

Policy on Healthy Eating

Introduction

At Gaelscoil Aodha Rua, we are dedicated to the promotion of healthy eating, as part of the formal curriculum within the school and as part of our daily routine, including at break and lunch time.

Aims of the Policy

We aim to:

- provide our pupils with information on the importance of healthy eating and the effects of an unhealthy diet on the body and teeth.
- encourage our pupils to make informed choices about the food they eat and to develop a moderate and balanced attitude to their diets.
- set a good example regarding healthy eating and to act as good role models for our pupils.
- implement an agreed whole-school approach to the consumption of food at break and at lunch-time
- agree guidelines on the use of foods (in particular sweets) as a reward in the classroom.
- utilise opportunities to engage with outside agencies who may host workshops with pupils, staff and/or parents regarding healthy eating.
- work in partnership with parents to ensure co-operation and continuity with the implementation of this policy.

Healthy Eating as part of the Curriculum

The school will promote healthy eating in curricular lessons as part of the areas of World Around Us, Literacy, Numeracy and PDMU.

In World Around Us, children will be encouraged to research and investigate foods which are healthy / unhealthy. They will have opportunities to learn about the effect that foods which are high in salt / fat have on their bodies and the effect that sugary foods have on their teeth. They will investigate traditional foods from other countries / ethnic groups, foods associated with particular festivals / special occasions throughout the school year and will be given opportunities to cook and prepare healthy snacks.

During Literacy lessons, children will have opportunities to read and write recipes / menus. This, we believe, will encourage the children to develop a healthy attitude towards cookery and the preparation of healthy foods.

During Numeracy lessons, children may carry out class surveys regarding the favourite foods of their classmates or regarding the number of pieces of fruit / vegetables eaten by their classmates over a given number of days.

As part of work in PDMU, children will be given opportunities to develop positive attitudes towards healthy eating and exercise. They will learn about the effects of specific foods on the body, e.g. allergies and the importance of eating a varied balanced diet.

Consumption of Food during the School-Day

Water

Children are encouraged to drink water regularly during the school day, to keep themselves hydrated and to facilitate concentration and learning. Children can bring a bottle of still water to school with them every day or can bring an empty drinking bottle / container with a lid and fill it with water from the tap in each classroom. Pupils are advised not to store their water in their school-bags, in case of spillages.

Break-time

Ranganna 1&2

Children in Ranganna 1&2 will be provided with a healthy snack and milk / water every day as part of the 'buffet snack' routine during the 'Learning Through Play' session each morning. Children will be encouraged to try a range of fruits and healthy snacks and will be given the opportunity to help prepare and clean up after snack-time.

The snack menu may include a range of the following:

- fresh fruit (a mixture of apples, bananas, oranges, grapes etc. and some more oriental fruits such as pineapple, watermelon etc.)
- bread / toast / crackers
- ham
- cheese
- yoghurt (sugar free)

Each Friday, in an attempt to foster a balanced attitude towards healthy eating, the children will also receive milk and cookies as a treat at snack-time.

Parents will be asked to make a £2 contribution per week to cover the cost of the snacks.

Ranganna 3-7

Children in Ranganna 3-7 should bring a piece of fruit / healthy snack to school each day for their break. If a child regularly comes to school without a break-time snack, the class teacher will contact the parent to remind them to send a snack

Lunch-Time

At lunch-time, depending on parental preference, children will eat a hot school meal or will bring a packed lunch from home. In the absence of a school canteen, the children taking school dinners will eat in the R5/6 classrooms and the children eating a packed lunch will eat in the R2/3 and R3/4 classrooms. Catering assistants, employed by the Education Authority and supervisory staff, employed by the school, will supervise the dinner and lunch sittings and will monitor what they eat.

School Dinners

The Catering Services department of the Education Authority plan and provide healthy, balanced meals for pupils. They produce a monthly menu, which is distributed to parents, to

enable parents to encourage their children to discuss and make choices about their daily school dinner.

School dinners cost £2.60 per day / £13 per week and should be paid for in advance each Monday morning. Dinner money should be placed in an envelope with your child's name written on it.

Please note that parents will be contacted if dinner money is outstanding for a period of 1 week or more and will be asked to forward the outstanding payment or to supply a packed lunch for their child in the meantime.

Families who may be entitled to 'Free School Meals' will be provided with an application form in the third term each year (or at induction evening for new pupils) which they should complete and send to the Education Authority, Southern Region. Please note that all forms must be stamped by the local Social Security agency.

Packed Lunches

Parents are asked to provide their child with a healthy lunch, which will satisfy their appetite and help them to continue to focus throughout the afternoon lessons.

A healthy lunch should consist of:

- bread products egg. sandwiches, pancakes, rolls, crackers, wraps etc. with a healthy filling such as ham, chicken, salad, tuna etc. Please note that bread products should not be spread with Nutella, as we have a child with a nut allergy.
- Fresh fruit (at least 2 portions / pieces) – please send fruit that your child can manage independently as supervisors often do not have time to peel / cut up fruits for everyone.
- Yoghurt – please note that some yoghurts can have a very high sugar content
- Cheese / cheese products
- Water / Sugar-free drink – please note that fizzy drinks are not permitted in school
- A small treat – biscuit, bar, crisps etc. Parents are asked to limit treats to one portion and are advised not to send sticky sweets, lollypops or anything else that may pose a choking hazard.

If a child brings a fizzy drink, sticky sweets / lollypops etc. lunch-time supervisors will inform the class-teacher who will send the item home to the parents with a reminder of the school policy on such items.

If a child is repeatedly sent to school with unhealthy food items / items which are contrary to this policy in their lunch, the parent will be asked to address the issue.

Eating Habits

Lunch-time supervisors will at all times encourage children to eat their dinner / lunch and to try new foods where possible and will also encourage the children to speak Irish in a social context during their lunch-break.

If a child is taking dinners and regularly does not eat their dinner, or even if they do not eat much of their dinner, the lunch-time staff will inform the class teacher who will in turn inform

the parent. If a child is taking lunch and they regularly do not eat their lunch or if they attempt to dispose of whole uneaten items of food, the lunch-time supervisors will again inform the class-teacher who will inform the parent. Children who take lunch will be asked to bring all uneaten food home, so that parents can monitor what they are eating.

All staff are encouraged to act as positive role models for children in the area of healthy eating and are invited to share in the practice of eating fruit / healthy snacks and drinking water during the school day.

Allergies

We have a number of children in our school who may go into anaphylactic shock if exposed to certain foods. Staff have been trained in dealing with such emergencies, but we rely on the co-operation of all parents in helping us to maintain a controlled environment within the school, where we can minimise the risk to these children. Please check the labels of food items in your child's lunch to check for traces of nuts. In anticipation, we thank you sincerely for your continued co-operation on this matter.

Please refrain from sending the following items to school with your child:

- Nuts or anything containing nuts
- Nutella / Chocolate spread
- Cookies with traces of nuts
- Kinder Bueno / Ferrero products

Use of Food / Sweets as Rewards

Teachers use a wide range of motivational strategies to encourage and reward our pupils, including star of the day / week, pupil of the month, stickers, pens / pencils etc. We recommend that teachers refrain as much as possible from using food / sweets as a motivational tool / reward, but recognise that only on occasion, particularly at special times of the school year (Halloween / Christmas) that children may enjoy a small treat or class party. Teachers have been advised to exercise caution when giving foods / sweets as treats / rewards and to consider the following factors:

- Development of positive attitudes towards healthy eating
- Food items which children may be allergic to
- Food items which may interfere with 'wobbly teeth'
- Food items which may pose a choking hazard

Consultation, Monitoring and Review of Policy

This policy has been drawn up through consultation between members of staff, governors, pupils, parents, catering staff and the EA Southern Region Catering Service.

All parents were invited to make comments and recommendations on the policy prior to it being ratified.

The policy will be reviewed by staff annually and will be sent out for further consultation to parents every three years.