



St. Raphaela's Primary School

Healthy Eating Policy

Introductory Statement:

This healthy eating plan has been devised by the teaching staff of St. Raphaela's School in consultation with the Parents Association of the school. It is intended to outline our commitment to promoting healthy eating and good nutrition. It describes how we will go about giving each child an understanding of the importance of good nutrition. We believe that establishing good eating habits in childhood will create life long patterns in each child's life.

This policy has been produced and written in the light of the following documents:

- Our School Mission Statement
- The NCCA Curriculum 1999

It was also informed by statements made by the Irish Health Boards and the World Health Organisation, and The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and by the Food Dudes Programme.

Rationale

The purpose of the healthy eating plan is to provide an overview of the universal approach of encouraging healthy eating, as practised here in St. Raphaela's School, and is intended to inform and guide new teachers and special needs assistants, and to outline for all partners in education our agreed approach to eating in the school.

The staff at St. Raphaela's recognise that good nutrition is critical for every child's short and long term health including both their physical and cognitive development helping to improve attention levels and concentration spans. Pupils need energy to fulfil growth needs and to complete everyday activities well.

Healthy eating habits learned during childhood are usually continued throughout a child's life

And these healthy behaviours can help to reduce the risk of diseases such as obesity, diabetes and dental caries throughout a child's lifetime. As school is where our children spend most of their waking hours it is important that they are sustained during the school day by healthy food and that they learn in an environment that supports healthy eating. This plan emphasises the fact that we will promote and encourage the understanding and benefits of eating healthily.

Our vision celebrates the uniqueness of all our pupils and strives to enhance their performance and cater for their needs and well being.

Aims:

The aims of this policy are to:

- Develop a positive attitude to healthy eating
- Ensure pupils practise healthy eating practices
- Foster a positive approach to food, nutrition and health education among pupils and parents
- encourage responsibility and accountability among parents/guardians in offering healthy choices to pupils
- help pupils appreciate that healthy eating enhances a healthy lifestyle through the teaching of a relevant and differentiated curriculum including the Food Pyramid
- promote the drinking of water as a first and best choice
- encourage pupils to have practical experiences in preparing their own lunches where appropriate
- promote and encourage physical exercise, particularly sports, as an integral part of a healthy eating programme
- Document and communicate the school's commitment to healthy eating.

Implementation Procedure:

Our Healthy Eating plan will be implemented as follows:

- We will inform parents of our healthy eating policy through the Information Booklet for new parents
- We ask parents to inform teachers of any allergies or food intolerances which their child has at the start of each year or as they arise.
- Include healthy eating rules at the beginning of a new year by means of a classroom agreement and also through a school assembly
- Only healthy foods and drinks may be brought to school each day. On a Friday however, one small treat is permitted. Fizzy drinks are never permitted.
- A healthy lunchbox might include some of the following foods: sandwiches, crackers & cheese, cold chicken or meat, fresh fruit, dried fruit, yoghurts, salads, fruit salads, carrot and celery sticks, and water to drink.
- It is a good idea to vary the content of the lunchbox as far as possible. New tastes are actively encouraged.
- Water is the recommended drink. We have several water fountains in the school, and older children are encouraged to drink water throughout the school day and to keep a bottle of water in their bag.
- Staff will remind children of our healthy eating policy.. If pupils persist in bringing in unhealthy foods, a note or a phone call will be made to parents /guardians.
- Pupils are asked to take home any uneaten food so that parents know if the quantity they are sending is too large or if a pupil does not like a certain food.
- Lunches are eaten in the classroom in a calm, respectful manner. Meal times are an opportunity for positive social interaction and for learning social skills.

- Teachers and staff on duty at break /lunch times are requested to be vigilant and to ensure that pupils eat appropriate foods.. If a teacher notices that a pupil appears to not be eating during the school day, parents will be informed. Similarly if it appears that a child has not sufficient food to eat, or has forgotten a lunch, the Principal should be informed. She will then take appropriate action. While teachers make every effort to encourage a child to eat they cannot insist or make a child eat if she won't be persuaded to do so. In very rare cases of this nature neither the school nor the teacher can take responsibility for the child's nutrition beyond letting the parents know and following the guidelines of child protection
- Rewards of sweets or lollies will not be given in school.
- We do not give out sweets, cakes or food of any sort for birthdays
- On special occasions such as Sports Day the school may provide special treats. In addition, during the year there may be special food days e.g. if children are learning about a country they may enjoy a treat from that country, or when there is a cake sale happening in the school, they may have a cake as a treat. Parents will be notified of these days.
- Oral health care will be promoted and support services used where possible.
- Children are forbidden to bring nuts to school.

Parents are encouraged to use plastic lunchboxes and to try and reduce the amount of packaging and litter. All personal items should be clearly labelled.

Approaches and methodologies to the explicit teaching of food and healthy eating, as presented in the curriculum:

Opportunities which exist to link and integrate the various curricula concerning food and healthy eating will be used. Our teaching of healthy eating will involve a variety of teaching & learning styles. We will provide a variety of contexts for practising and learning about healthy eating (in the class lessons, while children are eating at breaktime, in assembly etc). Priority methods will include the explicit teaching of the language of food and healthy eating; the use of Physical Education to develop awareness and the need to exercise; the appropriate use of symbols and concrete objects;

Conclusion:

All staff, parents and pupils are asked to comply with this policy. It has been developed with the pupil's interest at heart. With the co-operation of parents/guardians, teachers and other pupils we are hopeful that the foundation of healthy eating habits will be established for life.

Success Criteria

How will we know that the plan is being implemented?

- By monitoring the quantity and quality of foods eaten
- By a reduction in the amount of unhealthy food in lunch boxes

- By assessing and evaluating the pupils' progress regarding their knowledge and attitudes, examined throughout the delivery of the curriculum
- Through teacher and SNA observation, possibly by witnessing improved concentration, energy levels or attention spans.
- This plan was devised collaboratively and reviewed in September 2012. It was ratified by the Board of Management in September 2012 and will be reviewed as required.