



Saint Augustine's
— SCHOOL —

HEALTHY EATING POLICY

Introduction

This policy was reviewed by the Health Promotion Committee, which consists of members of the teaching staff and ancillary staff, together with parent representatives in the form of the Board of Management and student representatives in the form of the Student Council. The review of the previous Healthy Eating Policy took place to take account of some general feedback and suggestions from staff and parents. Students voiced their opinions on what constitutes a healthy lunch and what foods they considered should be avoided in the lunchbox, which helped to inform this policy. Prior to the above, students took part in various healthy eating activities (all of which were student centred and differentiated upon the ability of students). Parents were further consulted with questionnaires (see Appendix A) before it was ratified by the Board of Management in January 2020.

Rationale

In light of recent media attention on the area of well-being we feel it is vital to educate the students of St. Augustine's School in relation to healthy eating in order to develop healthy eating habits for life and a positive attitude towards food. The review of this policy will address areas of Circular 0056/2022 and encompass well-being as part of School Self-Evaluation. The review of our healthy eating policy will further form part of the school's submission for the Amber Flag application.

Good health is an important condition for the well-being and development of children. A healthy diet is important to ensure that children get all the nutrients required for their growth and development. A recent long term Government study entitled "Growing Up in Ireland" has published a new report on the lives of young people who were aged nine in 2017/2018 and have been followed by researchers since they were nine months old. Some of the main findings are outlined below:

- Almost all nine-year-olds were reported to have good general health. 79% were very healthy and 20% were healthy (but had a few minor problems). Just 1% were described as quite ill or always unwell.
- Almost one-quarter of nine-year-olds were overweight or obese; 18% were overweight and 5% were obese.
- Overweight / obesity was higher among those from less advantaged backgrounds (e.g. 31% for those from the lowest income families versus 15% for those from the highest income families).

Through this policy we hope to encourage and develop healthy eating habits and guide our students in making healthy choices in their everyday lives while acknowledging that children's appetites and tastes differ. Ultimately, it is the parent's / guardian's responsibility to ensure that his / her child has a healthy diet. The importance of healthy eating is well documented in research, and it has shown that inadequate nutrition impacts negatively on a child's ability to learn and benefit from education. Proper nutrition can improve children's ability to concentrate, improve disruptive behaviour and encourage children to attend school (Sorhaindo, A; & Feinstein, L (2006)).

Aims and Objectives

- a) To support and encourage healthy eating habits in students, which it is hoped will become lifelong eating habits.
- b) To raise students' concentration, learning and energy levels at school through the consumption of healthy food.
- c) Through positive nutrition we aim to improve students' ability to concentrate, to reduce behaviour of concern and encourage students to attend school.
- d) To enable students to appreciate the correlation between good nutrition and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.
- e) To encourage students to experience a wide variety of foods.
- f) To improve students oral/dental health.
- g) To support parents and students to enjoy making healthy decisions around food.
- h) To enable students to accept some personal responsibility for making wise food choices and adopting a healthy, balanced diet.
- i) To improve the environment by encouraging the use of reusable containers, minimum use of wrappers and single-use plastics.
- j) To develop nutritional awareness i.e. knowing ingredients in foods and reading and understanding food labels.

Guidelines

Lunch is an important meal for school-going children. It should provide 1/3 of kilocalories required during the day (child 1,400 - 2,000 kcal, female adolescent 1,800 - 2000 kcal, male adolescent 2,200 - 2800 kcal) without being high in saturated fat, sugar, or salt.

In an effort to support parents / guardians a list of guidelines has been compiled:

- To ensure the lunch is balanced, choose one food from three out of the four main food groups on the food pyramid - four lower levels (see Appendix B). Please see lunchbox

tips on our school website and Appendix C and Appendix D attached for sample lunch menu.

- Water and milk are recommended as healthy drink choices.
- Brown bread is encouraged over white.
- Read food labels to become aware of sugar, fat and salt content in foods and drinks. Remember: in terms of sugar, “low” < 5g of sugar per 100g, “high” 15g or more per 100g (see Appendix E). Please see Appendix F for your food shopping card which will assist you in determining if a particular food has a high, medium or low sugar, fat and salt content.
- Natural yoghurt is encouraged over fruit flavoured yoghurts.
- Ensure that lunch boxes contain utensils required e.g. a teaspoon if providing a yogurt.
- Avoid including prohibited foods (see list below).
- Ensure all food is well prepared e.g. fruit peeled and chopped if necessary and sandwiches cut in half. This is necessary to enable lunches to be eaten in a reasonable amount of time.
- One optional small (fun size) treat is allowed on a Friday (see suitable examples below).
- In order to reduce single use plastic and rubbish: reduce the amount of tin foil and cling film when packing lunches e.g. use reusable containers where possible / reusable beeswax food wrap. The use of reusable non-spill water bottles is encouraged (please label with child’s name). Glass and cans are not suitable for health and safety reasons.

Prohibited Foods

The following foods are not allowed in school, even on treat day (Friday).

- Cereal bars (due to high sugar content)
- Crisps
- Chewing gum
- Fizzy drinks / energy drinks
- Lollipops
- Processed fruit juices e.g. Capri Sun
- Pot noodles

Parents / guardians have a responsibility to provide lunches which do not include any of the prohibited foods and, if possible, to include variety. If children bring any of the above items, they will be encouraged by staff not to do so in future.

Treat Friday

In an effort to improve the content of lunch boxes Monday to Thursday and to promote the idea of a healthy balanced diet, an optional “treat” is allowed on a Friday (one small treat).

We emphasise that lunch should be balanced on a Friday too.

Some examples of a Friday treat:

- Savoury treats: one small pancake, crepe, croissant
- One plain mini muffin
- Chocolate covered fruit
- Fruit smoothie
- Plain popcorn e.g. unsalted
- One chocolate biscuit
- Two plain biscuits
- One chocolate / yoghurt covered rice cake
- One small fun size bar / packet of sweets
- One small homemade baked treat.

The treat may also consist of a more nourishing choice e.g. it may be a favoured fruit treat e.g. raspberries and diced mango.

Special Dietary Requirements

The onus is on parents / guardians to inform the school of any special dietary requirements / allergies on registration or of any allergies that develop together with updated reports over the course of their child’s time in St. Augustine’s.

Curriculum Links

In St. Augustine’s healthy eating and nutrition are taught and promoted in every class and across all different curricula, as outlined below:

Primary Curriculum:

- SPHE: Myself – taking care of my body
- Aistear – food / farm themes
- Cookery & Life Skills classes (P5 – PV).

Home Economics:

- JCSP statements (school based and official level 3 JCSP statements)
- Junior Cycle Level 2 elements (see below for details)
- Level 3 Home Economics.

Junior Cycle Level 2 Programme (L2LP):

- Personal Care: Element; Developing healthy eating habits (learning outcomes: 3.8-3.13) & Element: Developing a healthy lifestyle (learning outcomes: 3.18-3.19).

Vocational Development:

- Catering Department
- QQI Modules: Nutrition & Healthy Options 3N0887.
- School based JCSP's.

Initiatives

In St. Augustine's School there are various initiatives in place which help to promote healthy eating in the school. The non-exhaustive list below outlines the initiatives that are currently in place together with initiatives that we are hoping to implement in the future.

- "Incredible Edibles" initiative
- Amber Flag
- Well-being week
- Chat Café
- "Oh the Places You'll Go" initiative
- School Meals Local Projects Scheme (operated by the Department of Social protection and coordinated by the school, funding is provided towards provision of food services for disadvantaged school children)
- Food Dudes
- Healthy eating week
- Food pyramid displays
- Competitions e.g. Moo Crew competition
- Drinking water available to all students
- Recipe of the week
- Noticeboard promoting healthy eating
- Vocational Catering area
- Extended Day Programme and residential houses (HSE)
- Information regarding healthy eating on the school website
- Educational speakers / tours / virtual visits e.g. Farming through the Seasons
- Spot checks on lunches, merits such as certificates, stickers, praise and small prizes will be given to those making a continual effort.

Roles and Responsibilities of Students

- To eat their own lunch and not share food or drinks with others. This is important particularly for students who suffer from allergies.

Roles and Responsibilities of Staff

- To provide adequate time in which the children can eat their lunch.
- To co-ordinate the process of this policy and encourage the children to bring healthy lunches, checks will take place. Merits will be given which include certificates, stickers, praise and small prizes for those making a continual effort.
- To promote healthy options during celebrations e.g. Halloween / Easter / Christmas (exemptions may occur during a birthday celebration).
- To promote positive modelling and supportive attitudes to encourage healthy eating.

Roles and Responsibilities of Parents / Guardians

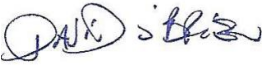
- To provide a balanced lunch / select a balanced lunch online (where applicable). All new parents / guardians will receive a healthy eating booklet in their induction pack together with a copy of the Healthy Eating Policy (also available on our school website).
- To support the school's environmental efforts by encouraging the use of reusable containers, minimum use of wrappers and single use plastics.
- To involve their child in making their healthy lunch and making positive choices.
- To read food labels to become aware of sugar, fat and salt content in food.
- To provide lunches which do not include any prohibited items.
- To provide utensils for lunches if required e.g. a teaspoon if including a yoghurt.
- Remember what we provide is what they are going to eat.

Communication and Ratification

This policy was reviewed by the Health Promotion Committee, having been informed by the views of staff and parent / student representatives. It will be communicated to each parent in their welcome pack which is distributed to each family as the students enrol in the school and referred to in various newsletters throughout the school year. The policy will be available on the school website for parents (hardcopy available upon request) and a copy will be circulated to all staff. Existing students and their parents / guardians will be informed of the reviewed Healthy Eating Policy during well-being week.

This policy will be reviewed in 2026 (or earlier if deemed appropriate) in consultation with student and parent representatives, as well as staff.

Ratified by the Board of Management on 23rd February 2023

Signature:  (School Principal) Date: 23/02/23

Signature:  (Chairperson, Board of Management) Date: 23/02/23

Appendix A: Questionnaire to Parents / Guardians

Questionnaire

Are you familiar with the current Healthy Eating Policy available on our school website?

Yes No

Do you feel healthy eating is promoted in the school?

Yes No

In light of current environmental concerns are you willing to actively address the issue by choosing reusable lunchbox containers / environmentally friendly packaging and avoid the use of one-off plastic when planning lunches?

Yes No

We currently have a treat day on a Friday whereby students are allowed to bring a small treat as part of their lunch e.g. one plain digestive biscuit / fun size chocolate bar. Would you like this to continue?

Yes, I would like treat day to continue No, I would prefer if there was no treat day

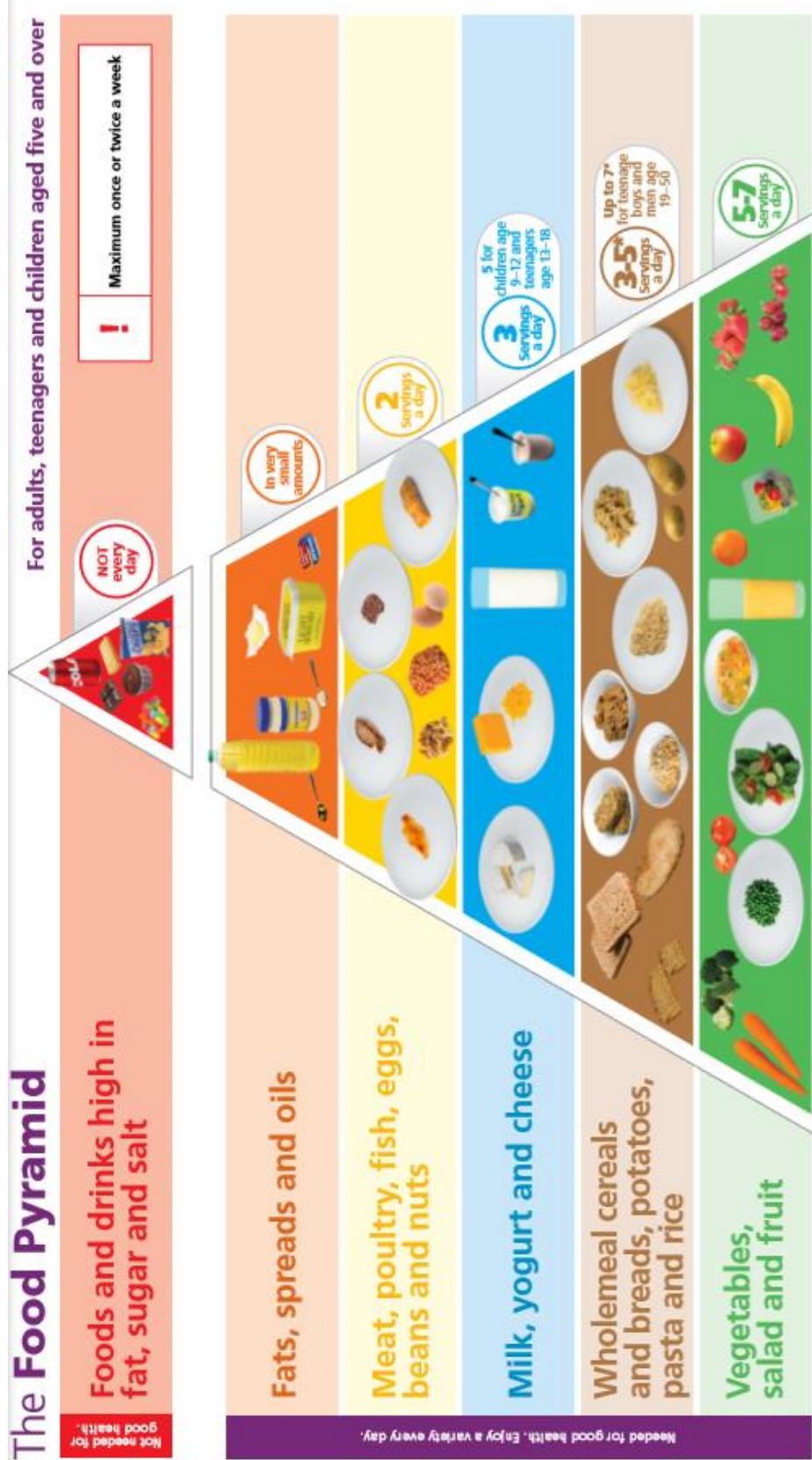
As a parent / guardian would you like further information on healthy eating?

Yes No

If yes – how should this information be provided?

Any other comments you would like to make?













Appendix B: The Food Pyramid



Appendix C: Sample Lunch Menu

5-day lunchbox planner

We often end up putting the same things in the lunchbox everyday. Keeping lunchbox contents varied makes lunch more enjoyable. The following planner shows you some examples of snacks and lunch items.

Monday								
1 medium wholemeal bread roll with tomato and cheese	+		+	Handful of carrot sticks	+	Pot of low-fat yoghurt	+	
Tuesday								
Small pitta bread with tuna and sweetcorn	+		+	½ wholemeal scone	+		+	
Wednesday								
2 tablespoons of pasta with 1 tablespoon of tomatoes and vegetables	+		+	2 crackers with low-fat cheddar cheese	+		+	
Thursday								
2 slices of wholemeal bread with cooked ham and lettuce	+	Slices of pepper, cucumber, sugar snap peas or mangetout	+		+	Yoghurt	+	
Friday								
Tortilla wrap with chicken, sliced peppers and lettuce	+		+	Small tub of stewed fruit	+	6 cherry tomatoes	+	

Appendix D: Sample Lunch Menu

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Chicken, lettuce sandwich on wholemeal bread	Wholemeal pitta bread with ham, cheese, lettuce and tomato	Cooked wholemeal pasta with tuna and sweetcorn	Ham, lettuce and tomato sandwich on wholemeal bread	Wholemeal pitta bread with chicken, grated cheese, sweetcorn, lettuce and tomato
Mandarin Banana	Apple Grapes	Strawberries, Raspberries and Blueberries	Banana Apple	Mandarin Grapes
1 small carton of low fat natural yogurt	Hummus and carrot sticks and sliced peppers	1 small carton of low fat natural yogurt	Cheese and crackers	Hummus with celery and carrot sticks
Water	Water	Water	Water	Water

Remember:

- Natural yoghurt is encouraged over fruit flavoured yogurts.
- Smaller portions for younger children.
- Milk and water are the preferred drinking options.

Appendix E: Labels Demonstrating High Sugar Content / Low Sugar Content

Label Demonstrating High Sugar Content

NUTRITION INFORMATION TYPICAL VALUES	Per 32g with 125ml semi-skimmed milk	Per 100g
Energy	734 kJ 174 kcal	1599 kJ 378 kcal
Protein	6.9g	8.5g
Carbohydrate of which sugars	28.5g 12.1g	74.5g 20.9g
Fat of which saturates	3.1g 1.4g	3.5g 0.9g
Fibre	2.2g	7.3g
Sodium	0.18g	0.40g
Salt Equivalent	0.46g	1.01g

Label Demonstrating Low Sugar Content

Nutrition Information *		
Typical values	per 100g	
Energy	1661kJ/392kcal	
Fat	0.3g	
of which saturates	0.1g	
Carbohydrate	86.2g	
of which sugars	1.3g	
Fibre	2.9g	
Protein	8.6g	
Salt	0.89g	

Typical values	per serving 30g	%RI*
Energy	498kJ/118kcal	6%
Fat	<0.1g	<1%
of which saturates	<0.1g	<1%
Carbohydrate	25.9g	10%
of which sugars	0.4g	<1%
Fibre	1.4g	
Protein	2.6g	5%
Salt	0.27g	5%

* Reference intake of an average adult (8400kJ/2000kcal)

Food Shopping Card

Check how much fat, sugar and salt is in your food

What is **HIGH** per 100g

Sugars	Fat	Saturates	Salt
OVER 15g	OVER 20g	OVER 5g	OVER 1.5g
5g to 15g	3g to 20g	1.5g to 5g	0.3g to 1.5g
5g and below	3g and below	1.5g and below	0.3g and below

What is **MEDIUM** per 100g

Remember that the amount you eat of a particular food affects how much sugars, fat, saturates and salt you will get from it. ●●●

What is **LOW** per 100g