



## St Mary's Primary School

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### St. Mary's N.S Healthy Eating Policy

#### Introduction:

As part of St. Mary's NS School Planning and Policy Review, the management and staff set about reviewing the school's Healthy Eating Policy. The HSE booklet *Healthy Eating Policy Toolkit for Primary Schools* was used to assist in the review process. Our Healthy Eating Policy outlines how we as a school support healthy eating practices through the promotion of healthy snacks and healthy lunches and how we help our students to gain a greater understanding of the importance of balanced nutrition.

St. Mary's is committed to facilitating our pupils' development of skills and attitudes to allow them to make informed decisions about their food intake. As a school, we believe that key adults in their lives, namely parents/guardians and school staff, should be good role models and support them in understanding how balanced nutrition contributes to a person's health, happiness and general wellbeing.

Our whole school approach to promoting healthy eating will actively involve teachers, parents/guardians and children to ensure that healthy eating messages are part of every aspect of school life. Our students will receive consistent messages regarding healthy eating both at home and at school. One of the key factors in influencing the health of school children and staff is nutrition. Nutrition forms part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum and is taught in our school.

#### Aims of our Healthy Eating Policy:

- To promote a whole school approach to healthy eating and nutrition
- To understand the benefit of a healthy well balanced diet
- To develop an awareness that good eating habits formed in early childhood influence health and wellbeing throughout our lives

- To raise levels of concentration within class through the consumption of healthy foods
- To provide members of staff, parents/guardians and those involved in school activities with clear information
- To help all those in our school community, children, staff and parents to develop positive and responsible attitudes to eating and to appreciate the contribution that good food makes to health.

#### Benefits of a Good Diet:

A good diet:

- ensures the development of healthy hair, skin, teeth, muscles and strong bones
- Provides energy and aids concentration
- Strengthens the immune system

#### School actions which Support our Healthy Eating Policy:

As a school, we will implement the following actions to support our Healthy Eating Policy:

- SPHE lessons on healthy eating will be planned for and implemented across all class levels
- St. Mary's participates in healthy eating activities during National Healthy Eating Week.
- Class teachers will allow children to choose from and explore the variety of School Lunch Provider options and discuss healthy options with them
- School takes part in the Health Promoting Schools Initiative
- The School Lunch Provider will adhere to the required Healthy Ireland *Nutrition Standards for School Meals*
- Sweets/Food Treats will not be used as daily rewards for children
- The HSCL teacher will organise regular healthy eating/cookery/baking sessions for parents/guardians

### Breakfast/Morning Munch:

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

In St. Mary's NS, Morning Munch/Breakfast operates from 9.20 entrance time each day in the child's classroom. Morning Munch is available to all pupils and some pupils, in particular, are encouraged to avail of it to help with a positive start to their day. The food available for Morning Munch adheres to the required Healthy Ireland *Nutrition Standards for School Meals*.

### **Break/Lunchtime Guidelines**

In order to promote the health and safety of all children in the school and prevent the spread of infection, guidelines for eating at lunch and break times are necessary.

- Students should not share their food or drink.
- Students should not share food utensils or drinks containers.
- Students should eat their food at their own table.
- Any uneaten food should go back into the pupil's lunch box. This will help the parent/guardian to be aware of what their child is actually eating.
- All recycling/rubbish should be taken home in line with our Green Schools Actions

### **Morning Break**

Due to school size and the number of students in St Mary's, there are two morning break times. Students have approximately 5 minutes to eat at their morning break. Food at this break should be easy to eat, ideally a small sandwich or a piece of fruit. Fruit should be of a manageable size, peeled/chopped if necessary.

### **Lunch Break**

There are two lunch breaks in St. Mary's . Students have approximately 10 minutes to eat their lunch.

A healthy lunchbox should contain:

- At least one portion of fruit/vegetables
- One portion of meat, poultry, fish, eggs or beans
- One portion of bread or cereal
- One portion of dairy
- Milk or water.



Please see table below for lunchbox ideas:

Vegetables, Salad & Fruit <i>5+ portions per day</i>	Meat, Poultry, Fish, Eggs, Beans & Nuts <i>2+ portions per day</i>	Cereals, Breads, Potatoes, Pasta & Rice <i>4+ portions per day</i>	Milk, Yogurt & Cheese <i>3+ portions per day</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1 medium apple, orange, banana, pear or similar size fruit</li> <li>▪ 2 small fruits - plums, kiwis or similar size fruit.</li> <li>▪ Half a tin of fruit in its own juice</li> <li>▪ Handful of dried fruit</li> <li>▪ 1 small bunch of grapes</li> <li>▪ Chopped vegetables, e.g., cucumber, carrot, celery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 2 slices of cooked meat</li> <li>▪ 1 to 2 hardboiled eggs</li> <li>▪ Small portion of tuna, salmon, sardines or mackerel</li> <li>▪ 4 tablespoons of hummus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 2 thin slices of wholemeal bread</li> <li>▪ 1 small bread roll</li> <li>▪ 1 tortilla wrap</li> <li>▪ 1 pitta bread</li> <li>▪ 4 to 6 crackers or breadsticks</li> <li>▪ 1 cup of cooked rice or pasta or couscous</li> <li>▪ 1 small bagel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1 pot of yogurt or custard</li> <li>▪ 2 cheese triangles</li> <li>▪ 2 thumbs of cheese</li> </ul>

We recognise the importance of access to drinking water (Fluid and the School-age Child, 2002). All students should bring a refillable water bottle to school every day. Students will be allowed access to water throughout the school day and can refill their bottles when needed.

Every child in St. Mary's has access to a free school lunch under the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection's School Meals Programme. This lunch is provided by an external Lunch Provider. With parental permission, children can choose their lunch menu in class fortnightly with the teacher.

Lunch options are varied to encourage participation. If students are availing of this lunch scheme, they will not need to bring any other lunch to school.

### **Foods Not Permitted in St. Mary's**

The following foods **do not support** our healthy lunch policy and should be **excluded** from your child's lunch box:

- Fizzy drinks, sports drinks and drinks/juices with high sugar content
- Take away food/ hot deli food
- Chewing gum
- Sweets & winders
- Crisps & popcorn
- Biscuits/cakes/muffins (except on Treat Day)
- Cereal Bars (except on Treat Day)
- Chocolate (except on Treat Day)

Please note that for certain class groups where there are students with nut allergies, nuts and foods containing nuts are not permitted.

**\*\*\* St. Mary's NS is a NUT FREE ZONE\*\*\***

### **Treat Day**

Friday is Treat Day in St Mary's. The students are encouraged to eat the treat after they have eaten their lunch.

On this day, students can bring one of the following:

- Treat/fun sized bar
- Treat/fun sized bag of sweets
- Small biscuit
- Small cereal bar (preferably homemade)
- Small home bakes

Other treat days may include:

- End of term parties
- Halloween
- School trips and events
- Class rewards

On these occasions, teachers may provide treats for the class or students may be invited to bring in items to consume. Teachers will be aware of students with allergies and will ensure safety and inclusivity.

### **Implementation**

If a pupil brings prohibited food or drink to school, they will be asked by the teacher to bring it home at the end of the school day, as such foods are not allowed. If the pupil does not have anything else to eat, the teacher will deal with the matter at his/her discretion. If a pupil persists in bringing unhealthy food to school, the teacher will organise a meeting with the child's

parent/guardian to remind them of St Mary's Healthy Eating Policy. School staff will consistently implement the Healthy Eating Policy and publish it on the school website to ensure that it is adhered to.

### **Allergies**

If a child has a serious food allergy, the parents/guardians must notify the school and provide a doctor's report stating the implications of the allergy and listing the foods to be avoided. Parents/guardians will be asked to participate with staff in formulating an individual Allergy Management Plan. This plan will identify how best to minimise the risk of an allergic reaction for the child and it will outline the protocol to be implemented if an allergic reaction occurs. Further details can be found in St Mary's Administration of Medicines Policy.

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### **Ratification & Communication**

This Healthy Eating Policy was reviewed and updated by the Board of Management on 11th February 2022, following consultation with staff, students and parents/guardians. The policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents Association.

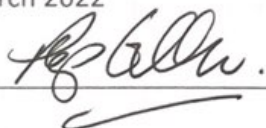
### **Monitoring & Evaluation**

The implementation of this Healthy Eating Policy will be monitored by the Principal, staff and Board of Management. It will be reviewed and evaluated at regular intervals, including through formal and informal feedback from parents/guardians, pupils, staff and others. The policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation.

Philip Gillen

Chairperson of Board of Management

March 2022



Ailish Mc Manus

Principal

March 2022

