



St Abbans N.S. Healthy Eating Policy

As part of the SPHE Programme at St Abbans National School we encourage the children to become more aware of the need for healthy food in their lunch boxes. In addition the Physical Education Programme supports the physical development and fitness of the children. The Science Curriculum also looks at the development of the body and deepens the children's understanding of how the body grows and develops. In addition to these programmes we have participated in Food Dudes this year where the importance of a healthy approach to eating is promoted through the tasting of certain fruit and vegetables and getting rewards.

As Americans are rather fond of saying – you are what you eat. That's especially true for youngsters. You probably have seen recent reports in the newspapers and on television where one British school decided to put the old adage into practice and see how children's diets affected their academic performance. When school officials banned fizzy drinks and crisps, they found it resulted in better behaviour and better exam results! This isn't an earth-shattering idea. It was based on similar research done by Schoenthaler in New York nearly 20 years ago! In an experiment conducted using data from more than 800 low-achieving schools, he showed that reducing sugar, fats and additives in children's meals raised the exam results of students from 11% below the national average to 5% above it! That's a 16% improvement! Children worked better in school, were more co-operative at home and slept better at night.

Healthy experts have been saying for years that foods full of refined sugar and refined flour make it harder for children to function effectively in class. Children get an immediate rush as sugar levels in their blood shoot up – and that's followed by a drop in their energy as the sugar levels begin to fall. Then their bodies start to produce adrenalin to stop their blood sugar levels falling too far, which makes them frazzled and edgy. This is going to have an impact on the children's ability to learn.

AIMS OF THE POLICY

- To promote the personal development and wellbeing of the child.
- To promote the health of the child and provide a foundation for healthy living in all of its aspects.
- To enable the child to appreciate the importance of good nutrition for growing and developing and staying healthy.
- To enable the child to accept some personal responsibility for making wise food choices and adopting a healthy balanced diet.

Lunch is an important meal for school going children. It should provide one third of their recommended daily allowance of nutrients without being high in fat, sugar or salt. It should also provide dietary fibre.

In our school the children eat twice a day after going out to play. To ensure good concentration it is important for children to drink lot of water, so please encourage your child to bring a bottle of water to school daily. This can be refilled from the school water supply if the need arises.

Growing children should get approximately one pint of milk a day. If children wish we can store their milk in our school fridge if they give it to us in the morning in a named container.

Although nuts are considered to be nutritious and healthy, children are forbidden to bring any food containing nuts or traces of nuts to school. Exposure to same will result in a severe and life threatening allergic reaction for some students.

WHAT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH ?

- It is full of goodness for example protein, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals and calcium.
- Contains food with no sugar.
- Contains no colouring or additives.
- Gives us strength and energy.
- Makes us fit and healthy.
- Helps our brain power

Some suggestions for a healthy lunch:

- Sandwiches or rolls with cheese, meat, fish or salad, cold pizza.
- Pitta bread, crackers, rice cakes (plain), wraps.
- Fruit (peeled and chopped for small children).
- Raisins.
- Vegetables (washed and chopped).
- Pasta.
- Salad.
- Sugar free yogurt.
- Cheese cubes.
- Hummus, couscous
- Sticks of raw carrot.
- Drained pineapple chunks.

What should not be in a healthy lunch?

- Crisps, salted nuts or popcorn (unless homemade and salt free)
- Chocolate, sweets, lollipops or jellies, cereal bars.
- Chewing gum.
- Cakes, biscuits, pastries or doughnuts, even homemade.
- Chocolate spread.
- Fizzy drinks including energy drinks and sugary drinks.
- All products containing any chocolate i.e. chocolate yogurt.
- Flavoured milk.

What drinks could we include in a healthy lunch?

- Water.
- Diluted sugar free juice drinks.
- Milk.
- Smoothies.

Who should make sure everyone follows the rules?

- Our parents, because they make our lunch and should set a good example. They are responsible for our health.
- Children should, because it's their health and they want to be fit and full of energy.
- Teachers, because they can see what's in the lunch boxes and know who is eating the right foods every day.

Should we make any exceptions?

- Yes, for treats after certain events, i.e. special celebrations.
- Yes for end of term parties.

Whatever people choose to eat at home is up to them, but with the co-operation of parents it is easy enough to implement a healthy eating policy in school. If this would lead to better behaviour, increased learning power and an overall improvement in health, it would be beneficial to introduce this policy into our school.

Review Procedure:

This policy will be reviewed regularly in the light of experience. It will be reviewed by the full staff and Board of Management as required. Any staff member, board member, parent, guardian or student who is unhappy with the content or the implementation of any school policy may request a review at any time and such a request will be dealt with as quickly as possible.

Ratification:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Killeen NS.

Date: September 2020

**Signed: *Mary English*
Mrs Mary English
Chairperson BOM**