Drumfad National School

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Healthy Eating Policy

Introductory Statement

As part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Programme, we at Drumfad NS encourage our children to become more aware of the need for healthy food in their lunch boxes.
What people eat is known to be a key factor influencing health. Research indicates a strong link between diet and performance. For example; a low sugar intake promotes concentration, lessens hyperactivity, protects teeth, and lessens the risk of diabetes. A low salt intake reduces the risk of heart disease in later life.
We believe that adults (staff, parents and carers) should be good role models and should support the children in understanding how balanced nutrition contributes to a person's health, happiness and general well-being.
The school is aware that the primary role model in children's healthy eating education lies with parents. We wish to build a positive and supportive relationship with the parents of children at our school through mutual understanding, trust and co-operation. In promoting this objective we will:

- Inform parents about the school healthy eating policy and practice;
- Encourage parents to be involved in reviewing school policy and making modifications to it

Rationale

This policy is intended as a guide to healthy and safe eating for the school. The focus of this policy is to support parents in encouraging their children to develop healthy eating habits from an early age. A knowledge of what constitutes a nutritionally balanced diet is acknowledged as being of importance for students. In support of this rationale nutrition education is considered to be an important element of the curriculum in Drumfad N.S.

SPHE:
Primary School Curriculum:
• Strand Unit: Taking Care of my Body; Food and Nutrition (Curriculum: J.Infants-6 th Class)
• Making Choices (see Teacher Guidelines pp11-13)

SCIENCE:
• Strand: Living Things ; Strand Unit: Myself: Human life Processes (Curriculum: J.Infants -6 th class) (see Teacher Guidelines p.10-11)

Relationship with Characteristic Spirit of the School

As part of our overall school policy the Healthy Eating Policy helps to promote the health of each child and to provide a foundation for healthy living. Our school aims to provide a holistic education for our children and health of mind and body is an ideal we aim for in all our pupils. The school nurtures a sense of caring and belonging. It fosters respect in children, not just for others, but for himself or herself. Christian principles also foster self-control and personal responsibility, both of which increase as a child grows and develops into adolescence and adulthood.

Aims

The policy aims:

- to create and foster good eating habits, together with the realization that each individual has some responsibility for his/her health and that this responsibility increases as he/she gets older,
- to help children understand the need for an informed and varied choice of food,
- to provide opportunities for children to consider, discuss and learn the facts about nutrition and its influence on good health,
- to help children categorise food into the four main food groups,
- to help develop a positive and responsible attitude towards food,
- to appreciate the contribution of a balanced diet to health,
- to provide guidance in working towards self-control in what they eat,
- to support parents,
- to implement guidelines recommended to schools by the Health Executives, Department of Education & Skills and the Health Promotion Bureau.

Policy Content

Education concerning healthy eating

- This takes place in the context of Social Personal and Health Education classes, together with incidental information discussed in the classroom.
- All pupils are provided with a refillable water bottle to school each year. Pupils will be allowed access to water throughout the school day and can refill their bottles when needed.
- Every child in Drumfad NS has access to a free school lunch and snack 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. All hot school meals comply with the Nutrition Standards for Hot School Meals (Gov, 2020).
- Children learn about the Food Pyramid and older children learn about the nutritional value and benefits of different types of food.
- An awareness is developed on the importance of food for energy and growth.
- Some factors that influence the consumption of different food products may be explored.
- Children are encouraged to understand and appreciate what it means to be healthy and have a balanced lifestyle.
- On occasions, invited visitors may speak to parents and/or children eg. visit from Dietician, Health Nurse or Dental Hygienist.

Management of healthy eating

- Wholesome lunches consist of sandwiches, scones, pancakes, pasta, crackers, fruit, yoghurts etc.
- Processed sweet cakes and biscuits are not permitted.
- Children drink water or milk – at present other drinks are not permitted.
- On Fridays children are allowed to bring a bar or a packet of crisps.
- In as far as possible only nutritious foods eg. fruit, fruit juices, are served to children at school related functions or activities.
- Parents are welcome to make an appointment to discuss dietary requirements of individual children with the principal.

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.
- Any uneaten food should go back into the pupil's lunch box. This will help the parent/guardian to be aware of what their child is actually eating.
- All recycling/rubbish should be taken home.

School Trips

In line with the above, a cold lunch option will be provided by external provider to pupils instead of the hot meal option when attending school trips and planned workshops. Options will be provided by external provider a week before the planned trip.

Allergies

If a child has a serious food allergy, the parents/guardians must notify the school and provide a doctor's report stating the implications of the allergy and listing the foods to be avoided. Parents/ guardians will be asked to participate with staff in formulating an Emergency Porcedures plan (Appendix 3 Administration of Medication Policy). This plan will identify how best to minimise the risk of an allergic reaction for the child and it will outline the protocol to be implemented if an allergic reaction occurs. Further details can be found in Druumfad National School Administration of Medication Policy.

Incidences of non-compliance

When it has been established that the child has enough food to eat the child is requested to take the non-permissible item home. The teacher/principal may request to the discuss the matter with a parent/guardian.

Ratification & Communication

This Healthy Eating Policy was reviewed and updated by the Board of Management on 28th November 2024, following consultation with staff, pupils and parents/guardians.

Ratified by The Board of Management on: _____

Signed: _____ Chairperson, BoM