

Scoil N. An Chroí Ró Naofa – Healthy Eating Policy

Rationale

- i. As part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Programme and Wellbeing promotion, Scoil N. An Chroí Ró Naofa encourages children to become more aware of the need and opportunities to eat healthy food in school.
- ii. This policy was developed in consultation with school stakeholders and in accordance with the HSE's Healthy Eating Toolkit for primary Schools – Supporting Wellbeing in School. It was led the school's Health, Safety and Welfare Coordinator and senior management.
- iii. What people eat is known to be a key factor influencing health. Research indicates a strong link between diet and performance (e.g. 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 etc).
- iv. Dr Mary McCreery, one of Ireland's leading consultant nutritionists and dieticians, has highlighted the importance of intervening early so children develop healthy eating behaviours before they leave primary school.
- v. The reality of diet-related ill-health of Irish children is very clear and concerning (Bel-Serrat et al. 2017; Browne et al. 2017; Department of Health 2016).
- vi. Research has shown that the wide availability of low nutrient, energy dense foods in...the retail outlets close to school children (e.g. our local shop Centra), can have a negative impact on food choice and is at odds with Healthy Eating Guidelines (Oostindjer et al. 2017; Smith et al. 2013; Browne et al. 2017; Browne et al. , 2019.)
- vii. In a Sacred Heart SNS student survey on school lunches (2021), 92% of our children said that they think it is important to make healthy food choices and 98% believed that our hot lunches in school are healthy.

Aims

1. To take a whole school approach to healthy eating in school, in relation to the Culture and Environment, Curriculum (Teaching and Learning), Policy and Planning, Relationships and Partnerships.
2. To promote healthy eating across school life, consistent with national healthy eating guidelines and school curriculum.
3. To ensure that food provision in school reflects the ethical and medical requirements of staff and pupils, e.g. religious, ethnic, vegetarian, medical and allergenic needs.
4. To make the provision and consumption of food an enjoyable and safe experience.

Objectives

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

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).

Culture and Environment (looking at Healthy Eating from a physical and social perspective.)

- Free Hot lunches and healthy snacks are provided (see section 'Our School Hot lunch Programme)
- Fresh milk and filtered water are available
- In general, food is eaten in classroom areas (for children) and in the school staffroom (for staff)
- Breakfast clubs/after school clubs prepare and eat food in the children's kitchen and Parents' Room. Pupils participating in the Nurture Programme prepare and consume food at their own special kitchen area

- Time is allowed for eating at both 'little break' (Sos) and 'big break' (lón) – cognisance is given to striking a balance of eating time and social time.
- This policy supports the promotion of non-food rewards, less focus on food at school events and establishing consistent messages in all school celebration events.
- A culture of healthy eating is encouraged including positive modelling by adults in school.

School Lunches

Our School Hot Lunch Programme

Sacred Heart SNS is fortunate to be one of the schools included in the Hot School Meals Scheme which provides funding to schools and organisations towards the provision of healthy food for school children.

The objective of the scheme is to provide regular, nutritious food to children to enable them to take full advantage of the education provided to them. The programme is an important component of policies to encourage healthy eating, promote school attendance and enhance extra educational achievement.

Fresh Today

Our hot school lunches are provided by *Fresh Today*. Fresh Today have established a dedicated hot lunch production facility as they believe the children of Ireland deserve to not only have lunch made in a state-of-the-art facility, but also to have a menu designed by the best in the business.

They have a team of the best executive and sous chefs. Menus are developed with nutrition, variety and taste in mind, all considered as vital ingredients to the perfect school lunch.

- Families order their food on-line: promotes high participation and reduces food waste
- Fresh Today provide on-site staff members: to take delivery of food; heat and distribute the lunches; and collect and clean
- 100% compostable packaging

See below for more details of our Hot Lunches

Packed Lunch

The traditional packed lunch of milk and sandwiches is under threat from a range of convenience foods like crisps, sweets, biscuits, chocolate and soft drinks. Many parents/carers, school staff and pupils are concerned about this trend but some find it difficult to come up with popular healthy alternatives.

We ask parents/carers to encourage a healthy breakfast and lunch right from the start of school. HSE/Safefood/Healthy Ireland provide practical tips for parents/carers and children on how to prepare a healthy lunch:

- Fruit, salad, vegetables
- Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans and nuts
- Wholemeal cereals and breads, potatoes, pasta and rice
- Milk, yoghurt and cheese

Further guidance can be found at:

<https://www2.hse.ie/file-library/health-eating-active-living/healthy-lunchboxes.pdf>

Drinks

According to the Dental Health Foundation Ireland **plain water and milk are the best drinks when your child is thirsty**. School's should *Stay Fizz-Free* – even sugar-free fizzy drinks [and even pure fruit juice drinks] can damage the teeth as they are acidic and can cause tooth erosion.

A word about Milk

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 carton of milk at lunch (**all our pupils receive free, fresh milk everyday**), encourage them to have a carton of yoghurt or a small helping of cheese instead.

Water

All our staff and pupils have access to fresh, filtered water throughout the school day.

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:

- Fizzy drinks (including fizzy fruit-flavoured water, juices, etc)
- Crisps (including crisp-style snacks)

- Energy drinks
- Sweets
- Chocolate biscuits/bars
- Cereal bars
- Chewing gum
- Fruit winders
- Chicken fillet/chicken popcorn items*

*Low nutrient, energy dense foods such as chicken fillet/popcorn rolls, sausage rolls are not in keeping with healthy eating guidelines and not allowed in school. Moreover, according to the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, hot food should be consumed within the first 2 hours so these types of food are not a viable option for school lunches.

So as to take a proactive approach to healthy lunches, teachers may from time to time, reward children who can show a piece of fruit or other healthy foods in their lunchboxes or are seen to be eating or sampling the healthy snacks provided as part of the Schools Meals Programme.

Treats

Staff are discouraged from using food as a reward or treat (e.g. sweets, jellies, lollipops etc.) These top shelf food pyramid items do not promote a healthy eating message. Consideration should be given to using non-food rewards and treats instead (e.g. pencil/erasers/stickers/bonus Class Dojo points/golden book awards/golden time/book prize etc).

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

- Pupils will learn about food and healthy eating in curriculum areas such as SPHE, Science etc e.g. SPHE – Strand *Myself* – Strand *Unit Taking Care of My Body*
- Appropriate resources will be used for teaching and communicating with parents.
- ["Taste Buds" - safefood](#)
- ["Healthy lunchboxes" - safefood](#)
- ["MediaWise" - safefood](#)
- ["Nutrition Standards for School Meals" - Healthy Ireland](#)
- ["A Good Practice Guide to School Food Initiatives" - safefood](#)
- ["A Good Practice Guide for Breakfast Clubs" - safefood](#)
- External agencies may support us in delivery of this Healthy Eating Policy, in line with the guidelines in Department of Education and Skills Circular 0042/2018

Policy and Planning

- Efforts should be made to plan SPHE on healthy eating at similar times across class groups
- The school will ensure external meal providers adhere to healthy eating guidelines.
- The school operates a successful milk scheme.

Relationships and Partnerships

- Communication with parents/staff/pupils on the healthy eating policy materials.
- Parents Body
- Hot School Meals Provider
- External partners that support school curriculum – sporting partners, etc.
- School Completion Programme: breakfast club and after-school activities in schools
- HSE Dental Department
- Local shops, etc

Green Flag School

Children and staff are asked to:

- place all uneaten food, silver paper, wrappings, containers and cartons into the correct bins provided at each grade level
- 100% of our school lunches provided by Fresh Today are compostable and should be placed into the compost bins

- Do not bring in cans and glass as part of your lunch – for health & safety reasons.

Food allergy in School

Keeping food allergic children safe, while ensuring that they experience a full and inclusive childhood, should be the goal of all involved in their care. With this in mind, , Scoil N. An Chroí Ró Naofa has adopted recommendations of the Irish Food Allergy Network in relation to the management of food allergies in our school (see School Allergy Policy for more details).

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

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management & Parents' Council on

_____.

It will be reviewed on _____.

Resources and relevant material:

[Hot School Meals Pilot Project Main Report 2020.pdf](#)

[Nutrition Standards for Hot School Meals.pdf](#)

[HSE healthy-lunchboxes.pdf](#)

[Hot Lunch - Student Survey.pdf](#)

[Food Allergy in Schools IFAN.pdf](#)



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