



Polasaí Lón Sláintiúil

Healthy Lunch Policy

Bealtaine 2014

(Athbhreithnithe Meán Fómhair 2022)

Healthy Eating Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

As part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Programme, we at Gaelscoil na Cille encourage our children to become more aware of the need for healthy food in their lunch boxes.

What people eat is known to be a key factor influencing health. Research indicates a strong link between diet and performance. For example: a low sugar intake promotes concentration, lessens hyperactivity, protects teeth, and lessens the risk of diabetes. A low salt intake reduces the risk of heart disease in later life.

We believe that adults (staff, parents and carers) should be good role models and should support the children in understanding how balanced nutrition contributes to a person's health, happiness and general well-being.

The school is aware that the primary role model in children's healthy eating education lies with parents. We wish to build a positive and supportive relationship with the parents of children at our school through mutual understanding, trust and co-operation. In promoting this objective, we will:

- Inform parents about the school's healthy eating policy and practice;
- Encourage parents to be involved in reviewing school policy and making modifications to it, as necessary;

To promote healthy eating habits in our school, we introduced a Healthy Eating Policy in May 2014. To assist the school community to make a transition to more healthy lunches the school has participated in *Food Dudes*, a programme that encourages children to try fruit and vegetables. This programme was very successful in engendering a positive attitude in the children to fruit and vegetables. Since 2021, the school has availed of the services of the Irish company 'The Lunch Bag' where parents can order a healthy lunch for their child from a wide variety of options. Lunches are delivered to the school each morning and distributed to the classes. The options available on 'The Lunch Bag' adhere to the school's healthy eating policy. More information about The Lunch Bag can be found on their website www.thelunchbag.ie

Aims

1. To promote the personal development and well-being of our children
2. To promote the health of the child and provide a foundation for healthy living in all its aspects.

Objectives

1. To enable each child to appreciate the importance of good nutrition for growing and developing and staying healthy
2. To enable each child to accept some personal responsibility for making wise food choices and adopting a healthy, balanced diet.

**The school looks to all members of the school community –
staff, pupils and parents,
to respect and support this policy
in the interests of the long-term health and welfare of our children.**

2. CURRICULUM

There are many opportunities in the primary school curriculum for learning about the importance of living a healthy lifestyle.

The importance of balanced nutrition and healthy food choices is explicitly taught through the SPHE curriculum. Food and Nutrition is an important part of the Strand Unit: *Taking Care of My Body* at each class level. These themes are also dealt with in other subjects such as Science and Geography.

3. SCHOOL LUNCH

Lunch is an important meal for school-going children. It should provide one third of their recommended daily allowance of nutrients without being high in fat, sugar or salt. It should also provide dietary fibre (roughage).

The traditional packed lunch of milk and sandwiches can seem unattractive compared with the range of convenience foods like crisps, sweets, biscuits, chocolate and soft drinks. Parents and teachers are concerned about this trend but can find it difficult to come up with popular healthy alternatives. We ask parents to encourage a healthy lunch right from the start.

The following guide is designed to help parents provide quick, appetising, and nutritious lunches for our children:

Bread & Alternatives

Bread or rolls (preferably whole-meal, whole-grain or whole-wheat varieties)
Wraps
Pitta bread
Bread sticks
Rice – wholegrain
Pasta – wholegrain
Wholemeal Scones
Crackers

Fruit & Vegetables

Apples, Banana, Peach
Mandarins, Orange segments
Fruit Salad, dried fruit
Plum, Pineapple cubes
Grapes
Cucumber, Sweetcorn
Tomato
Slices of peppers
Carrot batons

Savouries

Lean Meat (e.g. chicken/turkey, ham)
Eggs
Tinned Fish e.g. tuna/sardines/salmon
Potato Salad
Hummous

Drinks

Water or Milk are the ideal choice
Fruit juices - *without added sugar. Pure fruit juice also contains natural sugar and should be diluted with water*
Yoghurt

Dairy

milk
natural or low fat yoghurt/custard/rice pudding
cheese (triangles/slices/ small blocks of cheddar/gouda/edam etc)

Pupils should be encouraged to have a role in preparing their own lunches and meals in order to promote responsibility for their own health and nutrition.

Milk and Water

Growing children should get approximately one pint of milk a day, or its equivalent as cheese, yoghurt or milk pudding. This ensures that they get enough calcium, which is essential for healthy bones and teeth. If a child does not drink a glass of milk at lunch, encourage him to have a carton of yoghurt or a small helping of cheese instead.

We encourage children to bring in a water bottle so they can have access to water throughout the day. Hydration is important for concentration.

We ask that children do not bring the following to school:

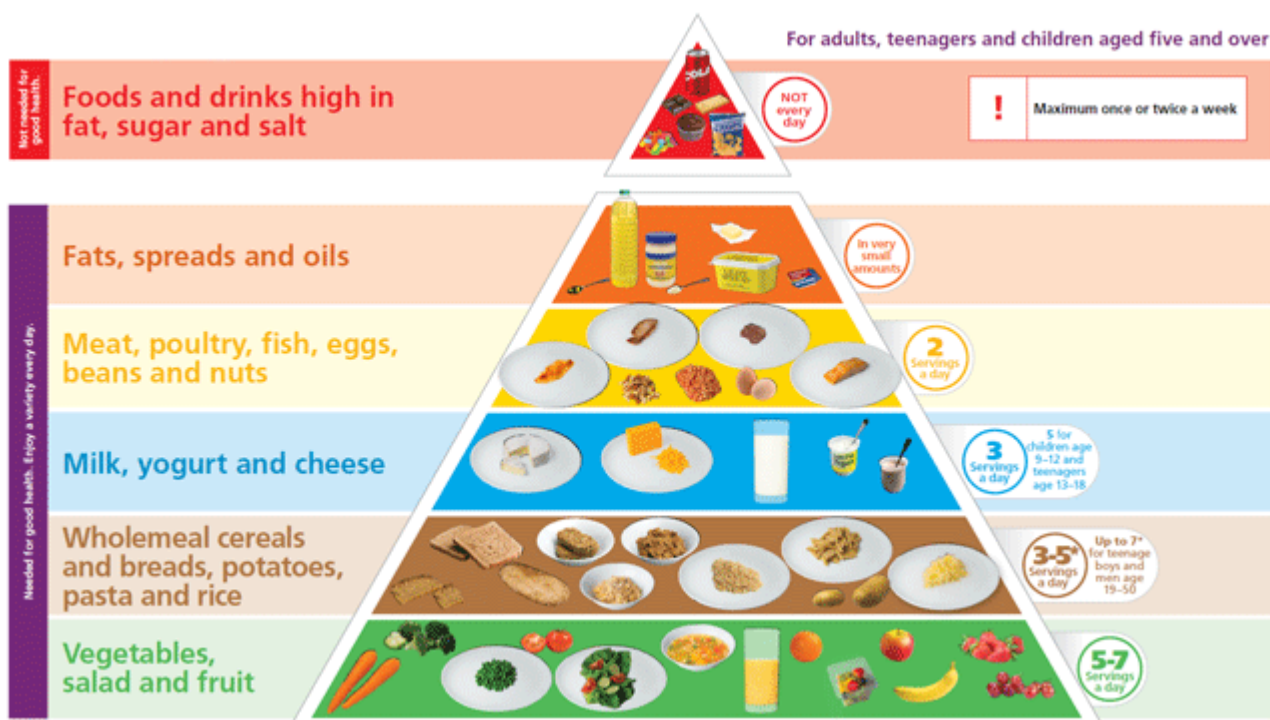
Snacks known to be high in sugar, saturated fat, salt, additives and preservatives, including the following:

- Crisps (including crisp-style snacks)
- Fizzy drinks (including fizzy fruit-flavoured water, juices, etc)
- Sweets or bars
- Cake/s, buns and muffins.
- Chocolate biscuits/bars
- Chewing gum
- Fruit winders

Parents should be mindful that cereal bars can often contain as much sugar as a chocolate bar and therefore we would recommend that you check the sugar content before adding it as a regular item to your child's lunch.

While popcorn is considered a healthy snack, we do ask that parents avoid giving this to children as part of their lunch as it can be messy and difficult to clean up from the carpet.

Food Pyramid (recommended daily intake)



Useful Links with Ideas for Healthy Lunches: (these URLs may be subject to change)

<http://www.safefood.eu/SafeFood/media/SafeFoodLibrary/Documents/Education/2012-Safefood-Healthy-Lunchboxes-Leaflet-v4.pdf>

http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/Healthier_Lunchbox_Leaflet_09_10_Irish.pdf

www.indi.ie (Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute website)

You will find a leaflet 'Are you packing a healthy lunch ? here

www.healthpromotion.ie

<http://www.nhs.uk/Change4Life/Pages/healthy-lunchbox-picnic.aspx>

http://www.freshforkids.com.au/lunch_box/lunch_box.html

<http://www.nutritionaustralia.org/national/packing-school-lunchbox>

4. Treats and Celebrations

Because we recognise that there is no such thing as 'bad food', we teach the children to enjoy the foods at the top of the food pyramid in moderation. In other words, if we are eating healthily, we will only eat these tasty, but potentially unhealthy foods as an occasional treat.

Special events in class are times where food contributes to a sense of celebration and sharing. On these occasions small portions of foods other than fruit or vegetables may be offered, but the staff will remind the children that this is an "occasional" treat and not "everyday food".

Staff should consult with an Príomhoide before organising cake-sales or events that might otherwise be out-of-step with the school's healthy eating policy.

***Please note that our Healthy Lunch Policy is in place from Monday to Friday inclusive – there is no 'treat day'.**

5. Other Considerations

Allergies & Medical Conditions

The school community is aware of the possibility of food allergies within the school population, particularly nut allergies. Parents or carers of children who are on special diets for medical reasons, or who have allergies, will be asked to provide as much information as possible about which foods are suitable or foods which must be avoided. This information will be displayed in the staff room.

Parents are asked to teach their children not to share lunches. Where there is a child with a nut allergy in a class the school will ask the parents of that class to avoid sending in lunches containing nuts. Gaelscoil na Cille cannot guarantee that all parents will comply with this request however. Advice from allergies web-sites suggest that it is in the interest of pupils' long-term safety that they learn to be aware of the risks of cross contamination and that they learn to manage the risks themselves.

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

Food Hygiene

Help keep lunches cool and safe by following these tips:

- An insulated box or bag can be used to help keep lunches cool. A small ice pack can also be used or alternatively include a frozen fruit juice carton
- It is important that lunches are not kept in a warm place such as near radiators or in direct sunlight
- Teach your children to discard any perishable food that hasn't been eaten at the end of the day
- Wash and dry reusable water bottles, lids and lunchboxes every day in warm soapy water
- To keep the cool air in, minimize the number of times your child needs to open the lunchbox, by packing other food items that don't need to be kept cool separately
- Include some kitchen paper to mop up any spills or mess

Children are provided time to wash their hands before eating lunch.

Green Flag School

Our green school motto is:

'Gaelscoil na Cille abú, Déanaimis bruscar a laghdú'

With this in mind, children are also asked to:

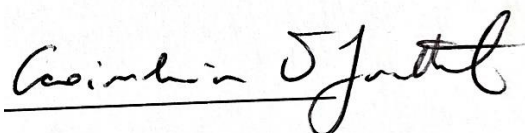
- take home (in lunchbox) all uneaten food, silver paper, wrappings, containers and cartons
- put only fruit peel into the compost bins
- not bring in cans and glass – for safety reasons.

Active Flag School

The education of children in healthy eating and making good choices for their health is complimented in our school by our efforts to achieve Active School status and our daily exercise initiative 'K an Lae'.

This policy was ratified by Bord Bainistíochta Ghaelscoil na Cille on 28 May 2014

It was reviewed during the 2022-23 school year.



Caoimhín Ó Fatháil

Síniú (Cathaoirleach)

7ú Meán Fómhair 2022

Dáta

