



Healthy Eating Policy

Introduction

This policy was developed following consultation with parents and school staff and taking the preferences of our students into account.

Rationale

Healthy eating is essential for good health. Nutrition is a significant factor in the growth, development and overall functioning of a child. Good nutrition provides the energy and nutrients essential to sustain life and promotes physical, emotional and cognitive development. The development of healthy eating practices and physical activity can prevent disease and support a lifetime of good health. Good nutrition is critical to optimising each child's potential for success. Meeting nutritional requirements throughout childhood is essential to full intellectual development. Research documents tell us that under-nutrition impacts on children's behaviour, performance and overall quality of development. Children require sufficient energy and essential nutrients each day to concentrate on accomplished learning tasks.

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

Stewarts School endeavours to provide a safe, secure and happy environment where students can grow and develop into confident adults capable of realising their full potential.

Aims

- To ensure that students eat healthy, well balanced foods in school.
- To encourage students to develop healthy eating practices.
- To educate students in healthy eating.
- To ensure that food provision in school reflects the ethical and medical requirements of students for example: religious, ethnic, vegetarian, medical and allergenic needs.
- To make the provision and consumption of food an enjoyable and safe experience.

Definition

Healthy Eating is eating the recommended types and amounts of foods and beverages, nutrients and calories, while limiting low-nutrient, high-fat and high-sugar foods and beverages to promote health and support energy balance for an appropriate body weight.

Guidelines

The guidelines are laid out as follows:

1. Roles and Responsibilities
2. Organisational Implications
3. Curriculum Implications

1. Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Management

The BOM oversees the development, implementation and review of school policy of Healthy Eating.

Students

- Will be encouraged to eat the healthy foods offered in school.
- Will eat healthy foods provided in lunch boxes.
- Will not bring unhealthy foods to school.

Parents/ Guardians

- Will be encouraged to co-operate with the school policy on healthy eating.
- Parents must inform the school if their child has special dietary requirements due to health reasons – as determined by medical professionals. While efforts will be made to accommodate these requirements within the resources available to the school it may be necessary for parents/guardians to provide a daily lunch for their child.

Staff

- Will promote and encourage healthy eating choices at all times.

2. Organisational Implications

2.1 A copy of the healthy eating policy will be sent home with all students in September.

2.2. Occasions when students are offered food in school

a. Prior to/after morning break-time

Prior to/after break-time students will be offered a choice of drink (water/milk/sugar-free diluted juice) and a choice of plain biscuit (digestive/wholegrain/rich tea) or fruit supplied daily by the school. Some parents will send in a packed snack from home. Teacher will discuss and agree on contents of snack with parents/guardians beforehand.

b. Dinners

Students are offered hot dinners (meat, fish, vegetables and mashed potato) or a sandwich/wrap. Hot food is supplied by Stewarts Care Catering Kitchen. A choice of drink (water/milk/sugar-free diluted juice) is also offered.

c. Lunches from home

If students do not eat school dinners parents can send in a healthy lunch: bread, sandwiches, pitta bread, fruit, salad, vegetables, cereal, custard, rice pudding, cheese, meat, fish, yoghurts, yoghurt drinks, raisins, crackers, ligu, mousse. However, sweets, bars, chocolate, pastries, crisps and fizzy drinks are not allowed in school for lunch as they are not considered 'a healthy option' and can cause upset to other students.

d. Shop

Some classes go to the shop once a week as part of the S.P.H.E. curriculum. Students may buy a food item of their choice once parental permission is given.

*Popcorn can be offered to secondary school aged students provided they do not have swallowing or feeding difficulties or are not on gluten free diets.

e. Cookery/Home Economics Classes/ Messy Picnics

During cookery classes healthy options will be cooked and baked. Messy picnics are encouraged in classrooms to support children who may be 'fussy eaters'.

f. Special Occasions

These include student birthday parties, trips out, visit to Mc Donalds, Halloween Treasure Hunt, BBQ, Football Party, Sports Day, Confirmation, Communion, Graduation, Multi-Cultural Day, etc.

- Birthday Parties: Students usually celebrate their birthday by having a party with students from their class/the adjacent class. Parties usually last 20 minutes, and may include some food, music and party games. In the event of more than one student having a birthday in the same week, one party is usually held for all students. Parents can send in any of the following for a birthday party: a small cake, a small amount of crisps/jellies/chocolate.
- On trips out students may visit restaurants or Mc Donalds or the café at Rosse Court Resource Centre. They will be encouraged by staff to order healthier options. Parents will be consulted by teachers regarding student preferences in restaurants.
- Some students participate in the annual Halloween Treasure Hunt and Easter Hunt. As part of the Treasure Hunt, students may win prizes of small amounts of food treats (sweets/chocolates) fruit or biscuits.
- During the school Sports Day food, drinks or ice-cream may be available.
- During Multi-cultural day students are offered foods from different countries of the world.
- A healthy eating promotion week will be held in annually throughout school.
- Participation in healthy eating programmes, for example, Food Dudes.

2.3 Exceptions

Special requirements of individual students will always be facilitated as stated below:

a. Behaviour Support Plans

Occasionally, food motivators are used for students on individualised behaviour support plans. Food motivators are only used as outlined in the plan. (These will be agreed with parents and recorded as part of a strategy in the behaviour support plan).

b. Sensory needs

Certain students will have difficulties with certain tastes, textures, smells, etc. The parents and the teacher will discuss and agree on permitted foods for consumption.

2.4 Unacceptable Foods

Chewing gum, fizzy drinks, CapriSun juice, hard boiled sweets, hard lollipops, chewy bars (for example: Chewits, Skittles), nuts and toffees.

However, some exceptions may need to be introduced to accommodate our students' needs. These exceptions will be discussed and reviewed regularly with the class teacher in consultation with parents and the principal.

3 Curriculum Implications

We promote and teach Healthy Eating through Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) curricular subject areas.

Success Criteria

Positive feedback from students, parents and staff on the development of students' healthy eating habits. Effectiveness of the policy will be recorded through observation.

Timeframe for Implications

These procedures will be implemented following notification from the BOM in March 2023.

Timetable for Review

The policy will be reviewed bi-annually.

Responsibility for Review


The teacher with responsibility for SPHE is responsible for co-ordinating the review.

Ratification & Communication

This policy was ratified by the school BOM on February 22nd 2023.

Signed: 

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed: 

Principal

Date 22/02/23

Previous Dates: September 2011; September 2013; September 2014

Current Date: February 2023