St. Caillin's National School

Healthy Eating Policy

Introduction

St. Caillin's National School Healthy Eating Policy outlines how the school supports healthy eating practices through the promotion of healthy lunches and healthy snacks and by other means. The SPHE Guidelines aim to promote the personal development and wellbeing of the student to provide a foundation for healthy living in all its aspects.

St. Caillin's National School is committed to facilitating the children's development of skills and attitudes to allow them to make informed decisions about their food intake. There will be a whole school approach, involving teachers, parents and children to ensure that healthy eating is a part of every aspect of school life.

The children will continue to receive consistent advice and information regarding healthy eating both at home and at school.

Aims of our Healthy Eating Policy

- 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 develop awareness of the importance of food for growth and development
- To explore food preferences in a balanced diet

Benefits of a good diet

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

<u>Small Break</u>

The children have a small break from 10.45am to 11.05 am which we refer to as a 'fruit break'. Food at this break should be easy to eat - ideally a small sandwich or piece of fruit. Fruit should be of a manageable size, peeled/chopped if necessary.

Lunch Break

Where children bring their lunch to school:

Children have approximately 10 minutes to eat in the classroom, at this break. Ideally, children's lunches should be varied and include:

- Two portions from the bread/cereal group
- One portion of meat or meat alternative
- At least one portion from the fruit and vegetable group
- One portion from the dairy product
- Water

On health and safety grounds, children are not allowed to use the staff room facilities, including the microwave oven.

Where children avail of the hot meals programme:

All school children can avail of a hot meal at lunchtime if they wish. All meals meet the Department of "Nutrition Standards for Hot School Meals" which have developed for the Department of Social Protection by the Department of Health, Safefood and the Health Service Executive.

Children will bring home any uneaten lunch in the lunchboxes provided.

Special Treats

From time to time, the teacher will provide treats for their class as a reward. We ask parents not to send in special treats, e.g. cakes etc. on birthdays. On specific days during the school year the children will be permitted special treats, e.g.,

- End of term parties
- School Trips

Exceptions will be made for children with special dietary requirements i.e. coeliac disease or diabetes

Suggestions for your child's school lunch:

- Breads – whole-grain breads, rolls, bagels, wraps, soda bread or pitta
- Bread substitutes – oatcakes, plain rice cakes, pancakes or crackers
- Fillings – cheese, tuna, hummus, cold meats, pate, egg, lettuce, spinach, cucumber, tomato, onion,

peppers, coleslaw, salad, or banana

• Hot and cold leftovers in a flask, e.g., curry, pasta (with or without sauce), soup, baked beans, rice, stew, lasagne or noodles

• Fruit – apple, oranges, banana, grapes, pear, plum, peach, apricots, melon, grapefruit, pineapple, strawberries, raspberries, mango, blackberries or blueberries. Remember to peel and/or cut fruit and vegetables into bite-sized pieces for younger children

• Raw vegetables – tomatoes, sweet corn, peppers, carrot sticks, celery sticks or cucumber.

Important to Read This:

• **No fizzy drinks, sports drinks, milk and drinks/juices with high sugar content**

• No chewing gum

• No sweets, chocolate bars and other foods with high sugar content

• No crisps

• No popcorn

• No chocolate in any form is permitted

Best Practice

• Ensure your child starts the day with a good breakfast, including a drink

• Eat small regular meals, not one big meal each day

• Children who take physical exercise each day will have a better appetite for healthy food

• Brown bread instead of white as it is healthier for children

• Cut large rolls/wraps/sandwiches into more manageable sizes

Allergies

Staff must be made aware if any of the children have any allergies or intolerances including, but not limited to: peanuts and tree nuts, wheat (gluten), sesame seeds, fish and shellfish and dairy products.

If we are notified of a child attending the school with a nut allergy, a protocol will be put in place to minimise the risk to that child. Depending on the severity of the allergy, a ban on nuts and nut products may need to be introduced in the classroom or throughout the school.

Roles and Responsibilities

Parents/guardians have a responsibility to provide lunches, which do not include any of the prohibited foods and if possible include variety. Children have a responsibility to eat their own lunch and not share or trade food or drink with others. Teachers have a responsibility to explicitly teach

about healthy eating as part of the SPHE curriculum. The whole school community - staff, parents/guardians and children – will work together to promote the progress of this policy. All are encouraged to discuss and provide feedback on its performance, which will be reported back as appropriate to the Principal and staff.

The overall performance of the Policy will be regularly monitored and evaluated by teachers, pupils and parents.

Success Criteria:

We will know if the policy is effective by:

- Observing what children have for lunch and during other break times
- The feedback from parents/guardians and school staff
- The level of concentration and performance of children in the class room

Implementation and Review:

The policy will be implemented immediately and will be reviewed every two years.

Ratification and Communication:

This policy was reviewed & ratified by the Board of Management in April 2026

Signed: P a t O ' T o o l e Date: April 2026
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed: O r l a R e d i c a n Date: April 2026
School Principal