

HEALTHY SCHOOL LUNCH POLICY

Aim

The aim of this policy is to ensure children eat a healthy, well-balanced lunch, thus promoting a healthy lifestyle. By encouraging healthy eating patterns, we educate children for later life. This policy aims to:

- Promote an awareness of the importance of a balanced diet
- Positively promote healthy eating among school-age children
- Raise levels of concentration within class through the consumption of healthy food
- Support and encourage healthy eating habits in children, which is hoped will become lifelong habits
- Provide members of staff, parents and those involved in school activities with clear information
- Protect the health and safety of children with serious food allergies.
- To encourage the children to be aware, alert and responsive to litter problems.
- To encourage positive involvement in their child's nutrition.
- To promote personal well-being and confidence through diet, activity and dental hygiene.

Rational

Rahara N.S Healthy School Policy aims to promote the development of the whole child, physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally. Our school recognises that a healthy diet is essential for maintaining and protecting children's health, for ensuring they perform to their full potential during the school day (both academically and physically) and for their growth and development. *"A child's early years are important for their future health and wellbeing, and good nutrition during this time lays a healthy foundation for all of childhood and life"*. Eating a balanced diet is vital for good health and wellbeing. Children need a wide variety of foods to provide the right amounts of nutrients for good health and development. It is important to teach children about healthy food choices and staying well hydrated, and to help them develop good habits and a healthy relationship with food.

Rahara N.S. takes part in the Food Dudes Programme.

Why do we need a healthy eating policy?

We need a healthy eating policy to:

- help us make healthy food choices and allow us to take responsibility for our health and wellbeing.

- help support our concentration, energy levels and moods in school.
- help us understand the connection between what we eat and how we feel.
- help us to develop life-long healthy eating habits.
- Encourage pupils to eat breakfast to support their wellbeing, performance and concentration

Who needs to support our healthy eating policy?

- School staff – Teachers and staff must lead by example and teach us about healthy lifestyles.
- Pupils – Children need to encourage each other to eat healthy foods so we have enough energy to learn, play and grow.
- Parents/Guardians - Parents/guardians are encouraged to provide children with a healthy lunch, which helps to maintain their level of concentration in the classroom throughout the day.

What do I need to consider when planning my school lunch?

- Drink plenty of water – keeping our bodies hydrated increases our energy, concentration and keeps our body functioning well. Lack of hydration causes irritability, poor performance and makes us tired.
- Opt for slow releasing carbohydrates e.g. wholemeal brown bread, brown rice, brown pasta, wholemeal wraps & pitta breads. These foods will provide a steady release of energy throughout the day.
- Reduce sugar intake – too much sugar can have a negative impact on our concentration, behaviour and weight so we need to limit our sugar intake and restrict treats to special occasions. Remember there are 4g of sugar in one teaspoon. The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2015) recommends no more than 19g of sugar a day for children aged 4-6 and 24g a day for 7-10 year olds.
- Eat a Rainbow every day – Try to get as much colour and variety into your school lunch as possible. This will ensure you are getting lots of vitamins and minerals every day to help support your health and wellbeing.
- To be green is very important to us in Rahara N.S. as a Green School so we would encourage everyone to bring reusable bottles to school, to bring all packaging and uneaten food home, to be aware of shopping local, food miles and Fairtrade when purchasing food for lunches. And of course to grow our own food where possible.
- Read ingredients and food labels –foods with a long list of ingredients which you struggle to recognise or pronounce are best avoided. Opt of real, unprocessed, whole foods as much as possible.

Healthy Lunch Options:

Children should choose from the following foods regularly:

- Sandwiches – wholemeal/wholegrain
- Bread/scones wholemeal/wholegrain
- Pitta bread – wholegrain/wholemeal
- Rice cakes/crackers - wholegrain
- Pasta – wholegrain
- Wrap – wholegrain
- Fruit
- Vegetables
- Cheese, lean meat, eggs, fish, salad
- Dried fruit
- Popcorn (unsalted/no butter etc.) (small sandwich bag/15g)
- Soup (in a flask)
- Water
- Milk
- Fruit Juice (preferably pure or diluted)
- Yoghurt Drinks (low sugar)
- Tuna

Prohibited Foods (this list is not exhaustive)

We do not allow foods such as:

- Nuts: or any product containing nuts of any description e.g. peanut butter/Nutella (Due to allergies)
- Sweets
- Take away foods – burgers/hotdogs/chips/wedges/hash browns etc.
- Bars/chocolate
- Chocolate spreads
- Cereal bars
- Fruit Winders
- Biscuits
- Crisps
- Buns
- Cakes
- Lollies
- Sugar spray/roller/ treats e.g. “Brain licker”/ Slushies spray,

- Fizzy drinks
- Energy drinks
- Chewing gum

However, on Friday one treat from the above list may be brought to school as part of the pupil's lunch, if parents wish, with the exception of nut products, candy floss, sugar spray/roller/ treats e.g. "Brain licker"/ Slushy spray, fizzy/energy drinks and chewing gum

Unfortunately, as there is a high risk of burns and scalds, please do not include hot drinks as part of a junior child's lunch (Junior and Senior Infants)

On a treat day parents/guardians may give treats to their own child and teachers may give treats to their own class. These are special occasions such as:

- End of term parties
- Halloween
- School trips and events
- Birthdays
- School events that children have been asked to bring in baked goods – Grandparents Day, fundraisers etc.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Role of Parents:

- Provide a healthy well-balanced lunch for children
- Encourage healthy eating
- Inform the school of any child's special dietary needs
- To implement school policy by not allowing their children to bring chewing gum to school.
- To reduce the amount of crisps, sweets, chocolate bars and fizzy drinks

Role of Children:

- To eat their lunch.
- To bring home any uneaten lunch.
- To help make their lunches and remind parents of the Healthy Lunch Policy.
- Not to bring nuts, chewing gum and not to ask parents for crisps, chocolate bars for school.

Role of School (Includes Breakfast & Afterschool Club)

- To promote and encourage healthy eating.
- Allow children adequate time to eat
- If children bring chewing gum it will be confiscated.

- Sometimes children forget their lunches. In cases where the staff is informed every effort will be made to contact parents and/or provide some lunch for the children.

Implementation:

This policy will be implemented from 1st October 2023.

If children bring prohibited food or drink into school they will be asked by the class teacher to bring it home, as it is not allowed.

If children do not have anything else to eat, the teacher will deal with this matter at his/her discretion.

If children persist in bringing unhealthy food to school, the class teacher will organise a meeting with their parents/guardians to remind them of the Healthy Eating Policy.

As part of the Social Personal and Health Education curriculum reasons for healthy eating will be discussed with the children regularly by staff.

Teachers will continue to give a sweet treat on occasions (e.g. Halloween, Christmas, celebrations etc.).

Children may also bring a cake (containing no nuts or nut products) on their birthday if they wish. No other 'birthday treats' are permitted.

Review:

This policy will be reviewed by staff and the parents during the first term of every year and if necessary updated in consultation with both parties.

Chairperson of the BOM: _____

Date: _____

Principal _____

Date: _____