

## **Bunscoil McAuley Rice**

### **Healthy Lunch / Healthy Eating Policy**

#### **Introductory Statement**

This policy has been formulated by the Board of Management of Bunscoil McAuley Rice. The Healthy Eating Policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies. Copies of this policy will be made available to each member of staff and it will be posted on our school's website.

#### **Rationale**

Bunscoil McAuley Rice Healthy Lunch/Eating Policy aims to promote the development of the whole child, physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally. Our school recognises that a healthy diet is essential for maintaining and protecting children's health, for ensuring they perform to their full potential during the school day (both academically and physically) and for their growth and development. The school actively encourages healthy eating on a daily basis.

#### **Consequences of an unhealthy Lifestyle**

- Hungry children are more likely to have behavioural, emotional and academic problems in school.
- Skipping breakfast leads to poor performance and concentration.
- Poor eating habits and inactivity are the root cause of health problems such as obesity, eating disorders, tooth decay and anaemia.
- Healthy Eating may help prevent health problems in later life including heart disease.
- Developing good eating habits at a young age is vital as changing patterns in adulthood can be very difficult.

#### **Aims**

The aims of the policy are to:

- Promote an awareness of the importance of a balanced diet
- Positively effect healthy eating among school-age children
- Raise levels of concentration within class through the consumption of healthy food
- Support and encourage healthy eating habits in children
- Provide members of staff and parents with clear information about healthy eating
- Protect the health and safety of children with serious food allergies
- To encourage the children to be aware, alert and responsive to litter problems
- To encourage parents to have a positive involvement in their child's nutrition
- To promote personal well-being and confidence through diet, activity and dental hygiene

## Content

### 1. Healthy Lunch

Parents/guardians are encouraged to provide children with a healthy lunch, which helps to maintain their level of concentration in the classroom throughout the day. A Healthy Lunch should, if possible, include a variety of foods from the bottom four shelves of the Food Pyramid. These are:

- Bread Cereals
- Fruit and Vegetables
- Milk, Cheese and Yoghurt (re-sealable only)
- Meat, Chicken, Fish and Alternatives

A healthy lunch might be a ham, cheese or tuna sandwich, yoghurt, some fruit and a drink of water or milk preferably.

Pupils are given the opportunity to drink water at regular intervals during the day. Constant sipping of water is discouraged as it is distracting for some children and interferes with learning. Pupils may use a refillable bottle which can be taken home and refilled each day. We encourage children to use a sports-water bottle as it is environmentally friendly and user friendly.

Plain biscuits are allowed.

**The following guide is designed to help you provide quick and appetising nutritious lunches for your children:**

<b>Bread &amp; Alternatives</b>	<b>Fruit &amp; Veg</b>	<b>Savouries</b>	<b>Drinks</b>
Rolls-preferably wholemeal	Apples, Banana, Peach, Orange Segments, Mandarin, Plum	Lean Meat- Chicken, Turkey	Water
Rice-Wholegrain	Fruit Salad	Tinned fish eg tuna/sardines	Milk
Pasta-Wholegrain	Dried Fruit	Cheese	Very diluted drinks
Wrap- Wholegrain	Pineapple Cubes	Quiche	
Wholemeal Scones	Grapes	Small slice Pizza	
Crackers	Cucumber, Sweet Corn		
Pitta Bread	Tomatoes/ Coleslaw		

## **A very simple approach to healthy eating is to use the Food Pyramid**

Fats/Sugars/Sweets	Sparingly
Meat, Fish, Poultry, Peas/Beans	2 portions per day
Milk, Cheese, Yoghurt	3+ portions per day
Bread, Cereals and Potatoes	4+ Portions per day
Fruit and Veg	5+ Portions per day

## **2 Prohibited Foods (this list is not exhaustive)**

In order to encourage healthy, balanced eating habits among children in school the following foods are prohibited,

- Crisps/ Corn chips, – high fat content
- Chocolate / chocolate nut spreads – high fat and sugar (allergy related)
- Take away foods – burgers/ hot dogs/ chips/ wedges / hash browns/ fried chicken (high in fat)
- Sweets
- Fizzy Drinks – (high sugar content)
- Chewing gum
- Chocolate/cream biscuits
- Iced Buns
- Cereal bars covered in chocolate – very high in sugar can lead to hyperactivity/poor concentration
- Nuts – possible allergy
- Fruit Winders – high sugar content
- Actimels – cause spillage often not finished

Unfortunately, as there is a high risk of burns and scalds, please do not include hot drinks as part of your child's lunch.

In order to take the proactive approach to healthy lunches, teachers will from time to time, reward children who can show a piece of fruit or other healthy foods in their lunch boxes.

On a treat day parents/guardians may give treats to their own child and teachers may give treats to their own class. These are special occasions such as:

- End of term parties
- Halloween
- School trips and events
- Treats may also be used occasionally as school rewards.

It is important to remember that the guidelines about sharing in section 3 and class specific restrictions in section 4, apply on treat day.

### **3. Lunch Time Guidelines**

In order to promote the health and safety of all children in the school and prevent the spread of infection, guidelines for eating at lunch and break times are necessary. These are essential and therefore mandatory:

- Children are not to share food or drink.
- Children are not to share food utensils or drinks containers.
- Any uneaten food goes back into the child's lunch box- the parent/guardian will be aware of what their child is actually eating

### **4. Allergies**

In order to protect children who have serious food allergies, the whole school community will work together to implement age appropriate, responsible measures to minimise the risk of an allergic reaction. All children in the school will be made aware of the implications of food allergies and how they can assist in preventing allergic reactions. It may be necessary to introduce additional precautions or restrictions in classes in which some children have serious allergies.

If your child has a serious food allergy, as parents/guardians you must notify the school and provide a doctor's report stating the implications of the allergy and listing the foods to be avoided.

### **5.Children with special/specific dietary needs will be catered for.**

#### **Dental Health**

Dental health and disease prevention is important so children are encouraged to drink water, not juices or diluted fruit drinks during the school day. We acknowledge the importance of brushing twice a day and lessons will be taught in each class to encourage good dental care and hygiene awareness.

## **Physical Activity**

All children are encouraged to participate in lunch time activities in the school playground. The children will receive minimum-one hour of physical activity per week as part of the physical education curriculum. The school will provide physical and social environments that encourage and enable physical activity in a safe environment. During the school year GAA Training is provided. Other extra-curricular activities involve Tag Rugby, Gymnastics and Dance. All pupils will participate in Active Week. The school promotes participation in local competitions- eg Cumann na mBunscoil, basketball, soccer, track and field, tag rugby. The school promotes sport and physical activity- by providing information on sports clubs and physical activity opportunities within the community. Bunscoil McAuley Rice has been awarded numerous Active Flag Awards in recent years.

## **Mental Health**

The school recognises the importance of mental health and how it is an integral component of general health and wellbeing, allowing a person to fully realise his/her abilities.

The school promotes mental health education and has an Anti Bullying Policy in place.

Friendship Week takes place in Term 2, which aims to promote positive relationships.

S.P.H.E, Stay Safe and the Relationship and Sexual Education Programmes are also taught in the school.

### **To help highlight the awareness of Healthy Lifestyles the following will take place:**

- Teachers and children will discuss healthy eating and physical activity each term.
- Our Healthy School Policy will be published on our school website.
- Teachers will provide positive modelling and supportive attitudes to encourage Healthy Eating
- The school will participate in the National Active School Flag programme.
- All pupils will be encouraged to participate in plenty of physical activity with a variety of active play equipment available for use in the school.
- Staff members will be encouraged to attend in-service courses and to participate in other forms of continuous professional development appropriate to their needs.
- Active week for all will be held in the final term which will emphasise games and activities that encourage participation rather than placing an emphasis on winning.

## **Implementation**

If children bring prohibited food or drink into school they will be asked by the class teacher to bring it home, as it is not allowed. If children do not have anything else to eat, the teacher will deal with this matter at his/her discretion. If children persist in bringing unhealthy food to school the class teacher will organise a meeting with their parents/guardians to remind them of the Healthy Eating Policy.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

Parents/guardians have a responsibility to provide lunches, which do not include any of the prohibited foods and if possible include variety.

Children have a responsibility to eat their own lunch and not share or trade food, drink or treats with others.

Teachers have a responsibility to provide a good example through their own healthy eating habits. The whole school community - staff, parents/guardians and children – will work together to implement this policy.

## **Success Criteria**

We will know if the policy is effective by:

- Observing what children have for lunch and during other break times
- The feedback from parents/guardians and school staff
- The level of concentration and performance of children in the class room

**Timeframe for review:** Every 2/3 years

## **Ratification and Communication**

The BOM ratified the policy on 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2021.

The policy has been communicated to all staff and children and has been published on our school website for parents. It will be promoted in school as part of the SPHE policy and its importance will be stressed in newsletters.

**Useful Information:**

The Health Promotion Unit has a booklet called “Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Primary Schools” it is available to download from [www.healthpromotion.ie](http://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 lunch boxes. [www.indi.ie](http://www.indi.ie)

The Voluntary Health Insurance (VHI) website has a section on children returning to school, which includes advice on healthy lunches. [www.vhi.ie/hfiles/hf-011.jsp](http://www.vhi.ie/hfiles/hf-011.jsp)