



Policy Statement on Healthy Eating (2020)

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.

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.

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.

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 alternate 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 provides samples of health promoting foods to all pupils. There is an emphasis on increasing the consumption of fruit and vegetables.
- The school acknowledges the special dietary needs of some children and adults and strives to support them in any way possible.
- The importance of a wholesome breakfast in relation to memory and concentration is acknowledged.
- Lunch and break timetabling is adequate to allow children to eat lunch.
- A short water/fruit/snack break is scheduled at approximately 10.30 a.m.
- A small snack and drink is sufficient for lunch. Nourishing foods are encouraged – sandwiches, cheese, fruit, yogurt, milk and water.

In April, 2007, Scoil Nano Nagle first introduced free, healthy lunches for all children in the school. They are currently provided by ‘Glanmore’ and the scheme is funded by the

Department of Social Protection. 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.

We strongly encourage all children to avail of these lunches.

- Should parents choose to provide their own lunches, a healthy lunch might include:
 1. At least 2 portions from the bread, cereals group.
 2. One portion from the meat and the meat alternatives group.
 3. 2/3 portions from fruits and vegetables.
 4. One portion from the dairy products group.
 5. The following foods **should not** be included in your child's lunch from home; crisps, chewing gum, sweets, bars including breakfast cereal/cereal bars, cakes, biscuits, lollipops, chocolate, chocolate spread, peanuts and any snack containing same.

Due to the incidence of severe allergy to peanuts and nut products amongst some pupils, please be mindful to:

- Avoid peanuts or any other type of nut in school lunches.
 - Avoid giving peanut butter sandwiches, chocolate spreads containing nuts such as Nutella, nut based breads and cereal bars containing nuts or labelled "may contain nut traces" in school lunches.
 - Ask children not to share their lunches.
 - If your child has eaten peanuts/nuts before coming to school, please be sure your child's hands and face have been thoroughly washed before entering the school.
6. Milk and water are the only drinks options encouraged. (Fruit juices are no longer included in the school's lunch menu due to sugar content). Re-useable containers are to be used for safety and environmental reasons. Cans and glass bottles are not permitted. According to the HSE; "there are no recommendations for the amount of water or other fluids children need. However, like adults, to stay healthy it is important for children to replace the water they lose to prevent dehydration."
- 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.
 - Teachers will also be mindful of the types and frequency of treats given to children taking cognisance of the minimum sugar content. This is in accordance with the school's policy on healthy eating.
 - 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.

This Healthy Eating Policy Statement was first formulated in 2003 by the teachers, parents, pupils and BOM of Scoil Nano Nagle. It was reviewed in March/April, 2016 in consultation with teachers, parents, pupils, BOM, representatives of the HSE and the school lunch provider. The policy was most recently reviewed in September 2020 and ratified in its present form by the BOM on 19th October 2020.