



# HEALTHY EATING POLICY TOOLKIT FOR POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS





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\*Available in electronic format on [www.hse.ie/schoolswellbeing](http://www.hse.ie/schoolswellbeing)



# WHY HAVE A HEALTHY EATING POLICY?

This toolkit has been developed to guide and support schools to either develop and implement a new policy or to review and improve an existing policy.

A healthy eating policy enables schools to develop and maintain a shared philosophy on all aspects of food and drink, including:

- Developing consistent messages about healthy eating across the curriculum.
- Ensuring consistency between the messages in the curriculum and food available in the school.
- Ensuring food provision at school is in line with healthy eating guidelines e.g. breakfast club, school meals, water consumption.
- Creating a positive eating environment, both social and physical, at mealtimes.

This toolkit will help schools work on the following statements of effective practice outlined in the Department of Education Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023.

- The school environment is conducive to promoting healthy eating choices. Drinking water is freely available and rewards other than food are used to motivate children and young people.
- The wellbeing of the whole school community is central to the school's ethos/mission statement and school leaders and management actively promote wellbeing.
- Opportunities are provided for children and young people, staff and parents to have an active voice in decisions relating to school improvement.
- Teachers use opportunities to promote wellbeing across the curriculum.

# THE PROCESS

When developing or reviewing your healthy eating policy we suggest you work through the following process.

**1. GETTING STARTED**

**2. GET YOUR TEAM TOGETHER**

**3. AUDIT OF CURRENT PRACTICE**

**4. DRAFT AN INITIAL HEALTHY EATING POLICY**

**5. CONSULT THE WHOLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY ON THE DRAFT POLICY**

**6. FINALISE THE POLICY**

**7. COMMUNICATE THE POLICY**

**8. IMPLEMENT THE POLICY**

**9. EVALUATION AND REVIEW**

### **1. Getting Started**

Discuss the concept of a healthy eating policy with key stakeholders in your school e.g. Board of Management, Principal, Management Team, Staff.

### **2. Get your team together**

The team should consist of approximately six members including representation from children and young people, staff, and parents/carers. Where appropriate, food providers may be involved.

### **3. Audit of current practice**

Conduct an audit of current practice in relation to food and drink in your school, this will help you decide what needs attention, you can use the audit provided in this toolkit or create your own. Audits can provide a baseline against which progress can be monitored at a later date. In addition, if you wish children and young people and staff can complete the surveys included in this toolkit.

### **4. Draft an initial healthy eating policy**

From the audit, and surveys you will see what is working well and what requires a bit more attention. Use positive and supportive wording, aiming to create an environment conducive to promoting healthy eating choices rather than banning foods. Keep the policy realistic and achievable and decide who is responsible for implementing each aspect of the policy (see template for a healthy eating policy on pages 9-11).

### **5. Consult the whole school community on the draft policy**

The draft policy should be made available to all stakeholders; they are invited to comment and to add to the policy with all feedback being returned to a named individual by a certain date. This toolkit includes a sample letter to parents and consultation questionnaire. Also consider discussing the policy with each class, and having a comment box for children and young people and staff.

### **6. Finalise the policy**

The team should meet in order to review all the feedback and modify the policy in light of appropriate suggestions and comments made. The policy should include an acknowledgement of who was consulted during its development and the date it was finalised.

### **7. Communicate the policy**

The policy should be circulated annually to relevant groups including:

- Parents and carers, staff and children and young people.
- Food providers, including the canteen, school shop and vending machine.
- Groups that use the school including after school clubs.
- Other local schools, as families may have children attending these schools.

Consider having a champion for your policy, choose an enthusiastic member of the school community, someone who can promote and drive the policy. The school may also like to celebrate the introduction of the policy.

### **8. Implement the policy**

A written implementation plan will help ensure its success; it lets people know what is expected from them in terms of implementing the policy. Ensure that the training and resources identified in the policy are available. This toolkit includes signposts to resources that can support implementation.

### **9. Evaluation and review**

It is good practice to evaluate your policy every 2 years. This toolkit contains a Policy Review checklist you can use or you can repeat the audit and surveys from step 3. You can adapt the policy based on what worked well and what did not work well and add new ideas, don't be afraid to make changes.



# POLICY TEMPLATE

This template provides content you can consider including in your healthy eating policy. This is not a sample policy. Your school's policy should be written with the unique context of your school in mind.

## **Rationale**

- Include a brief mission statement.
- Outline how the policy was developed and who was involved.
- Refer to key documents that are relevant to the development of this policy.

## **The Team**

- List the names of the team that developed the policy.

## **Aims**

Outline what the school hopes to achieve by having a healthy eating policy, for example:

- To promote healthy eating in our school, in line with national healthy eating guidelines and school curriculum.
- To take a whole school approach to promoting healthy eating in our school including culture and environment, teaching and learning, policy and planning and relationships and partnerships.
- To ensure that food provision in school meets the needs of our students and staff.
- To make the provision and consumption of food an enjoyable and safe experience.

## **Objectives**

- Describe how you will achieve the aims outlined above.
- Consider the results of any audits or surveys conducted with parents, students and staff.

## **Culture and Environment**

Some points to consider:

- Food provision, packed lunches and availability of drinking water.
- The eating environment, for both staff and students.
- Time allowed for eating, including the ratio of eating time versus social time.
- Access to food outlets at lunchtime.
- Breakfast clubs and after school activities.
- Consistent messages in all school celebration events.
- Promotion of non-food rewards.
- Creating a culture of healthy eating, and how to achieve positive modelling by adults in school.

## **Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)**

Some prompts to consider:

- Teaching and learning about food in the curriculum, ensuring a coherent and consistent cross curricular approach e.g. Wellbeing, SPHE, Science, Home Economics, PE, and Biology etc.
- Identifying useful resources for teaching and learning.
- How external agencies will support you, in line with the guidelines in Department of Education Circular 0043/2018.

## **Policy and Planning**

Some points to consider:

- Curriculum planning to ensure a coherent and consistent approach to teaching and learning about food and health.
- Professional development of school staff.

### **Relationships and Partnerships**

Some points to consider:

- Communication with parents and staff about the new or revised healthy eating policy material.
- Links with Parents Association.
- External partners that support school curriculum e.g. sporting partners, etc.
- After school activities in schools.
- Linking with local food providers, shops, cafes etc.

### **Communication**

Some points to consider:

- Has the policy been ratified by the Board of Management?
- How and when will you communicate the policy to the whole school community?
- How will you communicate with new students and staff joining the school?
- How will you communicate with others providing food in the school? e.g. parents, food providers
- How can you make communication an on-going process.

### **Implementation**

Some points to consider:

- How will you communicate with the whole school community about the policy?
- Who is responsible for each objective in the policy?
- How will implementation be monitored and reviewed? (You can use the policy review checklist on page 23)

## AUDIT

Electronic format available online at [www.hse.ie/schoolswellbeing](http://www.hse.ie/schoolswellbeing)

Please carry out the following audit of your school's current approach to food and drinks.

This audit is a guide you can add or omit any questions to suit your school's context.

Culture and Environment	
Food available in our school.	
<b>Does your school have any of the following: Tick all that apply</b>	
Vending Machine	
School Shop	
Canteen	
Drinking water fountain	
Vending Machine.	
<b>What food and drink does the vending machine sell? Tick all that apply</b>	
Water	
100% fruit or vegetable juice	
Regular soft drinks (including sports drinks or drinks that are not 100% Juice)	
Diet soft drinks	
Milk	
Flavoured milk	
Yogurt	
Smoothies	
Confectionary; chocolate/sweets/biscuits/cake etc	
Cereal bars	
Crisps	
Popcorn	
Fruit	
Vegetables	
Salad	
Sandwiches	
Whole grain bread/rolls/wraps	
Other, please specify:	

Please comment

## School Shop

### What food and drinks does your school shop sell? Tick all that apply

Water	
100% fruit or vegetable juice	
Regular soft drinks (including sports drinks or drinks that are not 100% Juice)	
Diet soft drinks	
Milk	
Flavoured milk	
Yogurt	
Smoothies	
Confectionary; chocolate/sweets/biscuits/cake etc	
Cereal bars	
Crisps	
Popcorn	
Fruit	
Vegetables	
Salad	
Sandwiches	
Whole grain bread/rolls/wraps.	
Other please specify	

Please comment

### At what times can students access the school shop? Tick all that apply

Before school		At break times		After school	
Between classes		At lunch time			

## Canteen

### What food and drink does your canteen provide? Tick all that apply.

Water	
100% fruit or vegetable juice	
Regular soft drinks (including sports drinks or drinks that are not 100% Juice)	
Diet soft drinks	
Milk	
Flavoured milk	

## HEALTHY EATING POLICY TOOLKIT

Yogurt		
Smoothies		
Confectionary; chocolate/sweets/biscuits/cake etc		
Cereal bars		
Crisps		
Popcorn		
Fruit		
Vegetables		
Salad		
Sandwiches		
Whole grain bread/rolls/wraps.		
Chips/potato wedges		
Sausage rolls		
Sausages		
Vegetables		
Salads		
Soup		
Hot dinners		
Pizza		
Other please specify		
Are all foods and drinks available every day?	Yes	No
Are there any restrictions on the availability of some foods?	Yes	No
<b>When does your canteen serve food?</b>		
Before school starts		At break-time
At lunchtime		After school
Are students involved in the development of the canteen menu?	Yes	No
Please comment		

**Eating Environment**

**Are the eating spaces in the school?**

Clean	
Comfortable	
Welcoming/nicely decorated	
Well lit	
Adequate litter bins	
Free from odours	
Have enough seats and tables	
Have handwashing facilities nearby.	
Please comment:	

**Access to food and drinks outside the school. (Tick all that apply)**

Coffee shops	
Fast food restaurants	
Shops serving food	
Mobile food vans	
Supermarkets	

**Curriculum. Teaching and Learning.**

**Does teaching and learning about food and nutrition happen in every class year?**

Year	Yes	No	Details of where in the curriculum it is included:
1 <sup>st</sup> Year			
2 <sup>nd</sup> Year			
3 <sup>rd</sup> Year			
Transition			
4 <sup>th</sup> Year			
5 <sup>th</sup> Year			
6 <sup>th</sup> Year			

Do teachers have the opportunity to attend training on food and nutrition?	Yes	No
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Please comment

Are staff discouraged from using food as incentives for students?	Yes	No
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Please comment

## HEALTHY EATING POLICY TOOLKIT

### Policy and Planning

#### Which best describes your school's current healthy eating policy?

There is no policy.

There is an informal understanding about what food and drinks should be provided or permitted in the school but there is no written policy.

There is a written policy.

#### Which of the following are addressed in your current policy: Tick all that apply.

Promotion of consumption of healthy food and drinks during the school day.

Limiting the consumption of food high in salt, sugar and fat.

Promoting consumption of water throughout the school day.

Providing a safe and comfortable eating environment.

#### Who is responsible for implementation of your school's healthy eating policy?

#### How do you communicate with students, staff, parents and visitors to the school about your policy?

### Relationships and Partnerships

#### Does your school have any links with outside organisations in relation to promoting healthy eating?

#### How does your school link with parents to promote healthy eating?

#### How does your school link with local food businesses to promote healthy eating?

#### Is there any other information relevant to promoting healthy eating in your school?



# STUDENT SURVEY – SAMPLE

Electronic format available online at [www.hse.ie/schoolswellbeing](http://www.hse.ie/schoolswellbeing)

1. What year are you in?					
1st year		2nd year		3rd year	
4th year (Transition)		5th year		6th year	
2. Does your school have a healthy eating policy that you are aware of?					
Yes		No		Don't know	
3. If there is a policy how are you informed about it?					
4. If your school does not have a healthy eating policy would you be in favour of your school developing one?					
Yes		No			
Please give reasons for your answer:					
5. Are you allowed bring chocolate, sweets, biscuits, crisps or fizzy drinks to school?					
Yes		No			
Give details of any food or drink you are not allowed to bring.					
6. Do you usually eat before coming to school in the morning?					
Yes		No		Sometimes	
If you have answered 'No' please say why not.					
7. If you answered 'yes' or 'sometimes, what do you usually eat?					

## HEALTHY EATING POLICY TOOLKIT

### 8. Do you eat or drink at break time? If you do what would you eat or drink?

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### 9. At lunchtime do you usually? (tick the relevant box)

Bring lunch from home	<input type="checkbox"/>	Go home for lunch	<input type="checkbox"/>
Get lunch in the school canteen	<input type="checkbox"/>	Buy lunch from a shop or garage	<input type="checkbox"/>
Buy lunch from a fast food outlet	<input type="checkbox"/>	Buy food from a mobile fast food van	<input type="checkbox"/>
Buy lunch from the school vending machine	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:			

### 10. What do you usually eat and drink for lunch?

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### 11. What influences your choice of where to eat? Tick all that apply.

Value for money	<input type="checkbox"/>	Convenience	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taste	<input type="checkbox"/>	Enough seats and tables	<input type="checkbox"/>
Where my friends eat	<input type="checkbox"/>	Choice of food	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clean and comfortable environment	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Other, please comment			

### 12. Does the dining area in your school?

Feel clean and comfortable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have enough seats and tables	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Feel bright and well lit	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Feel welcoming and nicely decorated	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Have enough litter bins	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Remain free from unpleasant odours	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

### 13. What could be done to improve the dining area in your school?

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### 14. If you have a canteen are you consulted about the choice of food and drink available?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Please comment:			

**15. Are healthy food and drink options available in the canteen?**

Yes		No	
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Name some healthy options you are aware of:

**16. Are you happy with the range of healthy options available in the canteen?**

Yes		No	
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If you are not happy, what healthy options would you like to have in the canteen?

**17. Is the canteen reasonably priced compared to other local food outlets?**

Less expensive		About the same		More expensive	
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**18. Does your school have a vending machine?**

Yes		No	
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Please describe what you would normally purchase from it.

**19. Does your school have a shop?**

Yes		No	
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Please describe what you would normally purchase from it.

**20. Do you learn about healthy eating in school?**

Yes		No	
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Name the subjects that teach you about healthy eating.

**21. What in your opinion could be done to promote healthy eating in this school?**

**22. Have you noticed anything in this school that makes healthy eating difficult?**

**23. Any other comments?**

# PARENTS LETTER – SAMPLE

Electronic format available online at [www.hse.ie/schoolswellbeing](http://www.hse.ie/schoolswellbeing)

Dear Parents/Carer,

We are currently developing/reviewing our healthy eating policy. The aim of the policy is to help us develop an environment that is conducive to promoting healthy eating choices in our school, this forms part of our Wellbeing Promotion Process. Please find enclosed our draft policy, which was put together by a team of school staff, students and parents, we would like parents and carers feedback on this. We invite you to fill in the enclosed questionnaire.

You can find information on current healthy eating guidelines on <http://www.healthyireland.ie/health-initiatives/heg/>. For information on healthy eating and active living for families you can visit [www.makeastart.ie](http://www.makeastart.ie)

You can post your responses directly to the school or you can give it to your child to bring to school by DATE HERE.

When we have finalised our healthy eating policy we will be in touch with you again to update you.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Yours sincerely

  

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# PARENTS SURVEY – SAMPLE

We don't want our policy to be a list of 'Do's' and 'Don'ts' about food. The following are some of things that have been considered in the policy

- What learning takes place about healthy eating in class.
- Having a suitable environment to eat at school.
- Providing healthy lunches and snacks, Students are encouraged to have a healthy breakfast.
- Using non-food treats as rewards in class and school.
- Food provision in the school, in the canteen, vending machine and school shop.
- Food provided at school and catering for celebrations, sports days, parent's association meetings.

**1. Do you support the development and implementation of the enclosed draft healthy eating policy?**

Yes	No
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If no please comment:

If yes, please comment:

**2. What eating habits and school practices around food do you think should be promoted in our policy?**

**3. Any other comments?**

**Thank you for filling out this questionnaire.**

Please return it to the school by XXXXXXX

# STAFF SURVEY – SAMPLE

Electronic format available online at [www.hse.ie/schoolswellbeing](http://www.hse.ie/schoolswellbeing)

<b>1. As far as you are aware, does the school have a healthy eating policy?</b>			
Yes		No	Don't know
<b>2. If your school does not have a healthy eating policy are you in favour of one being developed?</b>			
Yes		No	
Comments:			
<b>3. If the school has a healthy eating policy were you consulted when the policy was being developed?</b>			
Yes		No	
<b>4. Are you aware of any foods or drinks that are prohibited in your school?</b>			
Yes		No	
<b>5. For lunch do you usually</b>			
Bring lunch from home		Go home for lunch	
Buy lunch from a local shop or garage		Buy food from a fast food outlet	
Other, please comment.			
<b>6. Where do you eat lunch during the school day?</b>			
E.g. staffroom, classroom?			
<b>7. In your opinion what could the school do to support students to eat healthily?</b>			
<b>8. In your opinion what could the school do to support staff to eat healthily?</b>			
<b>10. Is there anything in the school environment that could undermine healthy eating for students and staff?</b>			
Any other comments			

# POLICY REVIEW CHECKLIST

As you review your healthy eating policy, consider the following:

## **Is our policy working?**

- Have there been positive changes in eating habits and attitudes to food since we last reviewed our healthy eating policy?
- Have any aspects of the policy caused difficulties for students, staff or parents?

## **How do we communicate our policy?**

- Is our policy clearly displayed in the school and are parents, staff, students made aware of it regularly?
- Have we consulted with students, parents and staff during this review of this policy?
- What are the methods used to consult with school community?
- Do we discuss our policy with those providing food in the school? e.g. canteen, school shop, vending machine and those organising school celebrations/parents association meetings/fundraisers/sports days, etc.
- Are there any ways in which our school could link more with parents and the local community to encourage healthy eating?

## **What we eat at school?**

- Do we encourage healthy options in line with the food pyramid for all food eaten at school? e.g. canteen, school shop, vending machine, lunches brought from home, breakfast clubs, afterschool clubs etc?

## **How we use food at school?**

- Does our policy cover the use of food for classroom rewards, school celebrations, school sponsorship, community events, sports days, etc?
- Do we encourage learning and discussion around food and nutrition in the classroom?

## **How healthy is our school environment?**

- Do students use/watch screens whilst eating lunch if it's raining? If yes, what could be an alternative?
- Do students and staff eat their lunch in a clean and comfortable place and do they have sufficient time?
- Does the whole school environment support healthy eating for all? (e.g. eating areas for lunch, school shop, garden, waste disposal, nearby food outlets, etc.)
- What, if anything, does not support healthy eating in and around the school environment? (consider above points).

## **So what needs to change?**

Let's think about our answers so far - what changes would we now like to make in our policy for the future?

# SCHOOL SHOPS

Food and drinks sold in the school shops should be addressed in the healthy eating policy.

The Department of Education gives guidance on this in their 'Healthy Lifestyles' Circular 0051/2015 "The Department of Education and Skills acknowledges that the sale of food and beverage products often represents a revenue stream for schools and it is not the intention to end this practice. Rather the intention is to ensure that there is a greater proportion of healthier alternatives to some of the less healthy products that are currently on offer for sale in schools.

Such healthier alternatives include:

- Fruit juice or smoothie (no added sugar)
- Fresh fruit or portions of fresh fruit salad in take-away containers
- Yogurts
- Popcorn
- Fruit or wholemeal scones/portions of wholemeal or wholegrain bread, with low-fat spread
- Grain cracker and cheese portion (preferably low-fat)
- Sandwich selection to include wholemeal/wholegrain bread or wraps with low-fat dressings
- Wholegrain or bran-type cereal mini-pack and milk (preferably low-fat)
- Cartons of low-fat milk
- Dry roasted nuts (unsalted)"

The HSE position is that vending machines are not recommended in schools.



# SCHOOL CANTEENS

The food provided in the school canteen should be addressed in the school's healthy eating policy.

The 2017 Nutritional Standards for School Meals outline healthy and balanced choices for food provided under the School Meals (Local Projects) Scheme and they align with the revised food pyramid and guidelines.

Even if your school is not part of this scheme these standards can guide your school in making healthier options available in your school canteen.

They outline a nutritional standard for:

- Breakfast
- Snack
- Lunch
- Dinner

They state that certain foods and drinks high in fat, salt and sugar should not be offered to children and young people and will not be funded under the School Meals (Local Projects) Scheme. The Standards also emphasise that milk and water are the best drinks to serve children.



Key documents to support healthier choice options in school

canteens are outlined in these documents:

1. Healthy Food for Life  
[www.healthyireland.ie/health-initiatives/heg](http://www.healthyireland.ie/health-initiatives/heg)
2. Nutritional Standards for school meals  
[www.gov.ie/en/publication/484f17-nutrition-standards-for-school-meals/](http://www.gov.ie/en/publication/484f17-nutrition-standards-for-school-meals/)
3. School lunchbox leaflet  
<http://safefood.eu/Publications/Consumer-info/Healthy-lunchboxes.aspx>
4. Irish Heart also has a healthy school canteen award which schools may like to explore  
<https://irishheart.ie/schools/>

# HEALTHY EATING RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS

This section signposts schools to information produced by reputable Irish agencies on a range of topics that are relevant to your Healthy Eating Policy and which can support schools in the implementation of their policy. However, please note that it is the responsibility of the school to check before use that all information provided is in line with school ethos and policy.

## HSE Junior SPHE Units of Learning

The units of learning below have been developed to support the new SPHE Short Course for Junior Cycle. Units of Learning linked to healthy eating are in the 'Being Healthy' module.

**All units of learning, and associated resources can be downloaded here:**

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/hse-education-programme/junior-cycle-sphe-training-resources/>

## Health Promotion

[www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie)

1. 'Your Guide to Healthy Eating Using the Food Pyramid'. The food pyramid for children aged 5 years up and adults is explained in this leaflet.
2. Adults and Children's Food Pyramid posters and stickers (Irish language version available)
3. START your child on a healthy lifestyle booklet.  
Booklet for parents/guardians with tips and advice on how to create a healthy lifestyle for your children



## Healthy Ireland

[www.healthyireland.ie/health-initiatives/heg/](http://www.healthyireland.ie/health-initiatives/heg/)

Healthy Food for Life is a toolkit which includes a new Food Pyramid and guidance materials to help people make choices to maintain a healthy, balanced diet. The resources reflect best national and international evidence and advice. The guidance applies for everyone from 5 years of age upwards.

**The three key messages are:**

- Limit high fat, sugar and salt foods from the top shelf of the Pyramid to no more than once or twice a week
- Eat more fruit and vegetables, at least 5 to 7 servings a day
- Use the Pyramid as a guide for serving sizes and remember that portion size matters.

## Support to Schools in 'Managing Chronic Health Conditions at School'

This resource is aimed at helping teachers and parents manage students with chronic health conditions such as Diabetes, epilepsy, asthma and anaphylaxis. It gives guidance on how to provide a safe environment for these students by the development of school guidelines, providing sample forms and letters as well as practical emergency plans for the classroom.

A copy can be downloaded at: <https://www.into.ie/ROI/ManagingChronicHealthConditionsatSchool/ManagingChronicHealthConditionsatSchoolResourcePack.pdf>

### Safefood



**safefood** Helpline: 0818404567

Email: [info@safefood.net](mailto:info@safefood.net)

**safefood** has a focus on schools' education around food safety/ hygiene and promotion of healthy eating. **safefood** provides teacher-led curriculum based educational resources for children and young people on healthy eating and food safety.

**safefood** has several resources including:

- Food labelling “What’s on a label” How to read food labels | <https://www.safefood.net/education/labels>
- Food safety e-learning “**safefood** for life” [www.safefood.net/safefoodforlife](http://www.safefood.net/safefoodforlife)
- Healthy eating, physical activity, and food safety resource for early school leavers “Eatright” <https://www.safefood.net/professional/nutrition/nutrition-resources/eatright>
- Teenage sports nutrition information Fuel your body | <https://www.safefood.net/education/fuel-your-body>
- Healthy eating tips for teens Healthy eating tips for teens | <https://www.safefood.net/family-health/teens>
- Vegetarian Diet How to eat a balanced vegetarian diet | <https://www.safefood.net/how-to/vegetarian-diet>
  
- To help people make healthier food choices, **safefood** has created comparison tools showing the amount of sugar contained in popular breakfast cereals and drinks.
  - What’s in your cereal? Compare popular brands for sugar content: <https://www.safefood.net/compare-cereals>
  - The facts about sugar in drinks. Find out how much sugar is in your favourite drink: <https://www.safefood.net/compare-drinks>
  - Children and teenagers are not advised to have energy drinks as they are high in caffeine and sugar. **safefood’s** energy drink comparer shows that there’s up to 17 teaspoons of sugar and 2 espresso cups worth of caffeine in some brands: <https://www.safefood.net/compare-energy-drinks>
  
- START Campaign - Start your kids on their way to a healthier life [www.safefood.net/start](http://www.safefood.net/start)
- ‘Good Practice Guide for Breakfast Clubs’ is a resource with ideas on setting up/running/funding your own school breakfast club. Download online: <https://www.safefood.net/getattachment/8cf4f-cd9-bcd5-41fb-9df0-40d93803f168/Good-practice-guide-for-breakfast-clubs.pdf?lang=en-IE>
- ‘Good Practice Guide for School Food Initiatives’. Download the guide online: [https://www.safefood.net/getattachment/b557a7a3-1800-4c1c-a294-d3ef15a34a46/2009\\_AGoodPracticeGuideForSchoolFoodInitiatives1\\_1.pdf?lang=en-IE](https://www.safefood.net/getattachment/b557a7a3-1800-4c1c-a294-d3ef15a34a46/2009_AGoodPracticeGuideForSchoolFoodInitiatives1_1.pdf?lang=en-IE)

### National Dairy Council

**Tel: 01 5224844**

**[www.ndc.ie](http://www.ndc.ie)**

National Dairy Council provides information on healthy eating, as well as sports nutrition. They have a downloadable booklet aimed specifically at teenagers. <https://f6j5r9q7.rocketcdn.me/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/209074-NDC-Teenager-16pp-A5-Booklet.pdf>

### The Dental Health Foundation

**Tel: 01 6728870**

**[www.dentalhealth.ie](http://www.dentalhealth.ie)**

The website has a section for Post Primary Schools with specific resources looking at sugar content of sports drinks, the importance of wearing a mouth guard when playing sport, diabetes and oral health, how taking care of your oral health can support feelings of wellbeing and also general information on dental health and healthy eating. Resources and Posters are available here [www.dentalhealth.ie/resources/oral-health-promotion/](http://www.dentalhealth.ie/resources/oral-health-promotion/)

### The Irish Heart Foundation

**Tel: 01 6685001**

**[www.irishheart.ie](http://www.irishheart.ie)**

The Irish Heart Foundation support schools to become more active and to eat healthily through their programmes.

- The Happy Heart @ School Catering Award recognises and rewards post-primary schools and caterers that promote and offer a healthy food environment. The programme offers support to achieve a national school catering standard. Request an application form by emailing [schools@irishheart.ie](mailto:schools@irishheart.ie).
- YPATH 'PE 4 ME' is a junior cycle post-primary programme which aims to improve physical activity among young people through the physical education (PE) and includes healthy eating which links to the SPHE school curriculum. The Irish Heart Foundation provide free CPD training in education centres nationwide.
- The Irish Heart Foundation provide a free food shopping card which can help to check the products you buy regularly, compare them with others and perhaps swap to healthier alternatives.

For more information please contact [schools@irishheart.ie](mailto:schools@irishheart.ie)

### Visitors to the School

National and international research has consistently shown that the classroom teacher is the best placed professional to work sensitively and consistently with pupils and that s/he can have a powerful impact on influencing pupils' attitudes, values and behaviour in all aspects of health education in the school setting. If schools decide to enhance or supplement the SPHE curriculum by inviting visitors to the classroom, we would advise revisiting the Department of Education and Skills Circular 0043/2018 – 'Best practice guidance for post primary schools in the use of programmes and/or external facilitators in promoting wellbeing consistent with the Department of Education and Skills' Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice'. This circular sets out very clear and comprehensive guidelines bringing visitors in to the school in relation to SPHE to ensure good practice and use of consistent up to date Irish healthy eating messages.

Please note that Health Promotion and Improvement, Health and Wellbeing Division, HSE is not in a position to resource individual "talks on healthy eating in schools". Schools can avail of training that is provided by Health Promotion and Improvement teams locally, more details on [www.hse.ie/schoolswellbeing](http://www.hse.ie/schoolswellbeing).

### School Meals Local Projects Scheme

The School Meals Local Projects Scheme operated by the Department of Social Protection provides funding directly to primary schools, secondary schools, local groups and voluntary organisations which operate their own school meals projects. Urban and rural schools and community based preschools can also apply.

The School Meals initiative is an important component of policies which aim to provide regular nutritious food to children to help improve their daily diet, to encourage school attendance and extra educational achievement by the children, particularly those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds.

Application forms for this scheme maybe downloaded at <https://www.gov.ie/en/form/9de84-school-meals-local-projects-scheme-application-form-smlps1/> or obtained from the Local Department of Social Protection.

Nutrition standards for the school meals local projects scheme are available to download at <https://assets.gov.ie/15978/6ade4b9f4810445e8c6516b3a33d330b.pdf>

### School Milk Scheme

The School Milk Scheme is EU-subsidised and provides a carton of milk at a very low price to every child registered in participating schools - Montessori, National and Secondary schools alike. The programme is valuable for Irish children, helping to count towards one of their recommended servings from the 'milk, yoghurt and cheese' food group and, as the milk is delivered by local dairies, participation also supports local jobs.

Only pupils at participating schools can receive School Milk, so we would encourage your school to register so that your pupils can benefit. In association with your local dairy, schools that require refrigeration to facilitate participation will be supplied with a free fridge upon registration.

To register your school for the School Milk Scheme or for further information, contact the National Dairy Council on 01-290 2451 or email [info@ndc.ie](mailto:info@ndc.ie).

### Breakfast Clubs - Good Practice Guide for Breakfast Clubs

Breakfast has long been considered the ‘most important meal of the day’. Research has shown that eating a nutritious breakfast has a positive impact on the nutritional intake of children and mediates against obesity. Healthy Food for All was a cross border Irish Organisation which developed a resource ‘Good Practice Guide for Breakfast Clubs’ on all aspects of breakfast clubs. The resource is available to download at <https://www.safefood.net/getattachment/31ff0eac-0222-4a1e-91a5-b702c06e3b8a/Good-practice-guide-for-breakfast-clubs.pdf?lang=en-IE#:~:text=A%20Good%20Practice%20Guide%20for%20Breakfast%20Clubs%20is%20an%20acknowledgement,develop%20more%20such%20breakfast%20clubs>.

### Healthy Lunches

Good food habits set early in childhood can last a lifetime. Lunches provide around one third of our daily nutritional needs, so it’s important to put some thought and planning into them.

Safefood has a number of excellent resources on healthy lunches. The ‘Healthy Lunchbox’ leaflet provides practical tips on how to prepare a healthy lunch box which will support the healthy eating policy. It is available to download at: <http://www.safefood.eu/Publications/Consumer-info/Healthy-lunchboxes.aspx>

### Food Allergy

Food Allergy is increasingly becoming a fact of life in schools and can affect your Healthy Eating Policy in terms of food choice. It is important that a care plan is agreed with school, the family of the child/staff member affected and medical profession. It is also important to consider if a whole school ban on the named food allergen is required or if a classroom/staffroom ban is sufficient. This aspect of food policy should also be linked to the school’s health and safety policy.

‘Managing Chronic Health Conditions in Schools’ is a resource aimed at helping teachers and parents manage students with chronic health conditions, such as diabetes, epilepsy, asthma and anaphylaxis. It gives guidance on how to provide a safe environment for these students by the development of school guidelines, providing sample forms and letters, as well as practical emergency plans for the classroom. A copy was sent to each school in 2011 and can be downloaded at <http://www.anaphylaxisireland.ie/downloads/ManagingChronicHealthConditonsatSchool.pdf>.

The Irish Food Allergy Network has a useful document for schools and food allergy available at <https://www.ifan.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Schools-2017.pdf> In addition, Safefood also has some useful information on food allergy <http://www.safefood.eu/Allergens/Home.aspx> .

### Food Labelling

Understanding food labelling is essential when making food choices. This aspect of the curriculum should be covered as set out by the SPHE guidelines. There are some excellent resources to support classroom/staff/parent learning in relation to food labelling available on the Safefood website. ‘How they measure up – a simple guide to food labelling’ is available at: [www.safefood.net/education/labels](http://www.safefood.net/education/labels)

This information used in conjunction with the Healthy Lunchboxes information supports the school community to make an informed choice about food choice.

### External Speakers

National and international research has consistently shown that the classroom teacher is the best placed professional to work sensitively and consistently with pupils and that s/he can have a powerful impact on influencing pupils’ attitudes, values and behaviour in all aspects of health education in the school setting. If your school chooses to bring in a visitor in relation to SPHE and the healthy eating policy it is important that they use information that is in line with your policy and the national healthy eating guidelines. We would advise revisiting the new Department of Education and Science Circular, “Best practice guidance for post primary schools in the use of programmes and/or external facilitators in promoting wellbeing consistent with the Department of Education and Skills’ Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice” [https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0043\\_2018.pdf](https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0043_2018.pdf): This circular sets out very clear and comprehensive guidelines for bringing visitors into school in relation to wellbeing. Please note that Health Promotion and Improvement, Health and Wellbeing Division, HSE is not in a position to resource individual “talks on healthy eating in schools”. Schools can avail of training that is provided by Health Promotion and Improvement teams locally, more details on [www.hse.ie/schoolswellbeing](http://www.hse.ie/schoolswellbeing)

### Additional websites to support nutrition education

<a href="http://www.healthyireland.ie/health-initiatives/heg/">www.healthyireland.ie/health-initiatives/heg/</a>	<a href="http://www.hse.ie/healthyeating">www.hse.ie/healthyeating</a>
<a href="http://www.indi.ie">www.indi.ie</a>	<i>The Irish Nutrition and Dietetics Institute</i>
<a href="http://www.irishheart.ie">www.irishheart.ie</a>	<i>The Irish Heart Foundation</i>
<a href="http://www.coeliac.ie">www.coeliac.ie</a>	<i>The Coeliac Society of Ireland</i>
<a href="http://www.irishosteoporosis.ie">www.irishosteoporosis.ie</a>	<i>The Irish Osteoporosis Society</i>
<a href="http://www.irishanaphylaxis.org/">www.irishanaphylaxis.org/</a>	<i>Provides support to those with allergies</i>
<a href="http://www.bodywhys.ie">www.bodywhys.ie</a>	<i>National charity for people affected by eating disorders</i>

### Key Documents

Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023. Department of Education and Skills.

Nutrition Standards for School Meals Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and Department of Education and Skills.

Department of Education Circular 051/2015 Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles in Post Primary Schools.

Department of Education Circular 043/2018 Best practice guidance for post primary schools in the use of programmes and/or external facilitators in promoting wellbeing consistent with the Department of Education and Skills' Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice.











This resource was developed by the HSE Health Promotion & Improvement Schools and Dietetic Team and reviewed by a national working group.

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“Establishing a whole school food policy”  
<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/Establishinga%20a%20whole%20school%20food%20policy.pdf>