



Healthy Eating Policy

Introduction

In St. Mary's Boys' National School, we promote a healthy eating policy. This policy was created in conjunction with staff and the Board of Management. For the successful implementation of this policy, it will require full support from parents, pupils and staff.

Lunch Breaks

The children, at present, have two breaks at which they eat their lunches. It is hoped that the children will be both encouraged by their peers and enticed by the variety of fruit and vegetables they will see being consumed around them, to try various healthy options and eventually find some that they like to eat.

Children bring home all food that is not eaten during the school day. It is important that parents check their child's lunch box to monitor what their child has eaten/not eaten. It is essential that children come to school with a freshly packed lunch every day. All waste and packaging from lunches, including snacks provided in school, is brought home to be disposed of and should not be placed in classroom bins.

Aims

- To take a whole school approach to healthy eating in school, in relation to: the Culture and Environment, Curriculum (Teaching and Learning), Policy and Planning, Relationships and Partnerships.
- To promote healthy eating across school life, consistent with national healthy eating guidelines and school curriculum
- To ensure that food provision in school reflects the ethical and medical requirements of staff and pupils, e.g. religious, ethnic, vegetarian, medical and allergenic needs.
- To make the provision and consumption of food an enjoyable and safe experience.

Lunches/Snacks Suggestions

Suggestions for lunches include the following and would ideally include a piece of food from the four main shelves of the Food Pyramid:

- Sandwiches (made from bread of all types)
- Filled rolls (of all types).
- Wraps, pitta breads, bagels, scones
- Sandwiches, rolls, wraps and bread may have fillings of any kind- chocolate spread as a treat on Fridays only. Please note chicken fillet rolls, breakfast rolls etc are not encouraged and should not be given as a regular lunch option.
- Crackers (preferably wholegrain/wholewheat) and cheese (avoiding pre-packaged ones)
- Yogurt, yogurt drinks and fromage frais (excluding chocolate ones)
- Cheese of any kind
- Fruit or vegetables of any kind
- Pasta, spaghetti or rice in small containers

- Slices, cubes of chopped meat, chicken, fish or hard-boiled eggs.

Yogurts should be of suitable size and easy for infants to eat without spilling.

Suggestions for Healthy Break are as follows:

Fruit

- Any whole piece of fruit such as an apple, pear, banana or orange. **Please note grapes are a serious choking hazard and therefore should be cut length ways.**
- A bowl of chopped fruit such as pineapple cubes, melon pieces etc
- A bowl/pack of dried fruit such as raisins, dried apricots etc.

It is important that any food is made easy for infants to eat

Vegetables

- Chopped peppers, carrots, celery sticks, cucumber etc
- Baby tomatoes or other whole baby vegetables

Drinks

It is important that children take in enough fluids during the day. Almost 2/3 of the body is made up of water. If children do not drink enough water, they may become dehydrated, thirsty, tired and weak.

Recent studies have shown that children who are dehydrated find it more difficult to concentrate. Therefore, we would recommend that **every child bring a drink of water each day**. Drinks that are encouraged are tooth friendly drinks, as follows:

- Water
- Flavoured water
- Milk (no flavoured milk)
- Fruit juice (preferably diluted and unsweetened)
- Diluted drinks/squashes (sugar free)

Please note, energy drinks and minerals are strictly prohibited in school.

Sugar

We strongly discourage food of any kind which is predominantly sugar – e.g. fruit winders, cereal bars etc. Such food should not be included in your child's lunch.

Unsuitable foods

The following foods are discouraged for consumption as school lunches and are not allowed in school:

- Fizzy drinks of any kind
- Crisps
- Chewing gum
- Sweets
- Chocolate bars

- Chocolate/icing covered cakes/bars/biscuits/treats/cereal bars/health bars
- Pre-packed combination lunches

While a single treat is allowed on a Friday, family bags, sharing bags, large bars etc are not. One small treat per pupil on a Friday only please.

Nuts – Allergy risk

Due to the risk of allergic reactions to peanuts or products containing nuts, pupils are asked not to bring peanut butter or products containing nuts into school.

Breakfast

A nourishing breakfast is a good start to a child's day and gives them the energy they need to concentrate, learn and participate fully in school activities. Therefore, we would encourage parents to provide a healthy breakfast before coming to school.

Hygiene

Pupils in our school will be aware of the importance of food hygiene and safety, when preparing and eating lunches, e.g. washing hands, have clean lunch boxes etc Signs will be displayed throughout the school to encourage pupils to become more aware of this.

Environment

In keeping with our ongoing environmental awareness, a Healthy Eating Policy will reduce the amount of litter in the school and will give the pupils an understanding of how people affect the world around them and how they can improve it.

In doing this, we will encourage the pupils to cut down on litter produced by packed lunches e.g. using re-sealable bottles instead of cartons or re-usable airtight containers rather than disposable wrappings. **Pupils will bring home all waste associated with lunches.** Any packaging left over from a child's lunch is brought home in the lunch box for disposal. Any partially/fully uneaten lunch will be sent home so that parents can monitor how much their child is eating.

Birthdays/Parties

At St. Mary's Boys' National School, we don't allow party bags, cakes or sweets. Handing these out takes up a lot of teaching and learning time throughout the year and can put pressure on other parents to supply sweets and treats on their child's birthday. Every child in the school is made to feel special on their birthday by the school community. School staff cannot be responsible for handing out party invites. Parents can do this in a subtle manner outside of school time.

Concerns around snacks/lunch

Where a pupil does not bring an adequate lunch to school on a regular basis, the class teacher will monitor the situation and bring the concern to the attention of the parent(s). Where issues/concerns are ongoing, despite the teacher bringing the concern to the parent(s), the principal may be informed and arrange a meeting with parents to outline our concerns.

Success Criteria:

Teacher Observation
Parental Co-operation

Healthy Lunch Boxes

Increases awareness about healthy options.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Individual class teachers

Parents

Pupils

Timeframe for implementation:

This policy will be implemented upon ratification.

Timeframe for Review:

This policy will be reviewed every two years or as the need arises.

Responsibility for Review:

Principal and staff

Ratification and Communication:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 6th December 2022 and made available to parents on the school website.

Signed: _____

Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: _____