

HEALTHY LUNCHES POLICY

Rationale

We have always encouraged healthy eating in the school in the interest of both children's health and their ability to learn. As part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Programme, we encourage the children in our school to become more aware of the need for healthy food in their lunch boxes. In addition, our Physical Education Programme supports the physical development and fitness of the children. The Science curriculum also looks at the development of the body and deepens children's understanding of how the body grows and develops. We have developed this policy in June 2016 in order to provide clarification for all members of the school community on the issue of healthy lunches. Reviewed in November 2018, March 2021. Current review, October 2022.

Aims

- To promote the personal development and well-being of each child.
- To promote the health of the child and provide a foundation for healthy living.
- To enable the child to appreciate the importance of good nutrition for growing, developing and staying healthy.
- To enable the child to accept some personal responsibility for making wise food choices and adopting a healthy, balanced diet.

The importance of cutting down on sugary foods and encouraging children to eat healthy, nutritious food is being emphasised by health authorities. It has been recognised that eating habits formed in childhood last a lifetime. A good diet ensures the development of healthy bones and muscles, provides energy, strengthens the immune system and aids concentration. Research shows that behaviour and concentration are improved in children who eat breakfast. Therefore it is extremely important that children get a good breakfast each morning before they come to school.

Many items we may think of as healthy or acceptable for lunchboxes actually contain a high quantity of sugar, therefore please read all packaging carefully. 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.

In our school the children eat twice a day, before going out to play. To ensure good concentration it is important that children drink lots of water, so please encourage your child to bring a bottle of water. Screw-top bottles are not suitable for younger children. Some items which are not necessarily unhealthy, are unsuitable in the school environment (e.g., frubes/tubed yoghurts, twist-top bottles in junior infants) as they cause a mess to both uniforms and classrooms.

Pupils will eat their lunch in the classroom in an effort to get pupils to eat their lunch. The teachers encourage the pupils to eat their lunch but it is ultimately the child's own responsibility. For safety, please do not put drinks in a glass bottle.

From time to time we have children in the school who have allergies to certain foods. When this occurs all pupils in the child's classroom will be informed of the degree of seriousness of the allergy and the procedures that are in place to keep the classroom environment safe for the child.

In the interest of children's health, we will be strictly enforcing our healthy eating policy in the school. The only exception to this rule is the **last Friday of each month** when children are allowed to bring in two **small** 'treats'. We would like to emphasise that these should be small treats as many children are bringing in several items, or large items.

Acceptable items	Unacceptable items
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandwiches: with pitta bread, bagels, wholemeal bread, wraps, rolls, soda bread. • Salads • Pasta/rice/cous-cous • Fruit, including dried fruit • Vegetable sticks, sweetcorn • Soup • Unsalted crackers • Hummus • Meat, chicken, tuna or other fish • Yoghurt (please check sugar content) • Cheese • Eggs • Water • Milk • No added sugar dilute • Plain popcorn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tubed yoghurts (cause a mess) • Chocolate spread sandwiches • Custard • Rice desserts • All dessert yogurts (including jelly) • Cake slices • Buns • Chocolate croissants/doughnuts • Cereal bars • Waffles • Cheese dunkers (cheese is left behind) • Sweet and salted popcorn • Crisps • Salted nuts • Biscuits • Fruit shoots/capri suns • Flavoured milk
<p><u>This list is not exhaustive.</u> Please keep healthy eating in mind when choosing items for your child's lunchbox. Processed foods are more likely to have high levels of sugar or salt, so stick to natural, unprocessed food as much as possible.</p>	

There are many easily accessible resources for healthy lunch options: www.safefood.ie; www.fooddudes.ie; [www.schooldays.ie](http://www schooldays.ie) to name but a few.

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed as necessary but at the latest March 2025.

RATIFICATION

This policy was ratified on _____

Signed: _____

Ms Aileen Mollahan, Chairperson, Board of Management, Scoil Mhuire, Clondra.