



George's National School

Healthy Eating Policy

Rationale

As a school we recognise the responsibility to provide our children with accurate information about health-related matters. We must understand that children must have the opportunity to acquire the knowledge needed to follow a healthy lifestyle. The children will do this within a personal, spiritual and moral framework, in relation to the ethos of the school. Parents are continually informed as to the nature of this programme and have, to date, wholeheartedly supported the handling of this curricular initiative. The wellbeing of the whole school community is central to St. George's ethos and mission statement and school leaders and management actively promote wellbeing. The relationship between academic achievement and a child/young person's wellbeing is understood by all staff in the school. The wellbeing of the whole school community is central to St. George's ethos and mission statement and school leaders and management actively promote wellbeing. The relationship between academic achievement and a child/young person's wellbeing is understood by all staff in the school.

The educational mission is to improve the health of the entire community of the school by teaching pupils' ways to establish and maintain life-long healthy eating habits. The mission shall be accomplished through food education and skills and core academic content in the classroom.

Aims

1. To promote healthy eating of pupils, by helping to influence their eating habits through increasing their knowledge and awareness of food issues, including what constitutes a healthy diet, and hygienic food preparation and storage methods
2. To promote a whole school approach to healthy eating and nutrition
3. To increase pupils' knowledge of food production, manufacturing, distribution and marketing practices, and their impact on both health and the environment.
4. To make the provision and consumption of food an enjoyable and safe experience.
5. To allow our students to understand the benefits of a healthy and well balanced diet
6. To develop an awareness that good eating habits formed in early childhood influence health and wellbeing throughout our lives
7. To develop an awareness of the importance of food for growth and development
8. To explore food preferences in a balanced diet

Benefits of a Good Diet

1. Provides energy and aids concentration
2. Strengthens the immune system
3. Ensures the development of healthy teeth, skin, hair, muscles and strong bones

Objectives

1. To work towards ensuring that this policy is both accepted and embraced by
 - School management
 - Teachers and support staff
 - Pupils
 - Parents
 - The school's wider community

2. To integrate these aims into all aspects of school life, in particular

- The curriculum
- Pastoral and social activities

Proposed Action Plan

It is proposed to encourage children to eat healthy lunches and discourage unhealthy food and drinks.

Current Good Practices:

Lunches are eaten indoors before going out to play. This habit encourages the children to focus on eating their food and enjoying it. An added advantage is the fact that litter problems are managed within the classroom.

Methods

We wish to establish an effective structure to oversee the development, implementation, and monitoring of this policy and to encourage a participatory approach to meeting the objectives.

- Identify who will take lead responsibility, i.e. who will make it work?
- Take a whole school approach - include consideration of curriculum, food service, pastoral and social care.
- Decide how to involve parents and the wider community.

We wish to develop an understanding and ethos within the school of safe, tasty, nutritious and environmentally sustainable food, through both education and example.

- Food topics with curriculum areas (check content, year group, timing etc.)
- Art, e.g. observation drawings of food, healthy eating poster design.
- Personal Social and Health Education, e.g. menu planning, nutrition.
- Design and Technology, e.g. cooking, designing tools.
- English, e.g. food diaries, following instructions.
- Geography, e.g. what food grows where, food miles, transporting food, waste.
- History, e.g. past diets, discoveries.
- Information Technology, e.g. recording results of a food survey, website review.
- Math e.g. weights and measures.
- Physical Education e.g. links between healthy eating and exercise.
- Science, e.g. effects of heat on food, plant growth, nutrition.

Examples of some activities that could support healthy eating

- Healthy eating drama activities
- Cooking
- Menu planning skills

- Food hygiene (e.g. common food poisons, bacterial growth, contamination, washing hands, temperatures, storage, cleaning and disinfectant, pests)
- Cultural diversity
- Nutrition
- Food production, marketing and labelling
- Recycling
- Healthy eating projects
- Eating experiences integrated into the curriculum for all subjects
- Healthy eating week

Breakfast

A nourishing breakfast is the best start to your child's day giving him/her the energy needed to concentrate and learn. Research has shown that children benefit both nutritionally and behaviourally by eating breakfast.

Small Break

The children have two eating breaks during the day. They have a small break to eat from 10.40 am to 10.50am. Food at this break should be easy to eat. Ideally a small sandwich or piece of fruit. Fruit should be of a manageable size, peeled/chopped if necessary.

Lunch Break

The children have Big Break at 12.30 and eat for 10 minutes. Ideally, children's lunches should be varied and include:

- Two portions from the bread/cereal group
- One portion of meat or meat alternative
- At least one portion from the fruit and vegetable group
- One portion from the dairy product
- Water

Suggestions for your child's school lunch:

- Breads - whole-grain breads, rolls, bagels, wraps, soda bread or pitta
- Bread substitutes - oatcakes, plain rice cakes, pancakes or crackers
- Fillings - cheese, tuna, hummus, cold meats, pate, egg, lettuce, spinach, cucumber, tomato, onion, peppers, coleslaw, salad, or banana
- Hot leftovers in a flask - curry, pasta (with or without sauce), soup, baked beans, rice, stew, lasagne or noodles
- Cold leftovers
- Fruit - apple, oranges, banana, grapes, pear, plum, peach, apricots, melon, grapefruit, pineapple, strawberries, raspberries, mango, blackberries or blueberries. Remember to peel and/or cut fruit and vegetables into bite-sized pieces for younger children
- Raw vegetables - tomatoes, sweet corn, peppers, carrot sticks, celery sticks, broccoli, cabbage or cucumber

Food items not permitted in school:

- Fizzy drinks, sports drinks and drinks/juices with high sugar content
- Chewing gum

- Chocolate (including chocolate spread)
- Sweets & winders
- Crisps
- Popcorn
- Biscuits/cakes/muffins/traybakes/ Sweet Pastries (including homemade)
- Fast Food

Food Allergies

If you are aware that your child has a food allergy, please make this known immediately to the class teacher and the principal. If there is a student with a serious allergy in your child's class, we ask that all parents cooperate and help us to keep all of our students safe. You can do this by being mindful when making your child's lunch and not including these foods in their lunchbox. In the case of a serious allergy, parents will be notified with a note from the school and a warning sign will be put up on the classroom door.

Best Practice for Parents

- Ensure your child starts the day with a good breakfast
 - Eat small regular meals, not one big meal each day
 - Children who take physical exercise each day will have a better appetite for healthy food
 - Serve brown bread instead of white
 - Cut large rolls/wraps/sandwiches into more manageable sizes
- The children will bring home uneaten lunch.

Healthy School Environment

We will endeavour to promote healthy eating by

- Promoting healthy lunches everyday
 - Having a healthy eating week in school each year
 - Engaging with the Food Dudes programme
 - Engaging in the incredible edibles programme
 - Using the school garden to grow vegetables with their students
 - Inviting outside speakers to talk to the parents and children about a balanced diet
 - Providing leaflets to parents (from *Bord Bia* etc) with suggestions for healthy lunches
 - Holding healthy eating poster competitions
- Promoting healthy eating through SPHE and SESE
- Displaying posters e.g. Food/Exercise Pyramid.

What if children bring discouraged food to school?

If children bring unhealthy food to school they will not be allowed to eat it and they will be asked to take it home. If there is no alternative healthy food in their lunch box then they may phone their parents to request a healthy lunch. If the parent is not contactable an effort will be made by the school to provide a healthy snack.

If children persist in bringing unhealthy food to school their parents/guardians will be contacted by the school and will be invited to discuss the issue. They will be provided with a copy of the "Safe Food - Healthy Lunch Box" brochure.

Exceptions

On specific days during the year the children will be permitted to bring in a special treat:

- End of term parties
- School trips

Promotion of the Policy

Each teacher will promote the policy. The school will promote the policy by sponsoring prizes for the poster competition and providing occasional healthy treats during the year.

Parents

The parents have been consulted in formulating this policy, its success depends largely on the support and co-operation of the parents. Parents are encouraged to provide their child with a good breakfast before school. They are responsible for providing a healthy school lunch for their child.

Success Criteria

This policy will have been deemed effective if the children develop a habit of eating a healthy balanced lunch.

Roles and Responsibility

The teachers will implement and develop this policy with the support of the pupils and parents. It will be monitored on a continuous basis.

Implementation

This policy comes into effect immediately.

Review and Ratification:

This Policy was reviewed and ratified by staff and the Board of Management in May 2023. It will be reviewed again in 2025.

BOM: _____

Date: _____