

**St. Joseph's Special School,
Thomas Hynes Rd, Newcastle, Galway.**

Telephone 091 521895.

Email stjosephsp.ias@eircom.net

Chairperson of the Board of Management: Eileen Costello-Conneely

Principal: Breda Dolan.

Policy: HEALTHY EATING POLICY

Date of Issue: **October 2014.**

Introduction

This policy was developed by a committee comprised of two teachers, the school nurse, the cook/housekeeper and a parent representative. Advice was also obtained from a dietician.

It should be read in conjunction with the policy on Child Protection, the Health and Safety Statement, the Green School policy, the whole school plan for SPHE, the Home Economics senior school programme and the FETAC module Food Choices & Health.

Rationale

Nutrition is a significant factor in the growth, development and overall functioning of a child. Good nutrition provides the energy and nutrients essential to sustain life and promotes physical, emotional and cognitive development. The development of healthy eating practices and physical activity can prevent disease and help to support a lifetime of good health. Research informs us that poor nutrition impacts on children's behaviour, performance and overall ability to concentrate on learning tasks. Meals and snacks served should meet pupils' nutritional needs, follow healthy eating guidelines, and help pupils to establish good lifelong eating patterns.

Aim

To help all those involved in the school community-pupils, staff and parents- to develop positive attitudes to eating and healthy living.

Objectives

- To provide pupils with positive healthy eating experiences
- To respect the different dietary, cultural, religious and health needs of all pupils
- To encourage pupils to develop positive attitudes towards food through the curriculum and all the other learning opportunities that are provided in the school.
- To promote an understanding of a balanced diet in which some foods play a greater role than others.
- To encourage responsibility and accountability of all parents and carers in offering healthy choices to children.

Pupils are provided with healthy meals which are low in fat, sugar and salt and high in fibre. Staff and pupils have access to filtered water throughout the day.

Snack time: 10.25- 10.35 **Lunch time:** 12.15- 12.45 (Seniors) 12.45- 1.15 (Juniors)

Snacks

As a cooked lunch is provided to the pupils every day the morning snack should in general be small. Quantities and content can vary according to the pupil's food preferences, the time the pupil left home and whether he/she has eaten a breakfast. All food packaging is sent home in the snack box.

Snacks can include small portions from the following categories:

- **Bread, other cereal, & potatoes**
- **Fruit & Vegetables**
- **Milk and dairy foods**
- **Meat, fish & alternatives**

Some suggestions:

- *Slice of bread or bread roll(wholemeal preferably), plain scone , oatcakes, unsalted popcorn, wholewheat crackers, plain rice cakes, unsalted pretzels, crispbreads, pitta bread, tortilla wrap, low sugar breakfast cereal,*
- *A portion of fruit- fresh, dried fruit or tinned fruit in juice; vegetables (cucumber, carrot, celery, pepper, tomatoes etc), small salad*
- *Reduced fat cheese, a small yogurt,*
- *A small slice/portion of cooked meat.*

Water and milk is available in the school. If the pupil does not partake of these, no added sugar diluted fruit juice is the preferable alternative.

Food and drinks not permitted: Fizzy drinks, juices high in sugar, crisps, chocolate, sweets, buns, cakes, biscuits , chocolate or sugar coated cereals, nuts or nut products.

School lunches

The kitchen facilities meet the hygiene standards set out by HACCP and are inspected regularly. Lunches provided are well balanced and are based on the recommendations of The Food Pyramid (see image). Portions served are appropriate to the age of the pupil and second helpings are not given. Healthy options such as brown pasta/rice/bread are served with a selection of vegetables and lean meat or fish. On occasion pupils can sample dishes prepared in Home Economics class.



Staff supervise and assist pupils as required and encourage reluctant eaters to make healthy choices. Lunchtime provides an opportunity for pupils to learn and practice good social skills and behaviour associated with eating and drinking. The few pupils who do not partake of school lunches are required to bring a healthy lunch and follow the advice outlined for snacks.

Special dietary needs and food allergies

We are sensitive to the requirements of pupils with specific dietary needs and respect the religious beliefs of families. It is the responsibility of parents/ carers to inform the school of any special diet required by a pupil eg: gluten free diet or any food intolerances.

Some pupils have an allergy to nuts and can have a serious reaction if they consume or are exposed to nuts or products containing nuts. Therefore parents/ carers are requested **not** to include nuts or nut products such as: peanut butter, nutella, cereal bars containing nuts in snack boxes.

Special occasions.

Foods recommended for snack boxes can be referred to as 'Everyday Foods' as opposed to 'Sometimes Foods' which we have on special occasions such as birthdays, festivals, school tours.

It is recommended that party food should include some healthy treats such as unsalted popcorn, natural sweets along with a cake, drinks and some other treats. Diluted orange or blackcurrant juices (no added sugar) is recommended

In organising school tours teachers can consider having a picnic or a visit to a child friendly restaurant serving healthy options.

Tiny portions of favourite foods are sometimes used as an incentive for younger pupils to communicate or to perform a task. A pupils response to healthy options such as popcorn, pretzels , raisins etc should be assessed before choosing from foods with high salt or sugar content. Using food as a motivator is a short term measure and it is not recommended that food be used as a reward for good behaviour.

Further activities

In developing St Joseph's as a health promoting school a Healthy Eating Awareness Week will be organised where lessons focus on food, pupils' work around this theme is displayed along with posters and information leaflets.

Materials available from health promotion organisations will be distributed to parents/carers. A dietician will be invited to address a meeting of parents and staff on food related issues.

Useful websites: www.safefood.eu/Home.aspx, www.healthpromotion.ie

Signed: _____
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: _____

(Principal)

Date: _____

Date of next review: as necessary

