

# *Healthy Eating Policy*

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Much of the recent focus on children's health has been in the areas of nutrition, exercise and rising levels of obesity. It is therefore timely that the school support parents in providing healthy food options that will enable their children to participate fully in the school day. By raising nutrition awareness amongst our children we are providing them with a basis to make informed choices about their health into the future.

To help achieve this, our guidelines will reflect good eating habits.

The purpose of making healthy food choices enables children to attain their optimum growth, development and health potential.

Recent research (Department of Health and Children) has highlighted disturbing trends, including an increase in childhood obesity and type 2 diabetes so therefore our policy and guidelines are critical for the health and development of children.

Through a whole school approach, and within the context of SPHE the children, parents and staff will learn about nutrition, healthy eating and healthy living.

Our healthy eating guidelines hope to enable the children to develop an understanding of healthy living, and an ability to implement healthy behaviour and willingness to participate in activities that promote and sustain health. This includes physical activity.

## **Healthy Snack Options**

- Different types of bread, such as pitta bread, bagels, wholemeal rolls, wraps or crusty rolls.
- Pasta, couscous, rice
- Fruit (for example, an apple or banana, handful of grapes)
- Washed, raw vegetable pieces (for example, sticks of carrot, celery, pepper and cucumber, cherry tomatoes)
- Half a tin of fruit (in its own juice)
- Plain popcorn (unsalted)
- Plain breadsticks, unsalted plain or wholewheat crackers, crispbreads
- Plain rice cakes.
- Natural or low fat yogurt with fresh fruit (fresh, frozen or tinned in its own juice)
- Wholemeal or plain scones.
- Plain biscuits (for example, digestive biscuits, rich tea)\*
- Fruit bun or mini fruit loaf.
- Sugar-free jelly pots or fruit jelly.
- Pot of custard or rice pudding.

## Healthy Drink Options

- water
- milk
- unsweetened natural juice.

*The children will be allowed to drink water during the school day if it is provided in a non-spill bottle.*

- ✓ It is important that children take in enough fluids during the day. If they do not drink enough, they may become dehydrated, thirsty, tired and weak.
- ✓ Drinks should always be included for break-time and lunch.
- ✓ Water and milk are the most suitable drinks for children.
- ✓ Because of its natural sugar content, unsweetened fruit juice should be consumed with meals and ideally diluted (one part juice to ten parts water).
- ✓ If you are unsure about whether a drink contains added sugar, check the ingredients list. Less common terms for sugar that may appear on the ingredients list are sucrose, fructose, glucose, maltose, dextrose and syrup. See our table for the low down on suitable drinks.

**The following foods do not support a healthy lunch policy and should be excluded from your child's lunch box;**

- X Sweets
- X Crisps
- X Chewing gum,
- X Sweets ,
- X Biscuits (except plain digestives & rich tea)
- X Bars including cereal bars/energy bars
- X Lollipops,
- X Chocolate,
- X Winders,
- X Crispie buns
- X Any snack known to be high in sugar, saturated, fat, salt, additives and preservatives

### **In Addition:**

- X Pistachio nuts, cashew nuts, peanuts and kiwi fruit are discouraged in school due to pupil allergy
- X Cans and glasses are not permitted for safety and litter reasons.
- X Foods, which have wrappers, are best kept to a minimum. All food wrappings may be brought home and we encourage the use of lunchboxes and reusable bottles for drinks.
- X Cakes, buns or treats (sweets and chocolate) for birthday celebrations will not be distributed.

### **To help highlight awareness of healthy school lunches the following will take place:**

- The Healthy School Lunches guidelines will be displayed in every classroom and the staff room and will be referred to by the teachers.
- At the beginning of each school term teachers and pupils will discuss healthy eating.
- During the year all classes will receive lessons on healthy eating.
- Teachers will provide positive modelling and supportive attitudes to encourage healthy eating.
- Once a year, this policy will be reviewed and a Healthy Eating Awareness week will be held.

### **Implementation**

- Ensure that the whole staff team is familiar with the policy and is prepared to work within it.
- Ensure that everyone is aware of changes that the policy will make in practice.

### **Monitoring**

- Highlight the positive aspects of individual lunches in the classroom.
- Discuss the contents of school lunch boxes in class.

### **Sustaining and strengthening your Policy within the school and home**

- Praise and affirmation.
- Reminders on school letters/ newsletters throughout the year.
- A “fun event” to highlight healthy lunches. This could include a competition, artwork or display.
- Inform all new staff of the policy.
- Ensure that the guidelines are clearly displayed.
- Use national campaigns, for example National Healthy Eating Week, to highlight awareness.

### **Please Note:**

- This policy revises the previous Healthy Eating Policy.
- This policy was reviewed and approved by children (Student Council), Parents (PTA), Staff and the Board of Management.
- We appreciate that encouraging children to choose certain foods is not always easy. However, with the increase in obesity, type 2 diabetes and the prevalence of dental caries we are encouraging best practice especially during school hours and after school activities held on site.
- For this policy to be successful, we need support from the whole school community.
- This policy will be reviewed each 2 years.

This policy applies to the food that children consume while at school, focusing on the contents of a healthy lunchbox and on health promoting activities within the school.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Oliver's National School,

On \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_