



**St. Michael's School**

**Healthy Eating Policy**

## **Introductory Statement**

This Healthy Eating plan has been devised by the teaching staff of St. Michael's School. As part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Programme, we encourage the pupils to become more aware of the need for healthy food in their lunch boxes. This plan is a set of statements which outlines our commitment and intended actions to promote healthy eating and good nutrition. Establishing good eating habits in childhood is extremely important, as this will establish life long patterns.

This policy has been produced and written in light of:

- St. Michael's School Mission Statement;
- The NCCA Curriculum 1999 (1999 Primary School Curriculum);
- Guidelines for the Education of Pupils with Mild General Learning Disabilities;
- QQI Fitness & Health module;
- L2LP (JC Level 2) curriculum, Personal Care;
- Teachers' Recommendations.

In addition, this policy was written in light of information from:

- Food Safety Association of Ireland (FSAI);
- The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food;
- Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute (INDI);
- Irish Health Boards;
- World Health Organisation.

## **Rationale and Vision**

The purpose of the healthy eating plan is to provide an overview of the universal approach of encouraging healthy eating, as practised here in St. Michael's School, and is intended to inform and guide new teachers and special needs assistants. The staff at St. Michael's School recognises that good nutrition is critical for every child's short and long term health, including both their physical and cognitive development, and is essential for our pupils, helping to improve attention levels and concentration spans. Pupils need energy and nutrients to fulfil growth needs and requirements for everyday activities.

Healthy eating habits learnt during childhood are usually continued throughout life and these healthy behaviours can help to reduce the risk of diseases such as obesity, diabetes and dental caries throughout a child's life time. As school is where young people spend most of their waking hours, it is important that they have every opportunity to access healthy food and to learn in an environment, such as St. Michael's School, that supports healthy eating. This plan emphasises the fact that we will promote and encourage the understanding and benefits of eating healthily. In effect, as this plan is implemented, it will contribute to our underpinning mission, which is to try and ensure that pupils achieve to their full potential.

Our vision realises and accepts the uniqueness of all our pupils and strives to enhance their performance and cater for their needs and their well-being.

## **Aims:**

The aims of this policy are to:

- promote the personal development and well-being of the pupil;
- promote the health of the pupil and provide a foundation for healthy living in all its aspects;
- develop a positive attitude to healthy eating and oral health
- ensure pupils practice healthy eating habits
- foster awareness with pupils and parents/guardians to develop a positive approach to food, nutrition and health education
- encourage responsibility and accountability of parents/guardians in offering healthy choices to pupils
- help pupils appreciate that healthy eating enhances a healthy lifestyle through the teaching and learning of a relevant and differentiated curriculum
- promote the drinking of water as the first and best choice
- encourage pupils to have practical experiences in preparing their own lunches and meals, where appropriate
- promote and encourage physical activities, as an integral part of the healthy eating programme
- contribute to and enhance current curriculum by increasing nutrition knowledge and awareness (including the Food Pyramid)
- be consistent with the school mission of enhancing pupil performance
- documents and communicates the school's commitment to healthy eating.

## **Implementation Procedure**

Our Healthy Eating plan will be implemented as follows:

- Inform parents of the school's healthy eating policy (through the Information booklet and/or a copy of this healthy eating policy, available on our school website).
- Include healthy eating rules at the beginning of the school year, by means of a classroom agreement (through written or verbal communication).
- Additional strategies and/or resources may be used to promote healthy eating, for example, video resources or use of a 'healthy eating pack'.
- Only healthy foods and drinks may be brought to school each day. On a Friday, however, one small treat is permitted (this may include a packet of crisps or a small bar of chocolate etc.). Fizzy drinks are not permitted.
- Foods containing bones or nuts are not permitted.
- A healthy lunchbox might include some of the following foods: sandwiches, crackers & cheese, fresh fruit, dried fruit, yoghurts, salads, fruit salads and/or carrot sticks to eat, and smoothies, milk or water (including still flavoured water) to drink.
- It is a good idea to vary the contents of the lunch box as far as possible. Everyone can get tired of the same food; a small change can make a big difference. New tastes are actively encouraged.
- Water is the recommended drink. A supply of fresh water and clean cups are readily available in the classrooms.

- Staff will confiscate any unhealthy snacks and return these items to the pupil at home time. If pupils continue to bring in unhealthy foods, a note and/or phone call will be made to parents/guardians.
- We ask that children do not bring the following to school: snacks known to be high in sugar, saturated fat, salt, additives and preservatives, including the following:
  - Crisps (including crisp-style snacks)
  - Fizzy drinks (including fizzy fruit-flavoured water, juices, etc)
  - Sweets
  - Chocolate biscuits/bars
  - Cereal bars
  - Chewing gum
  - Fruit winders
  - Popcorn
- Pupils are asked to take home all uneaten food, so that parents know if the quantity they are sending is too large or if a pupil does not like a particular food.
- Hot healthy dinners are available for all pupils at big break. The decision will be made at the beginning of the year as to whether or not pupils want to avail of this service. If not, the alternative is to bring in their own sufficient healthy lunch, which they may eat in their own classroom.
- In the dining room, all pupils are asked to sit and eat their food in a calm, respectful manner. Snack times/mealtimes are an opportunity for positive social interaction and promoting social skills.
- Pupils are encouraged to remove jackets or coats and to use both knives and forks while eating.
- Teachers and staff on duty at break/lunch times, are requested to be vigilant and ensure pupils eat appropriate foods. Staff on duty in the dinner room should be aware of any pupil who does not eat anything at this time and notify the class teacher. If it appears that a pupil appears not to be eating during the school day, parents will be informed.
- Where deemed appropriate, rewards and incentives may be used to encourage healthy eating. The use of sweets and confectionery as rewards will be discouraged. The use of stickers, praise, star charts etc. may be used as an alternative.
- Physical activities will be included in the curriculum as much as possible.
- Oral health care will be promoted and support services used when appropriate.
- Staff will be active in encouraging and promoting healthy eating and drinking.
- On school tours/outings, pupils will be permitted to bring one additional small treat.
- On special occasions, for example, Sports day, birthdays etc. special treats may be provided. In addition, during the year, there may be special food days organised (for example, barbeques or cake days). Parents will be notified of these days.

## **Approaches and methodologies to the explicit teaching of food and healthy eating as presented in the curriculum:**

Opportunities which exist to link and integrate the various curricula concerning food and healthy eating will be used. Our teaching of healthy eating will involve a variety of teaching and learning styles. We will provide a variety of contexts for practicing and learning about healthy eating (in the classroom, within other areas of the school for example, the yard or dining room). Priority methods may include: the explicit teaching of the language of food and healthy eating; the need to model the use of practice; the use of Physical Education to develop awareness and the need to exercise; the appropriate use of picture symbols and concrete objects; repetition of material; shopping experiences and dining out experiences.

### **Green Flag School**

Our green school motto is:

‘Let’s all be clean, green and supreme!’

With this in mind, pupils are also asked to:

- Use plastic lunchboxes to try and reduce the amount of packaging and litter;
- take home (in lunchbox) all uneaten food, wrappings, containers and cartons;
- put only fruit peel into the compost bins;
- use personal plastic bottles, not cans and glass – for safety reasons;
- all personal items should be clearly labelled.

**N.B. Parents/guardians of any pupil with a medical condition which requires a special diet should contact the school.**

## **Conclusion**

All staff, parents and pupils are asked to comply with this policy. It has been developed with pupils’ interest at heart. With the co-operation and guidance of parents/guardians, teachers, assistants and other pupils, we are hopeful that the foundations of healthy eating habits will be established for life.

## **Ratification and Communication**

This plan was drawn up by staff and ratified by the Board of Management on 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2007. It was reviewed regularly since then and the latest review took place in April 2024.

**Signed:** *Sr. Bernadette Carron*  
**Sr. Bernadette Carron**  
*Chairperson, Board of Management*

**Date:** 24.04.2024