



CASTLEBAR EDUCATE TOGETHER
NATIONAL SCHOOL

Castlebar Educate Together

Healthy Eating Policy

Introductory statement:

Our original policy was formulated in 2016 as an interim policy for one year to promote health and well-being in the school and to allow for parental consultation and feedback. We then reviewed this policy fully in October 2024 in consultation with pupils, parents and staff. We appreciate that encouraging children to choose certain foods is not always easy. However, with the increase in obesity, type 2 diabetes and the prevalence of dental care needs, we are encouraging best practice especially during school hours. For this policy to be successful, we need support from the whole school community. We do not wish to distract from teaching time in ensuring adherence to this policy so ask for full support from families

The Rationale:

Good nutrition is critical for every child's short and long term health and development. Healthy eating habits are learned during childhood and can help reduce the risk of diseases such as obesity, diabetes, anaemia and bad dental health throughout their life. As a school, we believe a healthy eating policy is fundamental, not only to add life to years but also to add years to life. Our policy is a statement which outlines our school's commitment to promote healthy eating. It promotes the importance of good nutrition practices. This policy aims to support parents/guardians and pupils around developing healthy eating habits at an early age.

Aims:

The aims of this policy are:

1. to promote nutritional awareness and provide consistent messages about nutrition through classroom education.
2. to provide members of staff, parents/guardians and pupils with clear information on healthy eating.
3. to support and encourage healthy eating habits in children, which we hope will become lifelong.
4. to promote the health and safety of children with serious food allergies.
5. to support the school's environmental policy e.g. re-usable containers and minimising wrappers.
6. to help improve children's concentration, learning and energy levels.
7. to support parents/carers and children in making healthy and enjoyable decisions around food by providing nutritional information.

Curriculum Links:

- **S.P.H.E:** Taking care of my body : Food and Nutrition
- **Science:** Myself : Human Life Processes
- **P.E:** Promoting a healthy, active lifestyle
- **Food Dudes:** We were awarded a Food Dude School Award in May 2023 We continue to implement the Food Dude programme to promote health eating and encourage pupils to try new healthy foods.

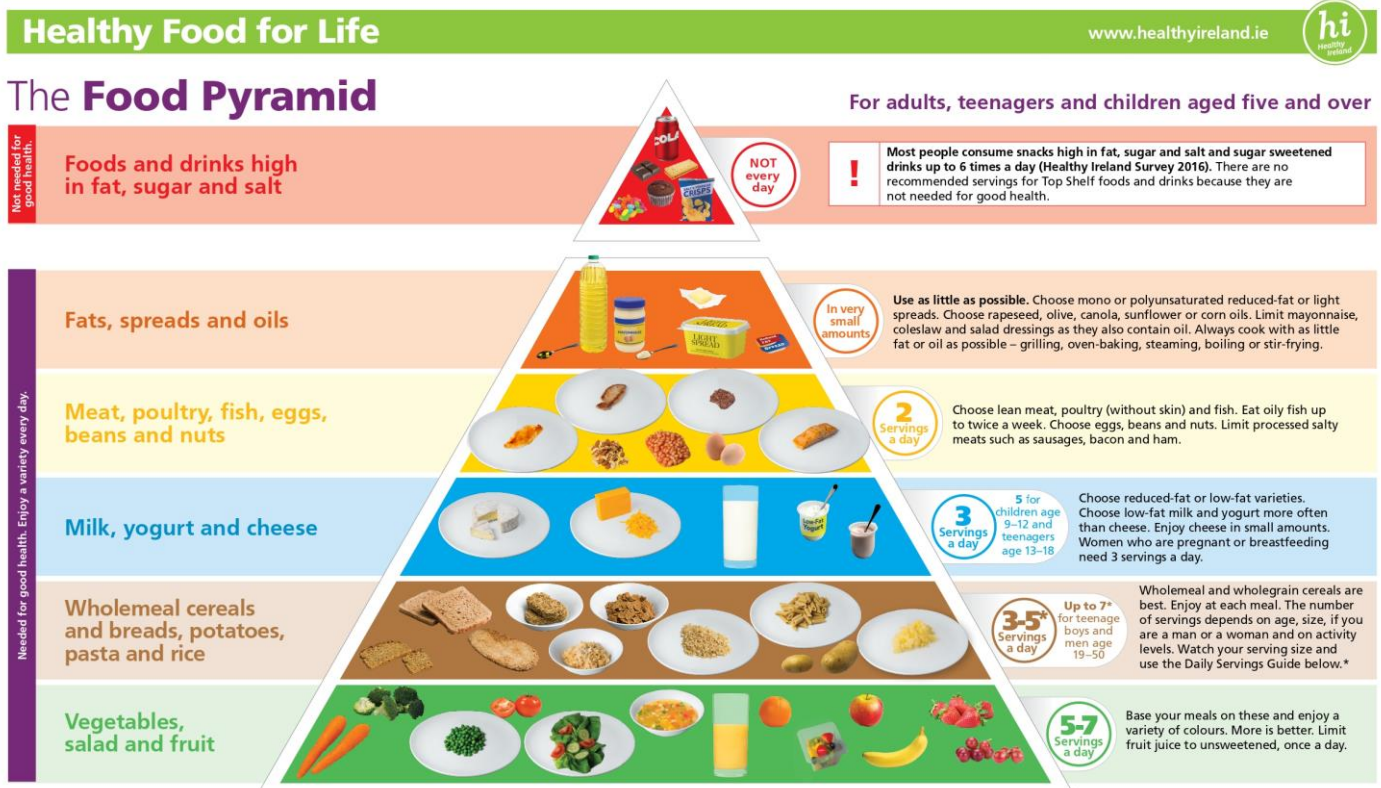


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Guidelines:

1. Contents:

A healthy lunch should, if possible, include a variety of food shelves from the food pyramid. These are indicated below:



The following is a **sample** 5 day lunch box planner from Safe Food – Healthy Lunchboxes

We often end up putting the same things in the lunchbox everyday. Keeping lunchbox contents varied makes lunch more enjoyable. The following planner shows you some examples of snacks and lunch items.

Monday	1 medium wholemeal bread roll with tomato and cheese	+ Banana	+ Handful of carrot sticks	+ Pot of low-fat yoghurt	+ Water
Tuesday	Small pitta bread with tuna and sweetcorn	+ Orange	+ 1/2 wholemeal scone	+ Strawberries	+ Milk
Wednesday	2 tablespoons of pasta with 1 tablespoon of tomatoes and vegetables	+ Cherry tomatoes	+ 2 crackers with low-fat cheddar cheese	+ Yoghurt	+ Water
Thursday	2 slices of wholemeal bread with cooked ham and lettuce	+ Slices of pepper, cucumber, sugar snap peas or mangetout	+ Apple	+ Yoghurt	+ Water
Friday	Tortilla wrap with chicken, sliced peppers and lettuce	+ Kiwi	+ Small tub of stewed fruit	+ 6 cherry tomatoes	+ Milk

Remember:
1. Use low-fat spread, low-fat mayonnaise or relish instead of full-fat options
2. Smaller portions for smaller children



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2. **NB: There is a total ban on all nuts and nut-based products (including peanut butter, chocolate spread, any cereal bars with nuts, pesto, drinks containing nut products e.g. almond milk) because of the serious allergies of some pupils in the school.** (If your child has a suspected nut-based product for their lunch, they will be asked to take this home, along with the note at Appendix 1)
3. Parents are asked, when choosing lunches, not to include the following items:
 - crisps/plantain/popcorn
 - sweets chocolate bars biscuits cakes/buns
 - fizzy drinks/energy drinks(If your child has an unhealthy food item for their lunch, they will be asked to take this home, along with the note at Appendix 2. If this is repeated a number of times, the class teacher will meet with the parent/carer to discuss and then will refer the matter to the Principal)
4. Lollipops, chewing gum, popcorn and hot liquids are not allowed for safety reasons. All pupils are reminded to eat slowly and safely for health and safety.
5. The school has two lunch breaks 10:45am and 12:30 pm. Please ensure your child has enough nourishing food and drink for both breaks. To save time, please ensure all food is well prepared (e.g. fruit peeled and chopped if necessary and sandwiches cut).
6. Children must take responsibility for eating and cleaning up after themselves appropriately. If there is persistent difficulty with this, teachers may request a meeting with parents to discuss alternative lunch options.
7. Children are requested to take home all uneaten food so that parents/carers know if the quantity they are sending is too large or if the child does not like a particular food. Uneaten food may not be thrown in the bin.
8. Children are not allowed to swap or share items from their lunch.
9. If treats are brought in on any day, the children will be asked to take it home and appendix 2 of this policy.
10. Cultural and religious and dietary habits are respected. Parents or carers are requested to provide details of foods not eaten by the child for these reasons.
11. In the interest of fairness, and for allergy, religious and health reasons, **we cannot host birthday parties at school.** If parents/carers wish, children should celebrate their birthdays at home with their families/friends. Please refrain from sending in birthday cakes/treats to school. We will, of course, sing 'Happy Birthday' for your child on the big day, if they would like us to, and generally make a fuss of them!



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12. We are a 'Green School'. We achieved our Green Flag for waste and recycling in 2019. In keeping with this and with the aim of being waste aware, please remove all packaging from food wherever you can. Instead we encourage the use of re-usable containers, water bottles/beakers etc. Glass bottles and cans are not allowed. Please ensure drink bottle is large enough as not all classrooms have filtered water.

Exceptions:

1. As before, during the school year, treats will be organised by school staff from time to time, on special occasions e.g. cinema days, school trips, baking days etc. On these days, all pupils will receive the same treats, thus eliminating the opportunity for comparing treats and any teasing or unkind words. Careful attention will be given to any dietary requirements, food allergies or religious observances when selecting treats for the pupils.
2. Some pupils with significant additional needs have a very specific and limited range of foods they eat. On the recommendation of a Medical/Health professional (e.g. feeding clinic) exemptions to this policy will be made. Evidence of this recommendation must be provided in writing to the school. This does not however include nut products. No exemptions can be made for nut products.

Resources:

The following websites provide useful information and tips on healthy lunches:

- www.safefood.eu
- www.healthpromotion.ie/health/healthy_eating
- www.enjoyhealthyeating.info/

Other Tips and Hints:

- Keep lunches in fridge if made the night before
- Use a small insulated cool bag especially in warmer weather
- Cut sandwiches into small manageable portions especially for younger children
- Peel fruit for younger children
- Avoid items that children cannot eat without assistance
- Try to give a variety of foods
- Vary the types of bread (wholemeal, granary, high fibre rolls, bagels, pitta and sliced bread)

We appreciate that encouraging children to choose certain foods is not always easy. However, with the increase in obesity, type 2 diabetes and the prevalence of dental care needs, we are encouraging best practice especially during school hours. For this policy to be successful, we need support from the whole school community.

Food Allergies:

If a child has a serious food allergy or a special dietary requirement, parents/carers are responsible for notifying the school and completing the yellow medical conditions/allergies form, and the administration of medication form, where necessary.

Please note guidelines above on Nut Ban and see Administration of Medication policy.



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School Support:

Our strong pastoral care ethic and the Educate Together key principle of child-centredness will ensure that no child goes hungry at school. If a child has forgotten their lunch, the school will contact their parents/carers to make arrangements for the delivery of their lunch. If this is not possible, the school will cater for the child.

All relevant curricular lessons which support this Healthy Eating Policy will be taught at all class levels (see '*Curriculum Integration*' section above)

Dissemination of Policy:

The attention of all parents will be drawn to this policy when enrolling their child(ren) in the school. The attention of all newly appointed staff will be drawn to this policy upon their appointment to the school. This policy will be published on the school website and provided to the Home/School Association. Hard copies of this, and all school policies, are available at the school on request.

Implementation and Review:

This policy will be implemented from November 2024.

This policy will be reviewed in November 2030.

Ratification and Communication:

The attention of all newly appointed staff will be drawn to this policy upon their appointment to the school by the Principal.

This policy will be published on the school website and provided to the Home/School Association.

A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and the Patron, if requested.

Hard copies of this, and all school policies, are available at the school on request.

This policy was ratified on 21st October 2024 by the Board of Management, with immediate effect.

Signature of Chairperson:

Signature of Principal:

Date:



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Appendix 1 – Note to parents/carers re: Nuts/Nut-Based Product

Date:

Dear parents/carers of:

Your child had the following food item(s) for lunch today, which we believe to contain nuts/be a nut-based product;

Your child was not allowed to consume this product and has been asked to take it home. Such food items are not allowed due to the severe nut allergies of some of our pupils. Please do not send these items to school again.

If there are no nuts in the above item(s), please clarify this with me by providing a list of ingredients, and please accept our apologies but we must take these precautions for health and safety reasons.

Many thanks,

Class Teacher





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Appendix 2 – Note to parents/carers re: unhealthy lunches

Date:

Dear parents/carers of:

Your child had the following food item(s) for lunch today, which are not allowed in line with our healthy eating policy;












Please ensure that you provide healthy lunch options for your child. There are some suggestions below from Safe Food, and further information can be found in the school's Healthy Eating Policy.

Many thanks,

Class Teacher

5-day lunchbox planner

We often end up putting the same things in the lunchbox everyday. Keeping lunchbox contents varied makes lunch more enjoyable. The following planner shows you some examples of snacks and lunch items.

Monday	
1 medium wholemeal bread roll with tomato and cheese	+  + Handful of carrot sticks + Pot of low-fat yoghurt + 
Tuesday	
Small pitta bread with tuna and sweetcorn	+  + ½ wholemeal scone +  + 
Wednesday	
2 tablespoons of pasta with 1 tablespoon of tomatoes and vegetables	+  + 2 crackers with low-fat cheddar cheese +  + 
Thursday	
2 slices of wholemeal bread with cooked ham and lettuce	+ Slices of pepper, cucumber, sugar snap peas or mangetout +  + Yoghurt + 
Friday	
Tortilla wrap with chicken, sliced peppers and lettuce	+  + Small tub of stewed fruit + 6 cherry tomatoes + 