

Rath N.S. Healthy Eating Policy



Vision

Rath N.S. is committed to encouraging and developing positive attitudes towards food and a healthy diet. Promoting a healthy life style is part of the curriculum and we recognise the importance of offering children the opportunity to make informed choices about what and why they eat. As a school we know that food is fundamental to the quality of a child's life, not just in providing essential nutrition but in communicating and sharing positive values, attitudes and experiences with each other. 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.

Aims and Objectives

To improve the health of pupils and the whole school community by helping to influence eating habits through increasing knowledge and awareness of food issues including what constitutes a healthy diet.

- To ensure pupils are well nourished at school and that every pupil has access to safe, tasty and nutritious food and a safe, easily available water supply during the school day.
- To ensure that lunchtimes in the school acknowledges the ethical and medical requirements of staff and pupils e.g. vegetarian, medical and allergenic needs.
- To introduce and promote practices within the school to reinforce these aims and to remove or discourage practices that negate them.
- To enable the child to accept some personal responsibility for making wise food choices and adopting a healthy balanced diet.
- To encourage and promote the recycling of lunch packaging, the reduction of waste food and the reuse of food containers and bottles/flasks in conjunction with our Green-School's action plan.

Organisation - Curriculum

- We regard healthy eating education as a whole-school issue and we believe that opportunities to teach about the importance of living a healthy lifestyle occur throughout the curriculum.
- Healthy eating education forms an important part of our school's curriculum. The importance of balanced nutrition and healthy food choices is explicitly taught through the Science and SPHE curriculum. The Math Curriculum is also an avenue to explore healthy eating - e.g. label reading skills are math based! (Quantities, serving size, calories etc.) Additionally, Geography might demonstrate the numerous countries that ingredients come from in processed foods and History could be used to track the origin of certain foods and the introduction to Ireland (e.g. Potato, different breeds of cattle, sheep, horses etc, also cultural changes in our food likes/dislikes/availability)
- All pupils have the opportunity to learn about food hygiene and safe food preparation and to learn about where food has come from. Pupils learn about the requirements for plant growth, the food chain and the components of a healthy diet through the Science curriculum. Through the SPHE curriculum, children will learn about food and nutrition as part of the strand unit; taking care of my body. In addition, the Physical Education programme supports the physical development and fitness levels of the children.

Organisation - Management of Eating

- In our school the children eat twice a day, before going out to play. To ensure good concentration it is important for children to eat a healthy breakfast before coming to school.
- Lunch is an important meal for school going children. It should provide one third of their recommended daily allowance of nutrients without being high in fat, sugar or salt. It should also provide dietary fibre (roughage).
- Pupils' lunch boxes should offer balanced nutrition. Across a week, parents are encouraged to offer a variety of healthy foods in accordance with the Lunchbox Guidance Leaflet available via e-mail. The Guidance Leaflet recommends a balanced selection of foods which should be available to the children in their lunch box.
- Chocolate, sweets, biscuits, crisps, and cakes are actively discouraged as everyday snacks in school or as part of lunch boxes. Chewing gum and fizzy drinks are not permitted on the school premises or while the

children are representing the school. Cereal bars are also discouraged because these can often contain as much sugar as chocolate bars.

- The contents of pupils' lunchboxes will be monitored daily by the class teacher. Teachers will ask pupils to keep unrecommended food for home.
- As we recognise that there is no such thing as "bad food", we teach the children to enjoy treats in moderation. Special events such as end of term parties in class are also times where food contributes to a sense of celebration and sharing. On these occasions foods other than fruit or vegetables may be offered, but the staff will remind the children that this is an "occasional" treat and not "every day food".
- The school community is aware of the possibility of food allergies and special dietary requirements within the school population. Parents or carers of children who are on special diets for medical reasons, or who have allergies, will be asked to provide as much information as possible about which foods are suitable or foods which must be avoided. This information will be displayed in the staff room.
- Portion - no child is made to finish all the food that they are offered because we know that appetites vary from person to person. However, we do actively encourage the children to "try a little bit more" if they can to ensure that they are not hungry later on in the day.

What could be in a healthy lunch?

- Sandwiches or rolls with cheese, meat, salad or peanut butter
- Pitta bread, crackers
- Fruit and vegetables (peeled and chopped for small children)
- Raisins
- Homemade popcorn (less salt and butter)
- Pasta
- Salad
- Rice cakes

What should not be in a healthy lunch?

- Crisps, salted nuts, shop-bought popcorn
- Chocolate, sweets, lollipops, jellies and cereal bars
- Chewing gum
- Cakes, buns, biscuits, pastries or doughnuts
- Chocolate spread (or very occasionally)
- Fizzy drinks

What drinks could we include in a healthy lunch?

- Water
- Fruit juices
- Diluted drinks
- Milk

What drinks should not be allowed?

- Fizzy drinks
- Sugary drinks
- Tea and Coffee (Caffeine)

The role of Parents:

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

Rath N.S. will:

- Inform parents about the school healthy eating education policy and practice;
- Encourage parents to be involved in reviewing school policy and making modifications to it, as necessary.
- Inform parents about the best practice known with regard to healthy eating so that the parents can support the key messages being given to children at school.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

The effective implementation of this policy will be monitored by the staff of the school, the school principal and the Board of Management. The policy will be reviewed every three years.