

Policy Statement on Healthy Eating

Scoil Nano Nagle

Introduction

Health education is important in that it enables people to obtain information and skills that will help them in making good decisions in relation to their health. When education is combined with appropriate policies, structures and support systems, the healthy choice becomes the easier choice. (*Dept. of Health and Children. A Health Promotion Strategy. 1995. Government Publications*).

Scoil Nano Nagle is committed to developing an understanding of healthy living, an ability to implement healthy behaviour and a willingness to participate in activities that promote and sustain health. We believe that this is most effective if based on a consistency in approach and where responsibility is shared by parents, teachers, children, board of management, health professionals and relevant members of the community.

Education about healthy eating is provided in the broader context of the S.P.H.E. curriculum, which is spiral in nature and delivered with the support of a health promoting school ethos.

This policy was initially formulated

- through discussion and debate at two staff meetings
- by surveying parents in relation to their views on a healthy lunch policy. Views and comments in relation to healthy eating in general were offered. One hundred and forty three questionnaires were returned.
- A committee representing parents, teachers and board of management was consulted in relation to formulating the healthy eating statement as it stands. It was comprised of the following.

Maura Sweeney	Principal
Margaret Litster	Board of Management/ Parent/Second Class
Fiona Carmody	S.P.H.E. Co-ordinator/ Teacher
Ciara O'Donnell	H/S/C/L Co-ordinator/ Teacher
Sheila Byron	Parent/ Early start
Joan Smith	Parent/ Junior Infants
Karen O'Reardon	Parent/ Junior Infants
Lynda Glynn	Parent/ Senior Infants
Tara Fogarty	Parent/ First Class

The process of drafting this Healthy Eating Policy was started in September 2003. Following consultation with teaching staff and policy committee, the agreed policy was ratified by the B.O.M. on January 21, 2004 and circulated to all parents of Scoil Nano Nagle thereafter.

In April, 2007, Scoil Nano Nagle introduced free, healthy lunches for all children in the school. They are provided by ‘Glanmore’ and the scheme is funded by the Department of Family and Social Affairs. Under the scheme, parents and children are invited to choose a variety of healthy lunches from an extensive menu of nourishing foods. This is in accordance with the school’s policy on healthy eating.

Rationale

This policy is a response to the fact that we accept that one of the aims of education as outlined in the White Paper is

“ To promote physical and emotional health and well-being.”

We take cognisance of reports of growing concerns over childhood illnesses related to poor diet and the acknowledgement of the link between healthy eating and learning. Our school aims to provide a happy, secure, friendly learning environment where all partners are valued and facilitated to reach their full potential. A balanced diet provides the nourishment and energy to maximise life’s opportunities.

“Health habits adopted in childhood will influence health and well-being both now and in the future. Developing health-promoting practices throughout his/her time in school can encourage the child to take increasing control over his/her own health and help to establish and maintain healthy behaviour from an early age. (Primary School Curriculum. S.P.H.E. Teacher Guidelines, p.3). Our school ethos is central to this healthy eating policy.

Content

The policy is delivered in the context of the S.P.H.E. curriculum.

- Curriculum resources include The Walk Tall programme and charts/literature provided by the Health Board and outside agencies.
- The school hosts a special theme week – Healthy Lifestyle Week – each alternative year. Children will experience this approach/methodology on three occasions on their journey through the school. There is a strong focus throughout on diet and nutrition. Visitors from the broader community such as the public health nurse, National Dairy Council nutritionist and the dental hygienist deliver talks to teachers, parents and children on diet and nutrition. The commercial sector/school lunch provider, Glanmore, provides samples of health promoting foods to all pupils. There is an emphasis on tasting /sampling a wider variety of fruit and vegetables and increasing the consumption of same. There would be a strong encouragement to limit the consumption of sugary snacks. A Health and Wellbeing Fortnight, community linked, is held early in the first term with similar emphases. This is facilitated by the Home/School/Community Liaison co-ordinator.
- Lunch and break timetabling is adequate to allow children to eat lunches provided from the school and home.
- A short water/fruit/snack break is scheduled at approximately 10.30a.m.

- A small snack and drink is sufficient for lunch. Nourishing foods are encouraged – sandwiches, cheese, fruit, yogurt, milk, and water. Healthy lunches are provided by the company ‘Glanmore’ to all children free of charge. Fizzy drinks, commercially produced fruit juices, crisps and chewing gum are discouraged. We are advised that breakfast cereal bars are not recommended due to their high sugar content.
- Treats such as sweets, biscuits, cake, bars and chocolate are confined to special event parties hosted by the school. Due to timetabling restrictions and the prevalence of allergies, teachers are unable to facilitate birthday celebrations to celebrate individual pupils’ birthdays.
- The school acknowledges the special dietary needs of some children and adults and strives to support them in any way possible.
- The needs of parents in relation to health education, specifically in relation to diet and nutrition will be supported by co-operation between the S.P.H.E. co-ordinator and the H/S/C/L co-ordinator.
- The importance of a wholesome breakfast in relation to memory and concentration is acknowledged.

Roles and Responsibilities

Pupils are encouraged to be active learners, recording their learning through artwork and the compilation of portfolios. Cross-curricular links are acknowledged, for example, links with such subject areas as S.E.S.E., Drama and Oral Language.

Teachers will be responsible for the delivery of formal lessons and informal guidance in the area of health and nutrition and will encourage healthy lunches. They are to be supported in this and be provided with relevant resources.

Parents of Scoil Nano Nagle, as partners in education, are asked to support and encourage this healthy eating policy. Suggestions and comments in relation to this policy are encouraged in the spirit of democracy and ownership.

Outside agencies are crucial in delivering the nutritional aspects of S.P.H.E. through the provision of relevant information and resources.

Timeframe for Implementation

The Healthy Eating Policy was ratified by the B.O.M. on January 21, 2003 and circulated to all parents of Scoil Nano Nagle thereafter. The policy will be included in induction packs distributed to parents of new pupils in the future. It is an ongoing process and will be reviewed annually and as issues arise in relation to healthy diet.

Review 2016

This policy was reviewed in March/April, 2016 in consultation with teachers, parents, pupils and representatives from the HSE and school lunch provider. The policy was discussed over two staff meetings. A general meeting of parents, representatives from

the Board of Management and Parents' Association, the Public Health Nurse, HSE Dental Hygienist and Glanmore nutritionist was facilitated by the Home/School/Community co-ordinator and S.P.H.E. co-ordinator where this policy was reviewed and discussed.

Concern was expressed about current findings in the relation to the effect of sugar in the diet and its negative impact on weight, dental health and children's ability to concentrate and learn. It is consequently decided that

- the school lunch menu will include only milk and water. Fruit juices will no longer be an option.
- The option of a jam sandwich will also no longer appear.

In the event that children bring in their own lunch, these drinks are deemed to be the only refreshments acceptable in the context of the school day. Other items of food must also comply with the schools healthy eating policy, taking cognisance of the minimum sugar content. To this end, it is proposed also that teachers will also be cognisant of the types and frequency of treats given to children. This is in accordance with the school's policy on healthy eating.

+Ratified by B.O.M 27th June 2017