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## Healthy Eating Policy

### Introduction

The HSE booklet Healthy Eating Policy Toolkit for Primary Schools was used to assist in the review process of Ballycullane National Schools Healthy Eating Policy.

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 pupils to gain a greater understanding of the importance of balanced nutrition.

Ballycullane NS 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 pupils will receive consistent messages regarding healthy eating, both at home and at school

### Aims

The aims of our healthy eating policy are:

- To promote a whole school approach to healthy eating and nutrition
- To understand the benefit of a healthy well-balanced diet
- To promote the health, wellbeing, development and learning of pupils.
- To help children establish healthy eating habits early in life that persist into adulthood.
- To support concentration, energy levels, oral health, physical health (including healthy weight), and to reduce risks of diet-related illnesses (e.g. obesity, dental decay, type-2 diabetes).
- 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 food
- To provide members of staff, parents/guardians and those involved in school activities with clear information.

### 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.

## Roles & Responsibilities

- **School Board / Management:** adopt and review policy; ensure staff training; ensure infrastructure (clean water, storage, etc.).
- **All Staff:** promote healthy eating through teaching, role modelling; monitor compliance; integrate healthy eating into SPHE, Science, PE.
- **Parents/Guardians:** support the policy by providing healthy lunchboxes; encourage children to follow the guidelines.
- **Pupils:** participate, learn, try healthy options; avoid bringing prohibited items; respect school guidelines

## 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 and implemented across all year groups
- The School Lunch Provider will adhere to the required Healthy Ireland Nutrition Standards for School Meals.
- Sweets and/or food treats will not be used as daily rewards by teachers.
- Parents are encouraged to download our School Lunch Provider app for ease and convenience to change meals.
- Parents and students are regularly reminded to change lunches before Thursday at 5pm
- We will take part in food initiatives such as Food Dudes/ Incredible Edibles to promote healthy eating.

## School Meals Programme

- Every child in Ballycullane NS 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. Our school provider is Fresh Today.
- Parents/guardians and children can choose their lunch menu online.
- Lunch menus are set up to encourage variety.
- Snacks are provided at small breaks. Snacks may include but not limited to - a piece of fruit, yoghurt, popcorn, oatmeal bake and flapjack.
- Children in each classroom receive the same snack.
- Hot meals are provided for lunchtime.
- Students have a wide variety of choices for their hot meal.
- Students are provided with a lunchbox to bring home their school meals.
- Each student is provided with a water bottle and every classroom has a water cooler. Students will be allowed access to water throughout the school day and can refill their bottles when needed.

School Meals are not compulsory. Parents/guardians can choose not to avail of them if they wish. However, if this is the case, parents/guardians must supply a healthy lunch for their child that follows our Healthy Eating Policy.

## Break/ Lunchtime

Ballycullane NS has 2 breaks at 11am and 1pm.

- Students are given approximately 5-10 minutes to eat their lunch before going out to the yard
- Students should not share food, utensils or drinks
- Students should be seated at their own desk when eating.

- All rubbish should be taken home.
- Any uneaten food should be put in their own lunchbox and brought home. This will help parents/guardians to be aware of what and how much their child is eating.

## **Bringing their own Lunch**

Students are welcome to bring their own lunch to school providing it aligns with our Healthy Eating Policy.

A healthy lunchbox should contain:

- At least one portion of fruit/vegetables (fruit/ veg should be a manageable size and cut and peeled if necessary)
- One portion of meat, poultry, fish, eggs or beans
- One portion of bread or cereal
- One portion of dairy
- Water

Please see table below for lunchbox ideas:

Vegetables, Salad & Fruit-	5+ portions per day
Meat, Poultry, Fish, Eggs & Beans-	2+ portions per day
Cereals, Breads, Potatoes, Pasta & Rice-	4+ portions per day
Milk, Yogurt & Cheese-	3+ portions per day

1 medium apple, orange, banana, pear or similar size fruit

2 small fruits – plums, kiwis or similar size fruit.

Half a tin of fruit in its own juice

Handful of dried fruit

1 small bunch of grapes- cut in halves for Ji and Si

Chopped vegetables, e.g. cucumber, carrot, celery

2 slices of cooked meat

1 to 2 hardboiled eggs

Small can of tuna, salmon, sardines or mackerel

4 tablespoons of hummus

2 thin slices of wholemeal bread

1 small bread roll

1 tortilla wrap

1 pitta bread

4 to 6 crackers or breadsticks

1 cup of cooked rice or pasta or couscous

1 small bagel

1 pot of yogurt or custard

2 cheese triangles

2 thumbs of cheese

## **Foods Not Permitted**

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

- Fizzy drinks, sports/ energy drinks and drinks or juices (including dilute) with high sugar content
- Take away food or hot deli food
- Chewing gum
- Sweets including jellies

- Crisps & sweetened popcorn
- Biscuits, cakes, muffins
- Cereal Bars
- Chocolate (bars, biscuits and Nutella)

### **Special Occasions/ Exceptions**

End of term parties, Halloween, school trips and events, class rewards-

On these occasions, teachers may provide treats for the class or pupils may be invited to bring in items. Teachers will be aware of pupils 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 our Healthy Eating Policy.
- School staff will consistently implement the Healthy Eating Policy 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

### **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.

### **Ratification and Communication**

The policy has been made available to all parents via Aladdin, school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents Association.

This policy was presented to the BOM on 20th October 2025

It was ratified by the Board of Management on 20th October 2025

Signed *Fr William Byrne* Chairperson, Board of Management

Review Date: 2027