



Powerstown Educate Together National School

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HEALTHY EATING POLICY

This policy has been formulated by Powerstown ETNS to assist teachers, pupils, and parents in developing a school environment and a school culture that is conducive to promoting healthy eating choices.

This policy has been developed in line with HSE and nutritionist guidance on healthy eating in schools.

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RATIONALE

As part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme at Powerstown Educate Together, we encourage children to become more aware of how our food choices can affect our overall feelings of health and wellbeing. The practical application of what is taught and learned in this area is achieved through the implementation of our Healthy Eating Policy. This forms part of our Wellbeing Promotion Process.

This policy was developed in consultation with parents/guardians, staff, pupils, and the school Board of Management. All relevant parties were invited to fill online surveys in relation to healthy eating within the school environment and this information was collated to inform this policy. A draft policy was circulated to all members of the school community; staff and parents were invited to participate in a focus group to allow for further feedback, and the final draft was ratified by the Board of Management.

The following documents were consulted in drafting this policy: *Healthy Eating Policy Toolkit for Primary Schools (HSE)*; *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2019)*; *Healthy Lifestyle Circular 12/2016*; *Circular 42/2016*.

AIMS

The aims of this policy are:

- To take a whole-school approach to healthy and balanced eating in school, in relation to: The Culture and Environment, Curriculum (Teaching and Learning), Policy and Planning, Relationships and Partnerships.
- To promote a school culture that encourages balanced eating habits and nutrition awareness among the children in the school, which it is hoped will become lifelong habits.
- To ensure that food provision in school reflects the ethical and medical requirements of staff and pupils, e.g. religious, ethnic, medical and allergenic needs.
- To make the provision and consumption of food an enjoyable and safe experience.

CURRICULUM

Children learn about food, making balanced choices and how our bodies are impacted by our choices through the SPHE and Science curriculum. Active living and the benefits of exercise are promoted through the Physical Education (PE) curriculum.

- **SPHE Strand Units**
 - Taking Care of My Body
 - Growing and Changing
 - Making Decisions
- **Science Strand Units**
 - Myself / Human Life
 - Plants and animals / Plant and animal life

In line with the SPHE curriculum, children will learn about the Food Pyramid and balanced food choices in class. Individual differences in relation to food choices will be acknowledged, for example, choices influenced by allergies or intolerances, religion, family culture or personal preferences. Children will develop an awareness that what might be healthy for one person, may not be healthy for another person. A school culture which is respectful of difference will be promoted.

Staff will be encouraged to be mindful of the language that they use in relation to food and will avoid demonising any particular foods. Children will learn about making balanced choices and about listening to our own bodies' cues in terms of what foods we need at a particular time, or how much food we need to feel full. This may change from person to person, or from day to day.

RESOURCES:

Useful resources for each class level may include:

INFANTS

- [When Sally Met Sammy](#) – storybook from SafeFood
- ['Clean hands' song activity](#) to promote handwashing – from SafeFood
- [Moo Crew](#) activities on dairy foods – from National Dairy Council
- [Mediawise](#): an online resource to develop children's media literacy skills – from SafeFood
- [Seedlings programme](#) – from Bord Bia
- [Mighty Mouth school programme](#) – from Dental Health Foundation
- Food Dudes – healthy eating activities for all ages

1ST & 2ND CLASS

- [Tastebuds](#) resource for 8-10 year olds – from SafeFood
- [Seedlings programme](#) – from Bord Bia
- [Moo Crew](#) activities on dairy foods – from National Dairy Council

- [Mediawise](#): an online resource to develop children's media literacy skills – from Safefood
- Food Dudes – healthy eating activities for all ages

3RD & 4TH CLASS

- [Tastebuds](#) resource for 8-10 year olds – from Safefood
- [Moo Crew](#) activities on dairy foods – from National Dairy Council
- [Mediawise](#): an online resource to develop children's media literacy skills – from Safefood
- Food Dudes – healthy eating activities for all ages

5TH & 6TH CLASS

- [Moo Crew](#) activities on dairy foods – from National Dairy Council
- [Mediawise](#): an online resource to develop children's media literacy skills – from Safefood
- Food Dudes – healthy eating activities for all ages

The school has links with the Dental Health nurse and the HSE to provide education on healthy eating.

LUNCH BREAKS

The children have two breaks during the school day during which they can eat their lunch and socialise with their friends.

1. Sos beag / Little Break – **Fruit/Vegetable Break**

The children are encouraged to bring some fruit or vegetables to eat during our first break. This may include a piece of whole fruit, a portion of berries, chopped fruit or raw vegetables (e.g. cucumber, tomatoes, carrot sticks). It is hoped that the children will be exposed to a variety of fruit and vegetables and other healthy foods being consumed around them and will act as positive role models for one another. Children are welcome to eat other healthy snacks as well as fruit/vegetables during this break.

2. **Lón / Big Lunch**: The children will have 10 minutes to eat the rest of their lunch before going to the yard.

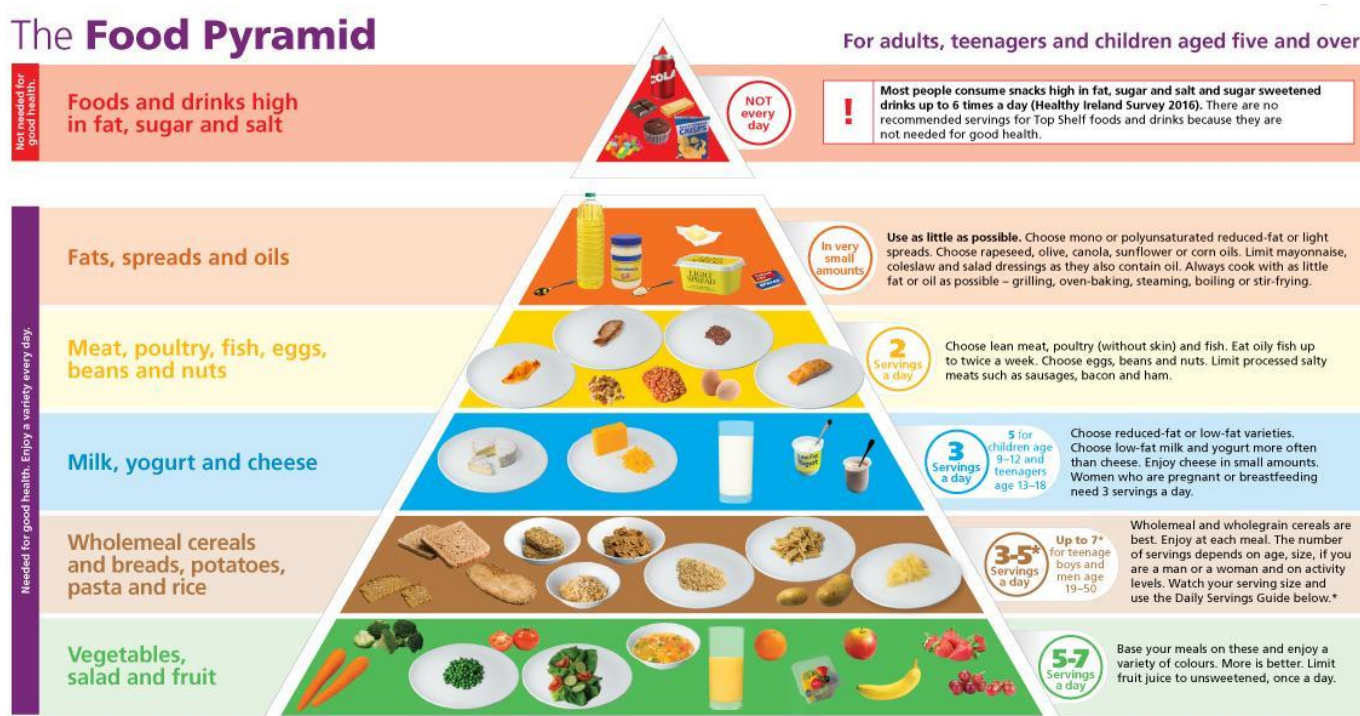
Children are encouraged to bring home all food that is not eaten during the school day. It is important that parents check their child's lunch box to monitor what their child has eaten. It is essential that children come to school with a freshly packed lunch each day.

LUNCH / SNACK SUGGESTIONS

Parents/guardians are encouraged to provide children with a balanced lunch, which will be nourishing and will help to maintain their level of concentration in the classroom throughout the day. Where possible, parents should include foods that their child can manage independently, being mindful of packaging and fruit peels. Children's lunch boxes

should include a variety of foods from the bottom four shelves of the Food Pyramid. Children may bring one small item from the top shelf of the Food Pyramid on a Friday to further promote a culture of balanced food choices.

The Food Pyramid



Suggestions for lunchboxes may include the following:

Fruit & Vegetables: Whole fruit, e.g. banana, apple, orange, pear Dried fruit Fruit salad Portion of berries / grapes Cucumber Tomatoes Carrot sticks	Dairy: <i>Note: HSE recommends that growing children aged 5-9 years have 3+ servings of dairy each day and 5+ for children aged 9-18 years. This ensures they have enough calcium which is essential for healthy bones and teeth.</i> Milk Cheese Yogurt
Cereals & Breads: Sandwiches, rolls, wraps, pittas, bagels Scones Crackers, rice cakes or oat cakes Portion of pasta, spaghetti, couscous or rice	Protein: Slices or cubes of meat Fish, e.g. tuna Eggs, e.g. hard-boiled, quiche Beans, e.g. hummus, toasted chickpeas

DRINKS

It is important that children take in enough fluids during the day. Almost 2/3 of the body is made up of water. If children do not drink enough water, they may become dehydrated, thirsty, tired and weak. Recent studies have shown that children who are dehydrated are less able to concentrate properly. Therefore, we would recommend that **every child bring a drink of water each day**. Where a child brings more than one drink to school each day, one should be water. Children can refill their water bottles from a drinking water tap in the classroom as required.

We encourage sugar-free drinks that are tooth-friendly, e.g.:

- Water
- Milk (no flavoured milk)
- Fruit juice (preferably diluted and unsweetened)
- Diluted drinks/squashes (sugar free)

FOODS FROM THE TOP-SHELF OF THE FOOD PYRAMID

It is not recommended to eat foods from the top shelf of the food pyramid regularly. However, we feel that it is important for children to learn that it is OK to eat small portions of these foods now and then as part of a balanced diet. It is recommended that small or fun-size servings should not be consumed more than once or twice per week. Therefore, we will allow pupils to bring a **fun-size portion** of chocolate, biscuits, cakes, sweets, or crisps to school **on Fridays only**. These foods can be provided by parents in their child's lunchbox. **Sharing bags or bars should not be brought to school.**

Foods will not be used as rewards in school. Non-food rewards are promoted, e.g. special privileges, certificates and 'good news' notes, special class activities.

PROHIBITED FOODS

The following foods are not allowed in school at any time, including Fridays:

- **NUT BAN** – We have a strict nut ban in the school due to the risk of anaphylaxis. This is a life-threatening medical emergency. Foods containing nuts are not permitted in the school grounds. This includes peanut butter, chocolate spread that contains nuts, or nut milk.
- **Chewing gum**
- **Fizzy drinks**

There may be particular cases where there are additional severe food allergies in your child's class and other foods may be prohibited in that class. If this is the case, you will be contacted by your child's class teacher.

If children bring prohibited food or drink to school, they will be asked by the class teacher to bring it home. If children persist in bringing prohibited food or drinks to school on a regular basis, the class teacher may contact their parents/guardians to remind them of the Healthy Eating Policy.

HEALTH AND SAFETY WITH FOOD

ALLERGIES AND INTOLERANCES

Information about pupils' food allergies and intolerances is updated each September by class teachers.

If your child has a serious food allergy which may necessitate the use of an epipen in school, you must notify the school and fill in the relevant documentation as per the Administration of Medication Policy.

FOOD SHARING

As some children may have a serious intolerance to particular foods (e.g. dairy, gluten products, certain fruits), please talk to your child about the danger of sharing foods with classmates.

In order to promote the health and safety of all children in the school, to protect children with food allergies, as well as to prevent the spread of infection, the following guidelines will apply:

- Children are discouraged from sharing food, drinks, utensils or drinks containers with one another.
- Children will be encouraged to only eat food that has been provided by their own parents in their lunch box, unless parent consent is provided.
- Children will be encouraged to eat their lunch at their own desk, where possible.

BIRTHDAYS

At Powerstown Educate Together National School we discourage the provision of party bags, cakes or sweets on birthdays. Handing these out would take up a lot of teaching and learning time throughout the year and can put pressure on other parents to supply sweets and treats on their child's birthday. **If you wish to mark your child's birthday, please see their class teacher for advice.** Every child in the school is made to feel special on their birthday by the school community using non-food treats, e.g. wearing a special birthday hat, enjoying special privileges.

COOKING OR BAKING ACTIVITIES

If children are participating in a cooking or baking lesson in school, their teacher will be mindful of dietary and medical needs (e.g. diabetes, coeliac disease, allergies) and dietary preferences (e.g. vegetarian, vegan, halal). Teachers will provide alternatives for children where possible. Teachers will seek parental consent through Aladdin in advance of the baking activity to allow parents/teachers time to source alternative ingredients.

SCHOOL EVENTS AND CELEBRATIONS

Food often plays an important role in celebrations, festivals and parties in many different cultures.

At times, food is shared as part of a whole-school event or celebration, for example, during Intercultural Week or at cake sales. Foods containing allergens (e.g. gluten, dairy, sugar) or meat should be labelled as such to allow members of the school community to make choices based on their own dietary needs or preferences. If your child has any dietary requirements we advise parents to accompany their child to school events to supervise their child's food choices.

If foods are being used as part of an end-of-term celebration or class party, parents will be informed in advance and will be invited to provide their child with alternative special foods of their choice if required.

FOOD HYGIENE

Children will be aware of the importance of food hygiene and safety when preparing and eating lunches. Handwashing facilities are available in every classroom and children will be encouraged to wash their hands before and after eating.

GREEN SCHOOLS AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

As a Green Flag school, the children will learn about themes such as 'Litter and Waste' and 'Food and Biodiversity'. The Green School Programme promotes respect for the natural environment and all its resources. In order to support this learning and to develop a culture of environmental consciousness, children are asked to:

- Take home all uneaten food and food packaging. Fruit peelings are put into compost bins and used in our school wormery.
- Use reusable lunch boxes and drinks containers, where possible.
- Choose airtight containers instead of single use plastic (including cling film) or tinfoil, where possible.

CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

We try to promote a culture which promotes a healthy and balanced attitude towards food and food choices.

- **Rewards** – We do not use food as a reward, which may interfere with children's hunger and satiety (fullness) cues. Non-food rewards that may be used in school include praise, encouragement, stickers, certificates or special privileges.
- **Growing and gardening** – Children will have an opportunity to work together to grow salad leaves, vegetables and herbs through our school garden. Children will also have the opportunity to help to care for our school chickens and to collect fresh eggs.

COMMUNICATION AND RATIFICATION

This policy has been communicated to all staff. At the beginning of each school year, it is brought to the attention of new staff, and current staff are reminded of its content.

Incoming parents are informed of this policy at induction meetings. The policy is shared on the school website and in the school newsletter in September to remind all families of its contents. The policy is available to parents on the school website or in hard copy format from the office on request.

The BOM ratified the policy in June 2023.

IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

The policy will be implemented by all staff, parents/guardians and pupils from **September 2023**.

The policy will be reviewed in 3 years.

USEFUL LINKS AND INFORMATION

- The Health Promotion Unit provides information on food and nutrition for children that is available to download at www.healthpromotion.ie

- The Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute has a vast amount of information on nutrition and diet and have suggestions on what to include in school lunchboxes: www.indi.ie
- Educational and parents resources for dental health: <https://www.dentalhealth.ie/resources/educational/>
- Healthy Food for Life – the Healthy Eating Guidelines and Food Pyramid from the Department of Health: <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/healthy-ireland/?referrer=/health-initiatives/heg>
- Resource pack for teachers and parents to support in [*Managing Chronic Health Conditions in Schools*](#)
- Resources and tips for parents on how to create a healthy lifestyle: <https://www.safefood.net/start>