

Below is the current text of this policy. Please note, however, that it is due for review during the 2019/20 school year.



## **Healthy Lunch / Eating Policy**

## **Introductory Statement**

This policy was originally formulated by a sub-committee of the Board of Management comprising of teachers and parents and with the input of Mary Keogan, Consultant Immunologist, Beaumont Hospital. It was reviewed in November 2013.

The Healthy Eating Policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies – Health and Safety Policy and Allergy Policy – and with the school information booklet.

Copies of this policy will be given to each member of staff, parents/guardians, those responsible for after-school activities, sibling after-care and to the members of the Board of Management.

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## **Rationale**

Our school setting provides an excellent health promotion avenue, reaching a large section of the community: children, families and teachers. The policy is intended as a guide to healthy and safe eating for the school.

## **Aims**

The aims of the policy are to:

- Promote nutrition awareness
- Positively affect healthy eating among school-age children
- 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
- Provide members of staff, parents and those involved in school activities with clear information
- Protect the health and safety of children with serious food allergies.

## **Content**

### **1. Healthy Lunch**

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 Lunch should, if possible, include a variety of foods from the bottom four shelves of the Food Pyramid. These are:

- Bread Cereals
- Fruit, Fruit Juice and Vegetables
- Milk, Cheese and Yogurt
- Meat, Chicken, Fish and Alternatives

A healthy lunch might be a ham, cheese or tuna sandwich, yogurt, some fruit and a drink of water or milk.

### **2. Prohibited Foods**

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

- Crisps Sweets Bars
- Chocolate / chocolate spreads
- Fizzy Drinks

Unfortunately, as there is a high risk burns and scalds, please do not include hot drinks or food as part of a child's lunch.

On a treat day, as determined by the school, parents/guardians may give treats to their own child and teachers may give treats to their own class. These are special occasions such as:

- End of term parties
- Halloween
- School trips and events

Although it is a special occasion, treats are not allowed on a child's birthday.

It is important to remember that the guidelines about sharing in section 3 and class specific restrictions in section 4, apply on treat day.

### **3. Lunch Time Guidelines**

In order to promote the health and safety of all children in the school and prevent the spread of infection, guidelines for eating at lunch and break times are necessary. These are essential and therefore mandatory:

- Children are not to share food or drink.
- Children are not to share food utensils or drinks containers.

We would also encourage that:

- All containers are labelled with the child's name
- As far as practicable, lunches are eaten in one place within the classroom.

It is important to note that the health and safety of children with serious allergies will take precedence over other issues. It may, therefore be necessary to introduce additional precautions or restrictions in classes in which some children have serious allergies.

### **4. Allergies**

In order to protect children who have serious food allergies, the whole school community will work together to implement age appropriate, responsible measures to minimise the risk of an allergic reaction. All children in the school will be made aware of the implications of food allergies and how they can assist in preventing allergic reactions.

If your child has a serious food allergy, as parents/guardians you must notify the school and provide a doctor's report stating the implications of the allergy and listing the foods to be avoided. You will be asked to participate with staff in formulating an individual allergy management plan. This plan will identify how best to minimise the risk of an allergic reaction for your child, taking her/his age and class into account. The individual allergy management plan may result in precautions or class specific restrictions, in addition to those of not sharing food or containers, being put in place. They are called class specific restrictions, as they will only apply to the class in which there is a child with a life-threatening allergy. Where class specific restrictions are required, the parents/guardians of all children in the affected class will be informed by a letter explaining what the restrictions are and the

reasons for them. These will be regularly reviewed and updated, and any changes will be communicated in writing.

### **Implementation**

If children bring prohibited food or drink into school they will be asked by the class teacher to bring it home, as it is not allowed.

If children do not have anything else to eat, they will be provided with fruit, milk and sandwiches that are almost always available in the school.

If children persist in bringing unhealthy food to school the class teacher and principal will organise a meeting with their parents/guardians to remind them of the Healthy Eating Policy.

### **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, drink or treats with others.

Teachers have a responsibility to provide a good example through their own healthy eating habits.

The whole school community - staff, parents/guardians and children – will 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 and staff.

The overall performance of the Policy will be regularly monitored and evaluated by the BOM sub-committee, responsible for its formulation and review.

### **Success Criteria**

We will know if the policy is effective by:

- Observing what children have for lunch and during other break times
- The feedback from parents/guardians and school staff
- The level of concentration and performance of children in the class room

### **Timeframe for implementation**

November 2013

### **Ratification and Communication**

The BOM originally ratified the policy at its meeting in March 2007, after it had been drafted, circulated and amended. It was reviewed in November 2013 with only minor changes.

The policy is available to all staff, children and parents on the school website. It will be promoted in school as part of the SPHE policy and its importance will be stressed in communication with parents.

### **Useful Information:**

The Health Promotion Unit provides information on food and nutrition for children and is available to download at: [www.healthpromotion.ie](http://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](http://www.indi.ie).

The Voluntary Health Insurance (VHI) website has a section on children returning to school, which includes advice on healthy lunches: [www.vhi.ie](http://www.vhi.ie).