



**St Mary's NS**

**Healthy Eating Policy**

**October 2025**

## **1. Introduction**

The HSE booklet Healthy Eating Policy Toolkit for Primary Schools was used to assist in the review process. Our Healthy Eating Policy outlines how we as a school support healthy eating practices through the promotion of healthy snacks and healthy lunches and how we help our pupils to gain a greater understanding of the importance of balanced nutrition.

St Mary's NS is committed to facilitating our pupils' development of skills and attitudes to allow them to make informed decisions about their food intake. As a school, we believe that key adults in their lives, namely parents/guardians and school staff, should be good role models and support them in understanding how balanced nutrition contributes to a person's health, happiness and general wellbeing.

Our whole school approach to promoting healthy eating will actively involve teachers, parents/guardians and children to ensure that healthy eating messages are part of every aspect of school life. Our pupils will receive consistent messages regarding healthy eating, both at home and at school.

## **2. Aims of Our Healthy Eating Policy**

The aims of our healthy eating policy are:

- To promote a whole school approach to healthy eating and nutrition
- To understand the benefit of a healthy well-balanced diet
- To develop an awareness that good eating habits formed in early childhood influence health and wellbeing throughout our lives
- To raise levels of concentration within class through the consumption of healthy food
- To provide members of staff, parents/guardians and those involved in school activities with clear information.

### **3. Benefits of a Good Diet**

A good diet:

- Ensures the development of healthy hair, skin, teeth, muscles and strong bones
- Provides energy and aids concentration
- Strengthens the immune system.

### **4. School Actions which Support Our Healthy Eating Policy**

As a school, we will implement the following actions to support our Healthy Eating Policy:

- SPHE lessons on healthy eating will be planned and implemented across all year groups at the same time each year.
- The School Lunch Provider will be invited into the school to show pupils samples of the range of foods available and provide opportunities to taste the different foods.
- Class teachers will open up the School Lunch Provider's online page on the interactive whiteboard and explore with the pupils all the options available to them and discuss the healthier choices with them.
- The School Lunch Provider will adhere to the required Healthy Ireland Nutrition Standards for School Meals.
- The HSCL Coordinator will organise regular healthy eating/cookery/baking sessions for parents/guardians.

## **5. Breakfast**

A nourishing breakfast is the best start to a child's day giving him/her the energy needed to concentrate and learn. Research has shown that children benefit both nutritionally and behaviourally by eating breakfast.

In St Mary's NS, Breakfast Club operates in the Halla every morning from 8.15am to 8.55am. Breakfast Club is open to all pupils. The food available at Breakfast Club adheres to the required Healthy Ireland Nutrition Standards for School Meals.

## **6. Break/Lunchtime Guidelines**

In order to promote the health and safety of all children in the school and prevent the spread of infection, guidelines for eating at lunch and break times are necessary.

- Pupils should not share their food or drink.
- Pupils should not share food utensils or drinks containers.
- Pupils should eat their food at their own table.

## **7. Morning Break**

Pupils have approximately 5-10 minutes to eat at their morning break. Healthy snacks are provided by the school. If you wish to provide your child with a lunch for small break, it should be easy to eat, ideally a small sandwich or a piece of fruit. Fruit should be of a manageable size, peeled/chopped if necessary.

## **8. Lunch Break**

Pupils have approximately 10 minutes to eat their lunch. Hot meals are available to all children. If you wish to provide your child with their own lunch, please see below.

A healthy lunchbox should contain:

- At least one portion of fruit/vegetables
- One portion of meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans or nuts
- One portion of bread or cereal
- One portion of dairy
- Milk or water.

**Please see table below for lunchbox ideas:**

<b>Vegetables, Salad &amp; Fruit</b>	<b>Meat, Poultry, Fish, Eggs, Beans &amp; Nuts</b>	<b>Cereals, Breads, Potatoes, Pasta &amp; Rice</b>	<b>Milk, Yogurt &amp; Cheese</b>
<i>5+ portions per day</i>	<i>2+ portions per day</i>	<i>4+ portions per day</i>	<i>3+ portions per day</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1 medium apple, orange, banana, pear or similar size fruit</li><li>• 2 small fruits – plums, kiwis or similar size fruit.</li><li>• Half a tin of fruit in its own juice</li><li>• Handful of dried fruit</li><li>• 1 small bunch of grapes</li><li>• Chopped vegetables, e.g. cucumber, carrot, celery</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2 slices of cooked meat</li><li>• 1 to 2 hardboiled eggs</li><li>• Small can of tuna, salmon, sardines or mackerel</li><li>• 4 tablespoons of hummus</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2 thin slices of wholemeal bread</li><li>• 1 small bread roll</li><li>• 1 tortilla wrap</li><li>• 1 pita bread</li><li>• 4 to 6 crackers or breadsticks</li><li>• 1 cup of cooked rice or pasta or couscous</li><li>• 1 small bagel</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1 pot of yogurt or cust</li><li>• 2 cheese triangles</li><li>• 2 thumbs of cheese</li></ul>

All pupils should bring a refillable water bottle to school every day. Pupils will be allowed access to water throughout the school day and can refill their bottles when needed.

Every child in St Mary's NS has access to a free school lunch under the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection's School Meals Programme. This lunch is provided by an external Lunch Provider. Parents/guardians and children can choose their lunch menu online. Lunch menus are set up to encourage variety. If pupils are availing of this lunch scheme, they will not need to bring any other lunch to school.

#### **9. Foods Not Permitted in St Mary's NS**

The following foods do not support our healthy lunch policy and should be excluded from your child's lunch box:

- Fizzy drinks or drinks with caffeine
- Take away food or hot deli food
- Chewing gum
- Sweets & winders
- Crisps
- Cakes
- Chocolate

Please note that for certain year groups where there may be pupils with nut allergies. Nuts and foods containing nuts are not permitted.

#### 14. Monitoring & Evaluation

The implementation of this Healthy Eating Policy will be monitored by the Principal, staff and Board of Management. It will be reviewed and evaluated at regular intervals, including through formal and informal feedback from parents/guardians, pupils, staff and others. The policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation.

#### **Ratification and Review:**

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management and will be reviewed every two years.

Signed: Mr. Betty Becker Chairperson Board of Management

Date: 15 October 2025