

## *ST FRANCIS' PRIMARY SCHOOL*

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30/4/24

Dear Parents/ Guardians,

As you are aware, the school has a Healthy Eating Policy which is informed by DE and NHS guidance, and is supported by our Governors. It was developed specifically to support our pupils in understanding how their food and drinks can fuel their body most effectively and promotes informed decisions around food and wellbeing. As part of this policy, we invest time teaching pupils about food groups and how they fuel, support and affect their bodies so that they can grow into adults who are able to make informed choices about what they eat. However, we cannot understate the role of parents and guardians, as primary caregivers, in achieving this goal and promoting this message.

We understand that there are a range of factors affecting parental choices around lunches and snacks, but we ask that barring exceptional circumstances such as allergies; ARFID (either to be confirmed by GP) or religious practices requiring dietary restrictions, our families consistently support our shared goal of promoting healthy eating by only sending in healthy options for snack and lunchtime, as outlined in DE guidance and our own Healthy Eating policy:

<https://www.stfrancisaghaderg.com/documents/policies/> - Link to access

To this end, we ask that parents continue to encourage their children to enjoy sandwiches/ wraps/ rolls/ fruit and vegetables as part of their lunch/ snack options rather than snacks or drinks which are not included in the list of recommended options.

In this way, children will see that the efforts of both their family and their school to promote their healthy development are aligned.

In order to maintain a consistent message for our pupils Friday is no longer considered a 'treat' day for snacks. Treats such as chocolate or crisps can be enjoyed at celebration events, e.g. following sacraments or at special PTA-organised events as a means of setting them apart as exceptional and celebratory. During the week we ask that children are given fruit, vegetables, crackers or a sandwich as their snack. Please do not send crisps (baked or fried), chocolate, brioche or cake for your child's snack, these are not suitable healthy options.

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/healthy-breaks-schools-leaflet-english-and-irish-translation>

Please note that some items which are marketed as 'healthy options', including fruit roll-ups, have a surprising amount of sugars and processed ingredients, the PHA leaflet linked above has further detail on this.

The same approach will apply to drinks so we ask parents to only send their child into school with water which we can readily top up as needed over the course of the day. Sugar-free drinks will still have an impact on your child's dental hygiene which this is a growing problem for all children across NI, so we ask that parents only send water.

**If there is a medical issue which means that an accommodation has to be made in relation to food or drink we are happy to work with families on this, but in such circumstances we would ask that a GP note be provided so that we can include this on our SIMS medical records and make sure all staff are aware of the specific circumstances of your child(ren). This is equally important for allergies and intolerances as our catering team and PTA will factor this information into planning for meals and events, but under instruction from EA, they can only do so if medical confirmation is provided.**

These strategies are being implemented to promote the best decisions around nutrition and lifestyle, as well as promoting food which will help our children remain focused and attentive during lessons. As a school we are reliant on your support to make this part of our culture at St. Francis' PS Aghaderg and I hope and trust that we can count on your assistance to make this part of our everyday life. Ultimately, we – like you – want our pupils to be confident, healthy, happy children who become confident, healthy, happy adults who can enjoy every opportunity life sends their way.

Please see the links below for further information, ideas and advice around what nutritious options pupils might enjoy in their packed lunches:

Choices leaflet from PHA

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/2024-02/Healthy%20Choices.pdf> Healthy

Healthy Eating in the Primary School Years Video

<https://youtu.be/aGtKYTbn1EM?feature=shared> -

Fussing Eating: Public Health video supporting parents addressing 'fussy eating' habits.

<https://youtu.be/HkHMjez7PIs?feature=shared>

With thanks for your continued support,

S. McKeown