

Scoil Naomh Buithe, Tenure

Healthy Eating Policy

Title

Promotion of healthy eating within Scoil Naomh Buithe, Tenure.

Rationale

Over the last number of years there has been a growing awareness and debate in our society about the effects of diet and exercise on our physical and mental health and well-being.

The world in which we live presents our children with many challenges that affect their health and well-being. Our school needs to reflect on how we can provide for the needs of students in the area of health and nutrition.

Eating habits are established at an early age. What we eat affects our health both now and in the future. Recent European studies highlight that young people eat too much sugar, salt and fat and they do not eat enough fruit and vegetables. There is a lot of evidence to promote the benefits of fruit and vegetables and there is a definite link between what we eat and our risk of developing diabetes and heart disease etc.

Health professionals have expressed serious concerns over the rising number of health issues directly related to poor diet and lack of exercise.

There is also increased emphasis on the role a balanced healthy diet can play in a child's ability to concentrate and to get the most out of time spent in school.

Studies have shown that children, who have regular balanced meals have better attendance in schools, perform better academically and have improved behaviour in the classroom.

The significance of establishing healthy eating habits early cannot be underestimated. Early primary school age can be a time for maximum impact, with equal emphasis on physical activity and other health issues.

Promoting healthy eating will help ensure that healthy children become healthy adults. The school with the support of parents can have a very valuable role to play in promoting health.

In developing a food and nutrition policy, this school is taking a step towards the positive images associated with a Health Promoting School. Our objective is to encourage and promote healthy lunches for all children everyday in addition to increasing their response to healthy choices. Our long-term goal is for the children to make their own healthy choices and to be self-motivated in achieving the overall goal of a healthy lifestyle.

This policy is incorporated in the Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum under the strand '*Myself*' within the unit '*Taking care of my body*'.

The Education Act (1998) provides that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.

Developing healthy eating guidelines for the school is an ideal way to support and encourage healthy choices.

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School.

Our school cherishes all pupils equally and to aid them in achieving their true potential we are going to promote a healthy eating policy within our school. This policy has been formulated by a sub-committee of the B.O.M. comprising of teachers, parents and management and with input from H.S.E. health promoting staff.

Aims

- To heighten an awareness of the importance of a balanced diet.
- To encourage the children to make informed healthy choices about food and nutrition.
- To promote healthy eating and active living as necessary and enjoyable aspects of young peoples lives in order to allow them to make independent and informed choices both now and in the future
- To encourage pupils to be aware, alert and responsive to litter problems caused by junk food, pre-prepared food, juice cartons etc.
- To encourage children to see a link and to establish a balance between food intake and physical activity in their daily living.
- To promote oral health in the form of healthy eating choices which reduces the frequency and amount of sugary foods and drinks consumed during the day.

POLICY

School management and staff will

- Develop an awareness and understanding of healthy eating through the Social Personal and Health Education Curriculum and the Social Environmental and Scientific Education Curriculum
- Position healthy eating in the broader context of healthy active living i.e. oral health, cooking, daily physical activity etc.
- Educate children to make healthy choices and to take responsibility for the choices they make.
- Request that parents provide children with balanced healthy lunches and that they facilitate children's healthy choices
- Encourage the children to sit and eat their lunch before going outside to the yard. They will be encouraged to eat as much of it as possible and asked to take all uneaten lunch home.
- Request that lunch boxes are free of bars and sweets with the exception of a Friday treat should parents so wish.
- Encourage and foster in children a sense of responsibility and independence regarding their own lunches
- Promote the five a day message and encourage a fruit/vegetable only little break.
- Request that unhealthy items are not eaten in the classroom.
- Facilitate the consumption of water
- Promote a sugar free reward system in school except on treat days and special occasions
- Arrange for health care professionals, such as dental staff, nutritionist, doctor, nurse, physiotherapist to visit the school to speak to the children about healthy eating and active living.
- Provide the children with as good a physical education programme as possible because the school has no indoor facility for P.E./Sport
- Encourage active and safe play in the playground at play time
- Encourage children to include daily exercise as part of a healthy living routine
- In the school a special focus will be placed on healthy eating by discussing healthy eating and having a designated Healthy Eating Week.
- A poster of the Food Pyramid will be displayed throughout the school and will be referred to by the teachers.

The Food Pyramid outlines an excellent commonsense approach to healthy and balanced eating.

A copy of the H.S.E healthy eating for Children will be distributed to the children when available.

Food Pyramid

5. Sugar/Sweets etc. Sparingly
4. Meat/Fish/Peas/Beans. 2 Portions per day.
3. Milk, Cheese, Yoghurt. 3 Portions per day
2. Fruit and Vegetables 5+ Portions per day
1. Breads Cereals and Potatoes 6+ portions a day

Small Break:

In order to encourage consumption of fruit and vegetables, we will encourage the children to eat only these items at this time. If you feel that your child would need something else at this time please include an extra sandwich.

Lunch Time

A healthy lunch is defined as a balanced meal which should ideally have a helping of food from the first four shelves of the food pyramid.

A copy of The Food Pyramid will on display in the classrooms/school.

The following items are actively discouraged and should not be included in your child's lunch box.

- Crisps and similar snacks.
- Cereal bars with high sugar content.
- Fizzy Drinks
- Sweets/bars/Biscuits/Chocolate flavoured foods.
- Chewing Gum
- Dairy/le lunchables.
- Chips/Fried Food
- Nuts (see note)
- ALL snacks known to be high in sugar saturated fat, salt, additives and preservatives

Please keep food manageable. E.g. peeled orange/apple etc.

The recommended choice of drink during school hours is water

Pure unsweetened juices or well diluted sugar free squashes (1:8) may be included but only as part of their main lunch meal to reduce the risk of tooth decay.

Please avoid messy food e.g. Frubes etc. While we recognize that yoghurt, yoghurt drinks etc are foods to be encouraged, these items very often spill, and despite the time and energy given to cleaning up the mess, they soak into clothes, books, carpets, etc and leave unpleasant stains and smells. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter especially with the younger children.

Nuts or foods containing nuts are not to be included in your child's lunch as they represent a choking hazard and a number of children are allergic to them.

Chewing Gum is strictly forbidden as it represents a litter problem.

Treat day

Friday is treat day. On this day one piece of food from the top shelf of the Pyramid may be included in the lunch box, if you so wish. This is a good opportunity discuss the top shelf of the food pyramid with your child.

If sugary foods are consumed it is advisable to have same as part of a meal in order to help prevent tooth decay.

Chewy/sticky bars are not advisable at any time

Implementation of Policy

- The general emphasis will be on the positive aspects of the children bringing healthy lunches, it is accepted that there is a need to register disapproval of unhealthy choices.
- All staff will be familiar with the policy and work within it.
- Children will be encouraged to self-monitor and self-evaluate their choices.
- Children who fail to make efforts in healthy choices will be monitored and encouraged to make changes. This will be an ongoing process combined with curriculum work in the area of nutrition to promote this whole school message.
- The Food Pyramid will be discussed in class and the positive aspects of same in relation to school lunches etc will be highlighted.
- Children may from time to time be rewarded for adhering to the healthy eating policy.
- If children bring unhealthy food/drink into school they will be reminded of the Healthy Eating Policy.
- If children persist in bringing unhealthy food into school the class teacher and principal will organize a meeting with their parents /guardians to remind them of the healthy eating policy
- This area will be addressed through curricular links especially in the S.P.H.E., P.E. and the Science curriculum.
- Health promotion in schools is a combination of health education within the curriculum and all the other actions a school takes to protect and improve the health of those within it.

Exceptions

The following exceptions may apply:

- Friday is treat day-one treat is allowed with lunch on this day
- Use of sweets as treats on treat day.
- End of term parties
- School trips

Children with Special Dietary Needs

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

Success Criteria

We will know if the policy is effective by:

- Observing what children have for lunch and break time. Evidence of success will be when children bring lunches which are balanced, healthy, natural and nutritious.
- The feedback from parents/guardians and school staff.
- The level of concentration and performance of children in the class room.

Roles and Responsibility

The whole school community, will work together to promote the progress of this policy.
Parents and guardians have a responsibility to provide lunches, which do not include unhealthy food.

Children have a responsibility to eat their own lunch and take home unhealthy items if requested by the teacher.

Teachers have the responsibility to bring the policy to the attention of the pupils and to monitor its success.

The overall performance of the policy will be regularly monitored and evaluated.

Timeframe for Implementation

The Policy will become effective from September 2009

➤ Timeframe for Review

This Policy will be review as necessary The B.O.M. reserves the right to make any changes that may be necessary in the interim.

Responsibility for Review

The overall performance of the policy will be regularly monitored, evaluated and amended if necessary.

Ratification and Communication

The B.O.M. ratified the policy at its meeting on June 11th 2009, after it had been drafted, circulated and amended.

The policy has been communicated to all staff and children and will be promoted in school. A copy has been made available to parents.

Ratified by the Board of Management _____

Signed _____

Useful websites for Information on Nutrition and Diet.

www.healthpromotion.ie

www.indi.ie

www.vhi.ie/hfiles/hf-011.jsp