



Healthy Eating Policy

1. Introduction

Our school recognises that healthy eating is an important part of every child's physical, emotional and educational development. A balanced diet supports children's growth, concentration, energy levels, ability to learn and overall wellbeing.

This Healthy Eating Policy aims to promote healthy food choices and positive attitudes towards food among pupils. It applies to food and drinks brought into school, food provided by the school, by Dublin City Council (DCC) and food provided by Carambola Ltd. through the Hot School Meals Programme.

The school recognises the important role of parents/guardians, pupils, teachers, SNAs, ancillary staff, the Board of Management and our hot meals provider in supporting healthy eating.

This policy was updated in April 2023 in line with the guidelines included in the HSE 'Healthy Eating Policy Toolkit for Primary Schools' (2023) & the 'Department of Education and Skills Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023,' and later in 2026 following the introduction of the Hot School Meals Programme.

2. Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Promote healthy, balanced and nutritious eating habits.
- Encourage children to develop positive attitudes towards food.
- Support pupils' growth, development, concentration and learning.
- Provide consistent healthy eating messages throughout the school.
- Ensure that food provided through the Hot School Meals Programme contributes to a balanced diet.
- Encourage children to make informed and healthy food choices.
- Reduce the consumption of foods and drinks high in sugar, salt and saturated fat.
- Promote good hydration.
- Respect individual dietary, cultural, medical and religious requirements.
- Support families by providing practical guidance on healthy lunches and snacks.
- Develop children's understanding of food, nutrition and healthy lifestyles.

3. Culture and Environment

These aims will be addressed as follows:

- All children are given the opportunity to participate in the Hot School Meals Programme (see below for further details).
- Children who do not participate in the programme are encouraged to bring a healthy lunchbox to school. Parents/guardians are encouraged to provide lunches and snacks that are varied, nutritious and appropriate to their child's age and activity level. A healthy lunch box should include a helping of food from the bottom four shelves of the food pyramid.
- Some of the healthy foods that we encourage include fresh fruit, vegetables, cheese, yoghurts (non dessert), sandwiches, pasta, plain rice cakes and crackers.
- Children are provided with the opportunity to eat most of their lunch in the classroom but can also bring smaller snacks out to the yard.
- All pupils are given the opportunity to avail of the EU School Milk Scheme (plain milk only will be offered and all milk cartons will be stored in the refrigerator). Milk is an excellent source of calcium which is the main mineral present in bones and teeth. For children aged 9-18 years, 5 servings of calcium rich foods are recommended due to the importance of this mineral during this life stage.
- School sandwiches and fruit, provided by DCC, are also available to students during the school day.
- Water is the preferred drink in school. Children are encouraged to bring a labelled reusable water bottle to school each day. Pupils will have regular access to drinking water. Water is available throughout the school day, particularly during physical activity and warm weather.
- In keeping with the Green Schools Initiative, which addresses reducing litter and hence protecting the school environment, children are encouraged to bring home food wrappers and hot meal containers.
- When refreshments are provided at school-related events, the school ensures that healthy choices are on offer.
- Sweet treats for birthdays such as cakes, buns, sweets, party bags, etc., should not be brought into school as, in the school setting, there may be so many birthdays that sweet treats are available nearly every day.
- Teachers and staff provide positive modelling and support attitudes to encourage healthy eating including providing non-food related rewards.
- Children are allowed 5 minutes for eating at 10.15am and 15 minutes at 12.00.

4. Hot School Meals Programme

As mentioned, our school participates in the Hot School Meals Programme. The provision of hot meals is an important part of our school's commitment to supporting children's health and wellbeing. Meals provided through the programme will be planned and supplied in accordance with the requirements and healthy eating standards of the scheme.

Where practical, meals will provide a balance of:

- Protein.
- Vegetables and/or salad.
- Starchy carbohydrates.
- Appropriate dairy or alternatives.

- Fruit or another suitable dessert option.
- Water.

The school will work closely with the approved hot meals provider to ensure that meals supplied to pupils are appropriate, nutritious and suitable for primary school children.

Menus will be communicated to parents/guardians where appropriate.

Children will be encouraged to try the foods provided but will not be forced to eat a particular food.

Where a child has a diagnosed allergy, medical dietary requirement or other approved dietary need, the school and meal provider will work with parents/guardians to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place.

5. Foods and Drinks Not Recommended for School

To support a healthy school food environment, the following are not recommended as part of everyday school lunches or snacks:

- Sweets and confectionery.
- Chocolate bars and chocolate-coated snacks.
- Crisps and similar high-salt snacks.
- Sugary drinks and energy drinks.
- Fizzy drinks.
- High-sugar drinks.
- Large quantities of cakes, biscuits and pastries.
- Foods with a high level of added sugar, salt or saturated fat.
- Chewing gum
- Nuts
- Lollipops

6. Special Dietary Requirements

The school recognises that some pupils may require specific diets because of:

- Food allergies.
- Food intolerances.
- Sensory difficulties around food.
- Medical conditions.
- Religious requirements.
- Cultural requirements.
- Vegetarian or other dietary choices.

Parents/guardians should inform the school of any relevant dietary requirements and provide appropriate medical information where necessary.

The school will maintain appropriate records of pupils with significant food allergies or medical dietary requirements and ensure that relevant staff are aware of the necessary procedures.

Food allergies will be managed in accordance with the school's relevant medical procedures.

7. Food Allergies and Food Safety

The school is committed to maintaining a safe environment for all pupils.

Staff will:

- Follow appropriate food safety and hygiene procedures.
- Be aware of pupils with known food allergies or dietary requirements.
- Follow the school's procedures for responding to allergic reactions.
- Encourage children not to share food with other pupils where this could create a health or allergy risk.
- Liaise with the hot meals provider regarding known dietary requirements.

Children will be taught the importance of washing/sanitising hands before eating and following appropriate hygiene practices.

8. Curriculum and Learning

Healthy eating will be supported through the school's curriculum, particularly through SPHE, Science, PE and other relevant subjects. Teachers use a 2 year SPHE Plan ensuring that all teachers teach lessons on healthy eating at similar times across class groups. It is part of the 'Taking Care of my Body' Strand Unit as outlined in the SPHE Curriculum. Healthy eating education will focus on health, wellbeing, enjoyment and informed choices, rather than weight or appearance

Children will have opportunities to learn about:

- A balanced diet.
- Food groups.
- Healthy choices.
- Hydration.
- Food hygiene.
- The importance of physical activity.
- Where food comes from.
- Sustainable food choices.
- The relationship between food, health and wellbeing.

9. Role of Staff

All staff are expected to support the principles of this policy.

Staff will:

- Promote positive attitudes towards food.
- Be sensitive to children's individual circumstances.
- Support pupils in developing independence around eating.
- Follow all relevant allergy, medical and food safety procedures.

10. Role of Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians are asked to support the policy by:

- Providing suitable healthy lunches and snacks.
- Providing children with a reusable water bottle.
- Informing the school of allergies and dietary requirements.
- Supporting children in developing healthy eating habits.
- Reading and engaging with information about the Hot School Meals Programme.
- Discussing healthy eating positively with their children.

The school recognises that families have different circumstances and will communicate this policy in a supportive and non-judgemental manner.

11. Pupil Voice

Pupils will be encouraged to contribute to the development and review of healthy eating practices within the school.

Where appropriate, pupil feedback may be sought regarding:

- Hot school meals.
- Food preferences.
- Healthy eating initiatives.
- School events.
- Opportunities to learn about nutrition.

The school will encourage children to develop independence and responsibility in making healthy choices.

12. Sustainability

Where possible, the school will promote environmentally responsible food practices, including:

- Reducing food waste.
- Encouraging reusable water bottles.
- Minimising unnecessary packaging.

13. Implementation, Monitoring and Review

The Principal, staff and Board of Management will monitor the implementation of this policy.

The policy will be reviewed as necessary according to:

- Government guidance changes.
- Requirements of the Hot School Meals Programme.
- Significant changes to school food provision.
- Feedback from staff, pupils or parents which indicates that amendments are required.

Feedback from pupils, parents/guardians, staff and the hot meals provider may be considered as part of the review.