

Scoil Ursula N.S. Healthy Eating Policy

March 2012

■ Introductory Statement

Good nutrition is essential for school children. Physical activity is integral to any healthy eating programme and hence should also be promoted and encouraged.

In consultation with the Principal, staff and Board of Management, a sub-committee of the staff reviewed and updated the school's healthy eating policy. The involvement of teachers, parents and older children (each important role models) in drawing up the draft policy ensures that children receive consistent messages both at home and at school.

■ Rationale

Healthy eating is an essential component of the overall health of children and as such is part of the holistic education that Scoil Ursula advocates in its education philosophy and mission statement. The adoption of a whole school approach ensures that healthy eating messages are part of every aspect of school life. It was decided to focus on this area for development in order to improve the pupils' health.

Our SPHE & Science programmes endorse this view:

- **SPHE Strand Unit:**
 - Taking Care of My Body: Food and Nutrition (Curriculum J. Infants – 6th Class Making choices (See Teacher Guidelines pp 11-13)
- **Science Strand Living Things: Strand Unit: Myself:**
 - Human Life Processes (Curriculum J. Infants – 6th Class) (See Teacher Guidelines p.10-11)

■ Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

In accordance with our aim to develop the pupils to the best of their ability, we see ourselves as having a role in the process of enabling pupils to increase control over and improve their health. The Food and Nutrition strand in our SPHE plan helps us promote this policy in our school.

■ Aims

- To assist all involved in our school community-children, parents and staff to develop positive and responsible attitudes to eating and to appreciate the contribution that good foods make to health.
- To improve the opportunities for our children to grow into healthy adults and to heighten an awareness of the importance of a balanced diet.
- To raise levels of concentration within class due to consumption of healthy food.
- To encourage children to be aware, alert and responsive to litter problems caused by junk food, pre-prepared food, juice cartons etc.

■ Guidelines (*content of policy*)

Current practice in the school is a recommendation by the school that healthy eating Monday through Thursday- a treat is allowed on Fridays. Crisps are banned at all times. No food is allowed during class (unless as needed by children with particular dietary requirements).

A Healthy Lunchbox & healthy snack for small break

- A healthy lunchbox includes food from each of the first four shelves of the food pyramid (see “Food Dudes” tips and suggestions or Scoil Ursula Tips on Healthy Lunch Boxes)
- Healthy choice of **drink** include water, milk and fruit juices. No fizzy drinks allowed. (yogurts/yogurt drinks not recommended in infant classes for practical reasons)
- The following **foods are not allowed at any time**: crisps, chewing gum, lollipops, fizzy or energy drinks.
- Parents should inform the school if a child is on a special diet or has an allergy i.e. nut. Once teachers are aware of a child’s special needs they can advice against swapping and sharing of food.
- “Treats” allowed on Fridays only. i.e. one small treat in the lunch box. (fun size bars, biscuits, sweets)

Healthy School Environment

- Through the parents association every effort will be made to communicate with and encourage parents to support the healthy eating policy.
- The sub-committee will source and use means to promote this policy e.g. posters, leaflets, the food pyramid, outside speakers and agencies. A copy of the Food Pyramid will be displayed in each classroom and teachers will be encouraged to refer to it regularly.
- National campaigns can be used as opportunities to focus on healthy eating messages. The school

will organise a healthy eating week periodically to highlight the policy.

- Children eat their lunch while supervised in classrooms. They are permitted to bring uneaten food to finish in the yard.
- Children are encouraged to drink water/fluids at specified times during the school day.
- ***If children bring "discouraged" food / drinks to school:*** - They will be allowed to eat/drink them but warned not to bring them on other days. If they persist in bringing unhealthy food to school, the teacher will inform parents re healthy eating Policy throughout the school
- The school will not apply further sanctions.
- **Exceptions**
- Exceptions are allowed:
 - End of term parties
 - School trips
 - School events – concerts, matches etc.
 - Teachers may give children a treat on Fridays.

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 "discouraged" foods to school apart from small treats on the exceptions listed above.

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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 unhealthy food to school

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Role of School:

- To promote and encourage healthy eating.
- To occasionally monitor healthy lunches in the classroom.

Success Criteria

- We will know that the policy is effective when healthy eating has become a habit for all pupils. Children observed around the school will be eating only healthy food/drinks (except on Fridays).

Timeframe for Implementation and Review

This policy will be implemented during final term of the 2011-2012 school year and will be reviewed in the first term of the following school year.

Responsibility for review

The sub-committee that drafted the policy will take responsibility for review and assessing it, in consultation with principal, staff, parents and pupils.

Ratification and Communication

A draft of this policy is now published on the website. Comments and suggestions were already sought from staff and from the Parents Association. Parents and pupils are now invited to review the policy and to e-mail comments to the principal (info@scoilursula.com).

The Board of Management will formally ratify the policy in after a review has taken place and views from staff, parents and pupils have been taken into account.