourage children to think about where their food comes from, from farm to fork and sustainable food production is taught as part of global citizenship. We currently have a garden at the back of our school as part of our Creative Space. We aim to develop this in further years and use it as a teaching resource to teach children the basics about food production and how fruit and vegetables are grown in particular.

Implementation

Foods not allowed as part of this policy should not be brought into school. A stock of basic foods may be kept in school from time to time and will be available for children who have forgotten their lunch (parents will be contacted first to bring a lunch into school) Parents in continuous breach of the school's Healthy Eating policy may be contacted by the school.

We encourage parents to support this policy by informing your child about the importance of healthy eating which will have a huge bearing on the food choices children make. Parents could make preparing the lunch a fun activity and children could be involved in preparation of the lunchbox the evening before school. Further information about healthy eating, a balanced diet and sugar content can be found at: www.safefood.net

Lunches will be monitored on an ongoing basis by the class teacher and teacher with responsibility for wellbeing. Any parents whose children have specific dietary needs should contact the school to discuss in advance, including children with specific medical needs.

N.B. Parents/guardians of any child with a medical condition which requires a special diet should contact the school.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Board of Management:

The BOM oversees the development, implementation and review of school policy on Healthy Eating.

2. Teacher with Responsibility for Wellbeing

The teacher with responsibility for wellbeing will gather feedback on the school lunches from the class teachers and report to the Principal and staff as to the success of this policy. Healthy eating initiatives and wellbeing CPD in these areas will also be organised and undertaken by this teacher.

3. Class Teachers:

Implement teaching programmes which optimise the learning of all pupils regarding nutrition. Monitor the school lunches of children in the class and give feedback to the teacher with responsibility for wellbeing.

4. Parents/Guardians:

It is the responsibility of each parent to ensure that their child/children's lunches adhere to the healthy eating policy in place in the school.

5. Pupils:

Pupils should strive at all times to adhere to the healthy eating policy in place in the school.

Ratification and Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on February 27th 2017. It was reviewed in March 2024.

Ratified by the Board of Management of Drimoleague National School on March 5th 2024