

## St. John's School - Healthy Eating Policy March 2020

**Background:** Food and drink play a very important role in the lives of the children in St. John's N.S. They are essential for helping both staff and pupils achieve to the best of their potential in school and we want to promote healthier options and help the children to make the right food and drink choices. In St. John's N.S. we are taking a holistic approach to our healthy eating policy and believe that being supported by the whole school community including staff, parents and students, will lead to a greater sense of ownership and success.

**Rationale:** Health and Nutrition form the basis for long, healthy, happy lives. We feel it is our duty to educate and empower our students to develop healthy habits for life! We believe that prevention is better than cure and by taking the right steps now to help encourage children to make healthier choices, we can help prevent them from facing obesity or other eating disorders in later life. Good nutrition can not only help children physically but also creates positive effects on their concentration, behavior as well as self-esteem.

This Policy has been created in line with the *Department of Health Promotion's Healthy Food for Life Campaign (launched 2016)*.

The draft policy was developed by a steering committee and the School Principal.

It also forms part of our curriculum through subjects like SPHE, SESE and PE and we aim to promote nutrition awareness and to positively affect healthy food and drink choices within the school community.

**Aims & Objectives:** The overall aims of Healthy Eating Policy:

- to help support the development of children and how their food choices contribute to the personal development, overall health and wellness, concentration and behaviour at school of each child, which they will carry forward throughout their lives.
- to help encourage pupils to make healthy choices and experience, as well as want to experience, a wide variety of healthy foods in their packed lunch or in the canteen at lunch or breakfast time.
- to inform pupils about what constitutes a healthy lifestyle for life such as the importance of good nutrition and fitness by educating them on facts around food and nutrition in line with the new Department of Health Promotion's Healthy Food for Life Campaign.
- to encourage parents and children to think critically about healthy eating and encourage them to accept responsibility for making choices and to encourage positive feedback and praise to any changes or good choices made.

**This policy will strive to help ensure the safety of children with allergies.**

### **Definition: "What is Healthy Food?"**

The staff in St. John's will work within national recommendations for healthy eating and will advise and encourage children to focus on the following recommendations:

1. Enjoy a wide variety of foods from the five food groups (See Food Pyramid).
2. Find enjoyable ways to be physically active every day – balancing your food intake with active living will help protect you against disease and prevent weight gain.
3. Monitor the size of your servings – choose smaller serving sizes and add plenty of vegetables, salad and fruit.
4. Wholemeal breads, cereals, potatoes, pasta and rice provide the best calories for a healthy weight.
5. Eat the Rainbow - Eat plenty of different coloured vegetables, salad and fruit – at least five a day.
6. Drink plenty of water.

### **The Guidelines:**

- Teachers and other adults who work in the school will provide positive modelling and supportive attitudes.
- A healthy lunch box includes a piece of food from the bottom four shelves of the food pyramid (vegetables, fruit and salad, whole grains, dairy (milk, cheese, yogurt) & protein (meat, fish, pulses)).
- **Acceptable food items to eat in school include:**
  - Sandwiches with healthy fillings & bread (preferably wholemeal/wholegrain)
  - Fruit & vegetables
  - Plain or fruit yoghurts with spoon
  - Crackers (preferably wholemeal/wholegrain) & rice cakes
  - Water, squash, fruit juice or yoghurt drinks.

- **Unacceptable food items to eat in school include:**

- Fizzy drinks/Capri Sun/Fruit Shoots/other similar drinks
- Any other drinks that are high in sugar
- Crisps & popcorn
- Chewing gum
- Sweets
- Chocolate bars/biscuits
- Chocolate spread (usually contain nuts as well as sugar)
- Nuts. In themselves nuts can provide a very healthy snack but due to the increasing number of children who are suffering from food allergies we feel we would be introducing unnecessary dangers to children who have an allergy to nuts. A bad reaction to nuts can actually be life threatening. Even on days when we have parties or treat days in school and children are allowed treats, nuts will not be allowed for this reason.
- Yoghurts which are based on confectionery products (e.g. aero, crunchie bars etc.)
- Pastries and cakes
- Any other foods high in sugar
- Fruit winders
- Cereal bars

We have been advised by the HSE that the last two items, while they may have some good properties, are high in sugar and that children should not be encouraged to eat them. Some are more harmful than others but it would be totally impractical in school for teachers to have to decide which (if any) are suitable for children.

- Pupils are allowed to have a bottle of water in their classrooms.
- Some special occasions or fun days may be regarded as a party or treat day and parents will be notified in advance by their class teacher about what the children can bring to school on that day.
- We ask parents to provide children with a lunch box - this can be an old margarine tub, food container, coleslaw tub etc. Children who bring foods that have wrappers are asked to take them home where they may be disposed of properly to reduce litter and protect our environment. Try to use recyclable and reusable containers and not items like tinfoil, glass and cans.

- As part of our school policy to promote environmental issues, the second class students did a lot of work on recycling, composting etc. They pointed out to us that we generate a lot of food waste in school each day from our lunches. In order to encourage the children in their environmental work and to cut down on this waste, we will encourage all the children in the school to bring home their organic waste in their lunchboxes to compost at home and also bring home any other unnecessary wrappings each day. Please help us out by cooperating with this request.
- Any uneaten food is requested to be sent home for parents to observe.

**Considerations of the Healthy Eating Policy:**

- It is expected all parents will support the Healthy Eating Policy in every way possible. If a child brings food which is deemed unacceptable, it will be returned to the child at the end of the day and sent home to the parent.
- If this continues to happen then a standardized school note with a tick or small explanation/reminder as to why the food is deemed unacceptable for consumption in the school. If this continues after this, then a meeting may be requested by the teacher with the parent.
- It is the obligation of the parent/guardian to inform the school office of any special dietary requirements or allergies pertaining to their child.
- Speaking with parents at Parent Teacher Meetings and other arranged meetings
- Healthy Eating Week
- Cross-curricular activities each term to promote a holistic, positive approach to good food and nutrition.
- Some planning time to be dedicated to the planning, implementing and reviewing of the Healthy Eating Policy.

- Promotional Materials pertaining to the new 2016 Healthy Food for Life (New Food Pyramid) will be evident around the school.

**Success Criteria:** This policy will have been deemed effective if the whole school community are supportive and children develop a habit of eating a healthy balanced lunch and healthy snacks and drinks.

**Roles & Responsibilities:**

**The Healthy Eating Policy will be overseen and implemented by a Healthy Eating Steering Committee:**

A whole school community approach will be taken.

The staff will implement the policy with each class teacher co-ordinating the progress of this policy. They will be responsible for modelling and continual reinforcement in the areas of praise and encouragement for success but ultimately the responsibility for ensuring that children eat healthily lies with the Parent /Guardian of each child.

**Role of Parents:**

- The support the ethos and guidelines of the healthy eating policy
- Provide healthy, well balanced lunches for children in accordance with the guidelines and monitor child's eating habits at school.
- Provide lunches in an "environmentally friendly" manner as possible.
- Inform the school of any special dietary requirements or allergies.

**Role of Children:**

- Try new foods, keep hydrated and make time to eat their lunch.

- Have a positive attitude to the healthy eating policy and be responsible for their own actions.
- Help make their lunch at home and remind busy parents to follow the guidelines of the policy.

**Role of School:**

- Be the positive role model and support to the whole school community in relation to the healthy eating policy.
- Monitor and observe the adherence to the policy.
- Continually review and adapt the policy to best suit the needs of the school community.
- Engage with a holistic, cross curricular approach to the healthy eating policy and encourage CPD and teacher development where possible.

**Timeframe for Implementation:** The Healthy Eating Policy Steering Committee will be established in academic year of 2019/2020 with a draft policy and provisional implementation beginning throughout the school. This will be then ratified by the BOM and a continually process of development and reflection will occur at designated times.

Timeframe for Review: The policy will be reviewed biennially.

**Responsibility of Review:** The responsibility of review of the policy lies with the Healthy Eating Steering Committee & the School Principal in consultation with the St. John's Parents' Council and St. John's Whole Staff.

**Ratification:**

The policy has been reviewed and amended by the Healthy Eating Steering Committee & the School Principal in consultation with the St. John's Parents' Council and St. John's Whole Staff. It is communicated to each parent by means of our school information booklet which is distributed to each family as the children enroll in the school and referred to regularly in the issues of St. John's Newsletter. It will also be made available on the school website for parents and a copy has been made available to staff.

Date of Ratification:

Signature of Principal:

Signature of Co-ordinator of Healthy Eating Steering Committee:

Signature of Chairperson of BOM: