



Healthy Eating Policy

Background

In line with the Food & Nutrition Guidelines for Primary Schools set out by the Dept. of Health and Children, and in following consultation with parents, staff, pupils and the Board of Management, Muire gan Smál has put together this Healthy Eating Policy. Research suggests that attention and concentration levels improve with the consumption of nutritious food.

Healthy Eating Policy

It is the policy of Muire gan Smál National School that healthy eating is encouraged by pursuing both **education** for pupils and **guidance** for parents. We approach this policy with the understanding that ultimately children's appetites and tastes differ and it is a parent's responsibility to ensure that his / her child eats healthily at all times, including during school activities.

In the course of studying science children will be exploring

- *Food groups*
- *The consequences of a poor diet*
- *The Food Pyramid*

Lunches should be composed of a variety of foods and include at least one item from the different food groups. The following is a list of suggested foods for a healthy, balanced school lunch.

Group 1 – Carbohydrate (Bread/Cereal/Pasta)

Sandwiches, Rolls, Pitta Bread, Pasta Salad, Crackers, Crisp bread, Rice, Pasta, Potatoes, Bagels, or Pancakes.

Group 2 – Fruit/Vegetables

Any fruit or vegetable item, Salad in a box (Please remember to peel or cut fruit for younger children). Some typical choices are a whole fruit, a fruit juice drink, vegetable soup, salad, or cooked/raw vegetables

Group 3 – Dairy

Cheese strings, small packets of cheese, yoghurts (pots with spoon, tubes, frubes), milk to drink

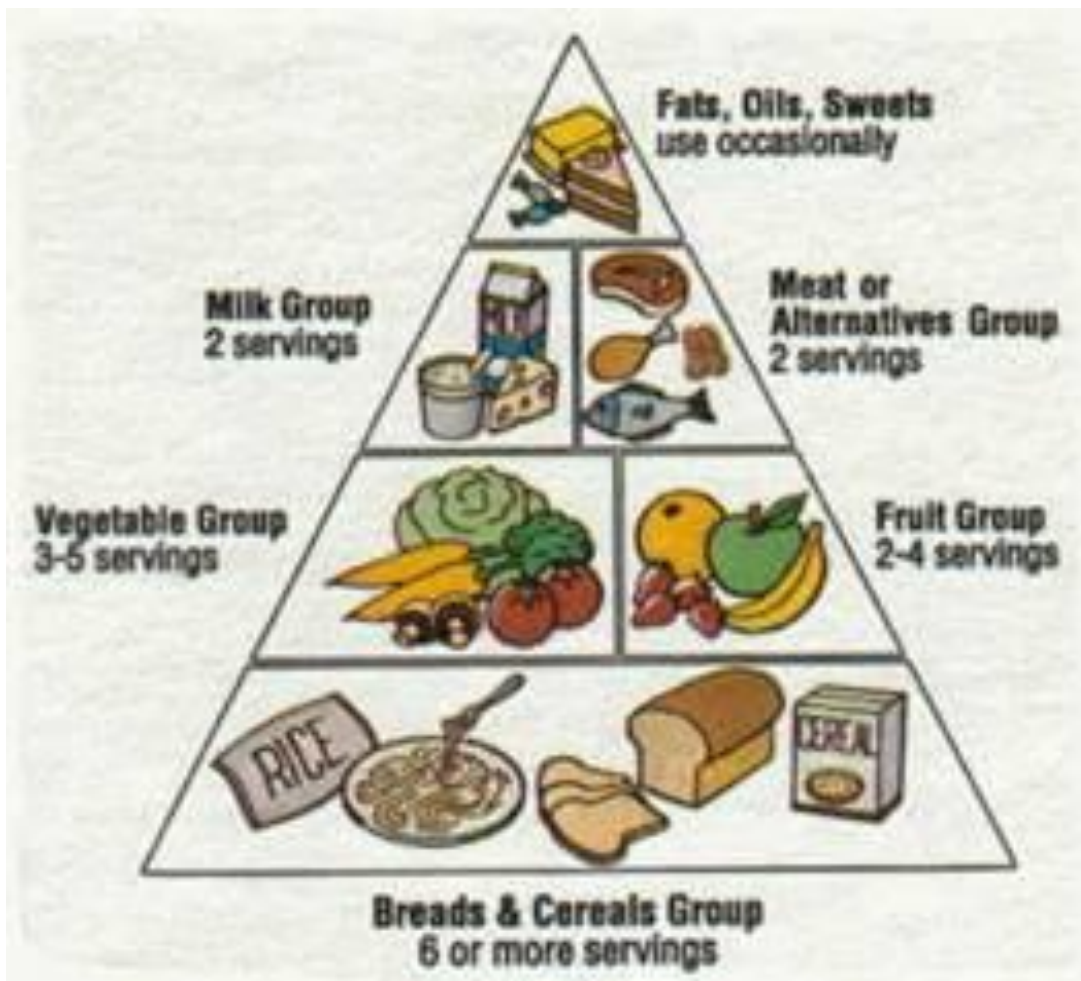
Group 4 - Protein (Meats)

Meat in sandwiches or salad, cold meats, tuna, chicken, fish, egg, beans or lentils.

Group 5 – Treats

Small fun size bar, small cake/bun, cereal bar. Sweet/bars should be kept as an occasional Friday treat.

All children are encouraged to eat balanced and proportionate meals at all times including those meals eaten while in school.



The food pyramid outlines an excellent common-sense approach to healthy and balanced eating. All children's lunches should contain a majority of items from the three lower food groups. Foods selected from each level should be in decreasing amounts. *Treats such as sweets, chocolate, etc. should always be limited to Fridays.*

Exceptions

It has long been a tradition in Muire gan Smál that on very special occasions e.g. end of year, child's birthday or special school event that children will receive a little treat. This could include a bar/sweet. This tradition will continue.

In Muire gan Smál National School two lunch breaks are timetabled.

10.30 a.m. (Sos beag)

Children may take a small item of lunch outdoors to eat, weather permitting. Younger children may be allowed some class time to eat indoors before going to play. This can be particularly important for Junior Infants in the first term who often eat more slowly.

12.30 p.m. (Am lóin)

Children are given approximately fifteen minutes to eat their lunch before going outside to the yard. Children are not allowed to walk around the room while eating. This is necessary in terms of good eating etiquette and also to minimize opportunity for spillage. Children are taught that treat items should always be eaten last once all other items have been eaten. Children should not exchange food items or save food to be eaten on the way home after school.

There is an area in each classroom for lunch boxes. Lunch boxes and drinks should not be stored in schoolbags for the day. On hot days and following P.E. lessons individual teachers may allow pupils to have a drink when they return indoors. Drinking **water** and fruit juices are encouraged, fizzy drinks are not permitted.

In the winter months (between Halloween and February mid-term holidays) children are permitted to bring **warm soup** in a flask. *It is not possible or safe to provide hot water in school for large groups of children to make instant soup.*

Healthy Eating Strategies in operation in Muire gan Smál

- * Healthy School Environment
- * Encouragement and praise
- * No tolerance of fizzy drinks, crisps or chewing gum.
- * Children given adequate time to eat and drink.
- * Successful participation and enjoyment of the Food Dudes Healthy Eating Programme.
- * Healthy Eating Notice Board containing 'The Food Pyramid Chart'.

Green Schools

As we are trying to reduce the amount of waste in the school, we encourage parents to try and reduce the amount of packaging in your child's lunchbox. As part of the Green Schools all packaging, waste and uneaten food will be brought home by the children in their lunchboxes. We greatly appreciate your cooperation in this matter. **Promotion of this policy**

- The promotion of our **Healthy Eating Policy** within the school is seen as a joint initiative and will require the commitment of staff, parents and children i.e. the whole school community.
- All new parents will be given a copy of this policy on enrolment. Parents will be encouraged to co-operate with the school in relation to lunches and if they have any questions or concerns to address these to the class teacher or principal.
- Teachers will address the area of healthy eating during SPHE lessons and will observe lunches brought to school and encourage pupils to bring balanced meals.
- If teachers have a concern about a child's lunch they will raise this matter with the parent not with the child. Food will never be taken from a child.

Success Criteria

- Children are aware of the importance of a healthy balanced diet.
- Children are bringing healthy lunches to school – eating and enjoying them.
- Children are encouraged and willing to try a variety of food.
- Parents are aware of the policy and are happy that it is being implemented.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Staff:** Will implement and monitor the policy and will give good example through their own healthy eating habits.
- Parents:** Will be aware of the policy and provide the healthy lunches.
- Pupils:** Will comply with the policy.

Special Duties Teacher – with responsibility for SPHE (**Connie Cosgrove**) will co-ordinate the progress of the policy, encourage and accept feedback on its implementation and report back to staff, parents and pupils.

Timeframe for Implementation

Policy was implemented as of September 2008.

Review

It has been reviewed on a 2 yearly basis or sooner if a need arises which has not been addressed by this policy.

Responsibility for Review

When the policy is being reviewed the following will be consulted

- Staff
- Pupils
- Parents
- Post holder
- B.O.M.

The Special Duties Teacher with responsibility for SPHE will co-ordinate the review.

Ratification and Communication

This policy was reviewed and ratified in September 2015. It has been communicated to parents, staff and children.

Signed: Gerry Lynch

(Chairperson BOM)

Teresa Nally

(Principal)