








**St. Patrick's N.S.  
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Registered Charity Number (RCN): 20126087

# Healthy Eating Policy

Ballylinan National School  
17064U



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#### 1. Rationale

Through these guidelines, Ballylinan National School aims to help all those involved in our school community to develop positive attitudes to food to promote wellbeing and healthy living. As part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Programme, we encourage the children to become more aware of the need for healthy food in their lunch boxes.

This policy was compiled in consultation with the Wellbeing committee which consists of students and teachers in our school. A review of our current food practices took place and this policy takes account of some general feedback and suggestions from staff, students and parents. What we eat is known to be a key factor influencing health and wellbeing. Ballylinan National School is committed to facilitating the children's development of skills and attitudes to allow them to make informed decisions about their food intake. There will be a whole school approach, involving teachers,



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parents/guardians and children to ensure that healthy eating messages are a part of school life. A culture of healthy eating is encouraged and modelled by adults in school. This policy will be supported by our Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice.

### 2. Aims

- To promote a whole school approach to healthy eating and nutrition
- To understand the benefit of a healthy well balanced diet
- To develop an awareness that good eating habits formed in early childhood influence health and wellbeing throughout our lives
- To develop awareness of the importance of food for growth and development
- To explore food preferences in a balanced diet

### 3. Objectives

- To enable the child to appreciate the importance of good nutrition for growing, developing and staying healthy
- To enable the child to accept some personal responsibility for making wise food choices for their school lunch in line with a healthy, balanced diet.
- To ensure that the staff and children acknowledge and respect the ethical and religious food choices of others while also being mindful of allergies e.g. vegetarian, vegan, coeliac, halal etc.
- To ensure pupils are well nourished at school and that every pupil has access to nutritious food and a safe, easily available water supply during the school day.
- To encourage and promote the recycling of lunch packaging, the reduction of waste food and the reuse of food containers and bottles/beakers in conjunction with our Green School objectives.

### 4. Culture and Environment

#### 4.1 School lunches

Here in Ballylinan National School, we are very fortunate to be able to provide every child in the school with a nutritious, hot lunch free of charge under the The Hot School Meals Programme operated by the Department of Social Protection. In the event that a parents opts out of the Hot Meals Programme, lunch provided from home must be in keeping with the aims and objectives of



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this policy. We encourage all families to avail of the Hot School Meals Programme and by doing so, you can rest assured that your child is receiving a healthy, well balanced meal every day. There is a great variety of food options available and parents have the flexibility to change the food choices on a regular basis.

### 4.2 Drinking water

Drinking water is widely available in every classroom in our school. Children are asked to bring their own beaker/water bottle to school each day. This beaker/water bottle can be refilled throughout the day if necessary.

### 4.3 Lunch Boxes and food waste/recycling

Please ensure that your child has a lunchbox in school with them every day. Please practise opening and closing this lunchbox with your child as many of them can have clips that are difficult for the children to manage. The children must bring home their food waste and recycling. We are a green school and place a big emphasis on recycling and limiting waste. The children will be encouraged to finish their lunch and then bring home any leftovers and wrappers.

### 4.4 Lunchtimes

In our school, the children eat twice a day before going out to play. To ensure good concentration throughout the day, it is important for the children to eat a healthy breakfast before coming to school. Children will be asked not to swap lunches or share food utensils/drink containers.

### 4.5 Special Treats

We recognise that there is no such thing as “bad food” and we teach the children to enjoy treats in moderation. Special events in class such as end of term parties, special achievements or seasonal celebrations such as Halloween, Christmas and Easter are also times where food contributes to a sense of celebration, community and sharing. On these occasions, special treats may be provided by the teacher, baked/prepared in conjunction with the children and on occasion brought in from home. We will always remind the children however that this is an “occasional” treat and not “every day food”.



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### 5. Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

- 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, ingredients etc.) Additionally, Geography can provide opportunities to discuss where certain ingredients come from and what countries they are grown in. History can also be used to track the origin of certain foods, their introduction to Ireland and also explore cultural likes/dislikes of food and issues involving 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 and the link that food and nutrition can play
- From time to time, we will arrange for outside agencies to come in and speak to the school community (students, staff and parents) on the benefits of Healthy Eating.

### 6. Implementation

- The Hot School Meals Programme run by the Department of Social Protection is available for every child in the school to avail of. The menu can be changed regularly through an online portal at home (information available through the office)
- For families who choose not to avail of the Hot School Meals Programme, parents/guardians are responsible for providing a healthy school lunch for their child(ren)
- Children are encouraged to participate in making their own healthy school lunch.
- Teachers will explicitly teach about healthy eating as part of the SPHE curriculum.
- Teachers will monitor lunches regularly.
- Teachers will contact parents if there is continued unhealthy lunches or inappropriate treats. If the children bring food to school that is not allowed as outlined in this Healthy Eating Policy, it will be sent home.



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- Teachers will keep in touch with parents regularly and inform them of any issues that arise relating to their child's lunch.
- Relevant speakers may be invited in to carry out a workshop/talk to parents/guardians throughout the school year.
- The effective implementation of this policy will be monitored by the staff of the school, the school principal and the Board of Management.

### 7. 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 cooperation. In promoting this objective Ballylinan National School will:

- Inform parents about the school healthy eating 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.

### 8. Special Dietary Requirements/ Allergies

Parents/guardians of children with special dietary requirements should make an appointment with the principal to discuss the implications of this policy.

Due to a number of serious food allergies, children are not allowed to bring nuts or nut-containing products to school.

### 9. Healthy Lunch Ideas

The following guide is designed to help you provide quick, appetising, and nutritious lunches for your children. This list is not exhaustive but will provide you with some ideas

- Breads – whole-grain breads, rolls, bagels, wraps, pitta
- Bread substitutes – oatcakes, plain rice cakes or crackers
- Fillings – cold meats, cheese, tuna, butter, hummus, pesto, egg, lettuce, spinach, cucumber, tomato, onion, peppers, salad, or banana



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- Cold leftovers in a flask/lunchbox – pasta (with or without sauce), rice (with or without sauce) stew, curry, lasagna, noodles
- Fruit – apples, oranges, bananas, sliced grapes, pears, plums, peaches, apricots, melon, grapefruit, pineapple, strawberries, raspberries, mango, blackberries or blueberries.
- Vegetables – tomatoes, sweetcorn, peppers, carrot sticks, celery sticks, broccoli, cucumber
- Yogurt – Plain or fruit yogurts only

Please see appendix 1 for a list of useful websites

### **In order to ensure the successful implementation of this policy, the following food items are not permitted in Ballylinan National School as part of a healthy lunch:**

- Chocolate (including chocolate spread), sweets, crisps, nuts (including peanut butter).
- Fizzy drinks, sports drinks, flavoured water, fruit juice.
- Biscuits, cakes, muffins, cereal bars containing chocolate/high sugar content.
- Yogurts with chocolate/biscuit balls.
- Hot liquids are not permitted as they are a health and safety risk.
- Chewing Gum.

### **10. Actions to take if the policy is not supported**

- If the children bring food to school that is not allowed as outlined in this Healthy Eating Policy, it will be sent home.
- Teachers will contact parents if there is continued unhealthy lunches or inappropriate treats. If the issue is not resolved, the principal will contact parents.
- Teachers will keep in touch with parents regularly and inform them of any issues that arise relating to their child's lunch.

### **11. Communication**

A copy of this policy will be made available to parents through our school website ([www.ballylinannationalschool.com](http://www.ballylinannationalschool.com)) Parents of incoming junior infants will also be informed of the school's healthy eating policy during the Junior Infant induction meeting, as outlined in school booklet. Communication of aspects of this policy to students will be ongoing in the classroom through both informal conversations and through discrete SPHE lessons.



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### 12. Review and Evaluation

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Ballylinan National School on

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The policy will be reviewed regularly in the light of experience. It will be reviewed by the full staff and Board of Management every three years. (The policy may also be reviewed at an earlier time should a need arise. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made.)

The next review of this policy will occur during the school year of 2026/2027.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(Chairperson B.O.M)

(Principal)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Appendix 1

**Useful Links:** Please explore the links below for some more information on nutrition and healthy lunch ideas.

<https://www.safefood.net/education/healthy-lunchboxes>

<https://www.bordbia.ie/nutrition/primary-school-children/>

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/70a2e4-the-food-pyramid/>

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/our-priority-programmes/health/healthyeating-guidelines/>

<https://www.healthpromotion.ie/publication/fullListing?category=Healthy+Eating&searchHSE>