

“EAT HEALTHY – STAY HEALTHY”

St. Helen’s Junior School Healthy Eating Guidelines

Background

The parents’ association of St. Helen’s J.N.S. initially devised the healthy eating guidelines policy in 2008. These guidelines were reviewed and updated in 2014. The Parents’ Association committee and teaching staff reviewed and amended these guidelines in 2016/2017. In order to do so in an effective way the parent body was surveyed to ascertain their views regarding the contents of the healthy eating guidelines. The updated guidelines below have been informed by the results of that survey and by training received by Joanne Fitzsimons (P.A. rep) and Ms. McHale (teachers’ rep) by the HSE in February 2016.

Much of recent focus on children’s health has been in the areas of nutrition, exercise and rising levels of obesity. We know from both national and international research that young people **consume 1/3 of their daily nutrition** during school hours.

Making healthy food choices enables children to attain their optimum growth, development and potential, whilst increasing concentration. Healthy eating also allows children to take full advantage of the opportunity to learn and to play during the school day. It is intended that the publication of these guidelines will promote a focus on the importance of good nutrition and an awareness of the dangers of sugar. In so doing, we hope to positively affect healthy eating amongst our children.

Lunch is an important meal for children. The consumption of foods with high sugar content provides a quick surge of energy and can adversely affect children’s concentration and in extreme cases give rise to hyperactivity and challenging behaviour. The school will encourage children to make healthy eating choices and discourage the consumption of junk food. We do however make allowances where necessary for children who have special educational needs.

Preparation of Guidelines

These guidelines are a result of a partnership approach between teachers, Parents’ Association members, the parent body and the Board of Management. They are based on Department of Health and Children “Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Primary Schools”.

Aims of St. Helen's Junior School Healthy Eating Guidelines

- To promote a culture of healthy eating within our school community.
- To lay the foundation for good health and wellbeing in later life.
- To sustain levels of concentration within the class.

Guidelines

- Healthy lunches are encouraged. For lunch box suggestions please see the parents' information section on the school website sthelensjunior.com
- Fluid intake is very important and children should be encouraged to take a drink of water or milk with their lunch. All other drinks, including fruit juices and smoothies are discouraged (in line with HSE recommendations).

The following foods are actively discouraged

- **Sweets, chocolate bars, popcorn, biscuits, cakes and cereal bars**

The following foods are not allowed

- **Products containing nuts- Following the results from our parent survey St. Helen's will be a 'nut-free' school, anyone in breach of this will be notified. Food containing nuts or traces of nuts are not permitted. This is to ensure the health and safety of every member of our school community.**
- **Chewing gum and fizzy drinks and crisps.**
- **Yogurt and yogurt drinks.**

General Information

- Cans and glass bottles are not permitted for safety reasons. Reusable containers are encouraged, in line with our green school ethos.
- Foods which have wrappers are best kept to a minimum and disposed of properly to protect the school environment.
- Lunch wrappers and leftovers will be taken home in order that parents see what foods are being eaten daily.

- The children have a daily fruit break as part of our S.P.H.E. programme. This is an initiative in our school to encourage healthy eating and not part of the designated lunchtime. **Only fruit and vegetables can be eaten at fruit break**
- It is suggested to keep food portions as manageable as possible and fruit/veg should be in reasonably sized portions for children to eat within the time allowed. **Please have fruit pre-peeled where appropriate.**

The following amendments will be made to current practice as a result of parent consultation.

- Children will not be rewarded sweets in class. However, once a term teachers may use their discretion and bring in a whole class treat
- **Children are not permitted to bring in treats to share with the class on their birthday.**
- To celebrate end of terms (Halloween, Christmas, Easter and Summer) children may bring in a treat for themselves. However **children are not permitted to bring in treats for sharing.**
- Children are permitted to bring one treat in their lunchbox on a Friday if they so wish. This treat cannot be a food containing nuts or any of the foods which are disallowed.
- Cereal bars should not be included in lunchboxes.
- Only milk or water should be given to children to drink in school.

Strategies to highlight awareness of Healthy Eating Guidelines

- Providing clear guidance in relation to suitable school lunches
- Giving parents suggestions on appropriate foods
- Incorporating the healthy eating message in the school through formal & informal lessons
- Displaying the “Eating Healthy, Stay Healthy” guidelines & Food Pyramid poster in every classroom
- The children have a 5 minute fruit break each day
- Using fun events to highlight healthy eating (art competitions)
- A healthy eating week to be held year which will highlight awareness & promote the benefits of healthy eating & exercise
- Distributing guidelines to the parents of all incoming pupils

Roles & Responsibilities

All staff members, parents, pupils and the Board of Management support the implementation of our Healthy Eating Guidelines.

Ratification & Communication

These guidelines were approved by the Parents Association in March 2017. They were subsequently ratified by the BOM. Its implementation was deemed effective from that date. A copy of these guidelines was made available to staff and parents. Parents were made aware of the existence and availability of these guidelines on the school website www.sthelensjunior.com

Useful websites

http://www.safefood.eu/SafeFood/media/SafeFoodLibrary/Documents/Education/Safefood_2014-Healthy-Lunchbox-Leaflet_1.pdf (See page 4 for lunch box ideas)

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/fruit-and-vegetables_en

<http://www.healthpromotion.ie/>

<http://www.fooddudes.ie/main.html>

<http://www.safefood.eu/Healthy-Eating.aspx>

<http://www.healthyreland.ie/health-initiatives/heg/>

Signed _____

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date _____