**Tobar an Léinn “Tús Maith”**

# Whole School Healthy Eating Policy

## Rationale

As part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Programme, we at Tobar an Léinn encourage our school community to become more aware of the need for healthy food in their diet.

What people eat is known to be a key factor influencing health. Research indicates a strong link between diet and performance. For example, a low intake of refined sugars promotes concentration, lessens hyperactivity and protects teeth. A low salt intake reduces the risk of heart disease in later life.

We believe that adults (staff, parents and carers) should be good role models and should support the children in understanding how balanced nutrition contributes to a person’s health, happiness and general well-being.

It was decided to update our Healthy Eating Policy as we are aiming to become a Health Promoting School in conjunction with the HSE. We completed an audit of our Whole School Approach to Healthy Eating and a survey of school lunches. The survey revealed that the majority of pupils had a breakfast before coming school, brought water as their drink and had fruit for the lunch. It also revealed however that only 10% had vegetables and that a high number of pupils had treats in their lunch boxes with biscuits being the most popular.

While developing this policy we were guided by the Irish Healthy Eating Guidelines, Irish Food Pyramid and Healthy Lifestyles Circular 0013/20163.

## The Team

The review and update of this policy was carried out by our School Health Promoting Team. Consultation was carried out with all stakeholders (pupils, parents, staff, B.OM.) during the process.

## Aims

The main aims of the policy are:

* To promote the health and well-being of the child through a whole school approach to food and fluids in school in relation to: the environment (social and physical); curriculum and learning; policy and planning; and partnership.
* To promote healthy eating across school life, consistent with national healthy eating guidelines and school curriculum to provide a foundation for healthy living.
* To make the provision and consumption of food and fluids an enjoyable and safe experience.

These aims will be addressed through the following objectives in the following key areas of the HPS:

**Objectives**

* To enable each child to appreciate the importance of good nutrition for growing and developing and staying healthy.
* To enable each child to accept some personal responsibility for making wise food choices and adopting a healthy, balanced diet.

1. **Environment**

Lunch is an important meal for school-going children. It should be nutritious and **not** high in fat, sugar or salt. We encourage children to bring in a **water bottle** (that can be reused or recycled) so that they can have access to water throughout the day. Hydration is important for concentration. All classes get 10 minutes at small break and 10 minutes at lunch to eat their lunches in their classrooms before going out to the yard.

Pupils should be encouraged to have a role in preparing their own lunches and meals in order to promote responsibility for their own health and nutrition.

The following guide is designed to help you provide quick, appetising, and nutritious lunches for your children. Children are encouraged **not to share** lunches in school due to allergies and special dietary requirements. **Tobar an Léinn is strictly a “Nut Free Zone”** due to allergies in the school.

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| **Bread & Alternatives** | **Savouries** |
| Bread or rolls (preferably whole-meal, whole-grain or whole-wheat varieties)  Wraps  Pitta bread  Bread sticks  Rice or pasta (wholegrain)  Potato salad  Scones (wholemeal)  Crackers | Lean meats (e.g. chicken, turkey, beef)  Eggs  Tinned fish (e.g. tuna, sardines, salmon  Hummus  Beans |
| **Fruit & Vegetables** | **Dairy** |
| Apples, bananas, peach, mandarins, plums, oranges, pineapple cubes, kiwis, etc.  Fruit salad  Dried fruits  Carrot batons, pepper slices, tomatoes, cucumber etc. | Natural yoghurt  Cheese  Milk |
| **Drinks** | |
| Water or milk are the ideal choice.  Pure fruit juice contains natural sugar and should be diluted with water. | |

In keeping with our Green Schools Status lunches should be packed in reusable/recyclable boxes avoiding the use of tin foil, cling film and plastic bags. All litter and uneaten food is to be taken home. Peelings and core from fruits/vegetables are put in our ‘skin bins’ for composting.

It is also important to stress the importance of the children getting a good breakfast each morning before they come to school.

As a Health Promoting School Teachers will **not** offer food rewards as prizes within their classes. However treats may be given on Special Days and Celebrations such as, Flag Raising Days, End of Term Parties, Food Demonstrations etc. Staff will remind children that this is an occasional treat and not every day food. A culture of healthy eating will be encouraged and praised by staff.

Pupils are encouraged and reminded to wash their hands throughout the day. Hand washing procedures are on display in all bathrooms within the school.

**2. Curriculum and Learning**

There are many opportunities in the primary school curriculum for learning about the importance of living a healthy life. The importance of balanced nutrition and healthy food choices is explicitly taught through the SPHE curriculum. Food and Nutrition is an important part of the strand unit: Taking Care of My Body at each class level and is taught each year. These themes are also dealt with in other subjects e.g. Science. A copy of the healthy food pyramid is on display in every classroom. A Healthy Eating/Food Tasting week will be held annually. Students develop the life skills to make informed decisions about healthy lifestyles throughout their time in primary school.

Staff members will be made aware of and encourage to attend continuous professional development within areas of Health Promotion. Our school will use healthy eating resources from reputable agencies for students, staff and parents and ensure any external agencies, that the school may choose to compliment the SPHE curriculum, follow the guidelines in Circular 0042/20186.

**3. Policy & Planning**

* All classes will focus on Food and Nutrition in their SPHE lessons during November as outlined in our SPHE Policy.
* Integration with other curricular areas, e.g. PE, Science, Geography, should be considered by teachers in their planning.

**4. Partnerships**

Any partners with whom the school works with should be made aware of our Whole School Healthy Eating Policy. Such partnerships may include

* Parents Association
* External partners that support school curriculum – sporting partners, visiting teachers/guests etc.

**Key Measures**

Tobar an Léinn as a Health Promoting School encourages a balanced and nutritious diet. We also promote the importance of physical, mental and emotional fitness as part of a healthy lifestyle.

* Healthy Eating is covered as outlined in the SPHE curriculum outcomes annually.
* Encouragement and praise given for healthy lunches.
* Consumption of water to remain hydrated is promoted.
* Non-food rewards given as class prizes.
* Sweet foods may be offered, along with other foods, on occasion at school events and on special occasions.

**Communication**

Once ratified by the Board of Management the Policy will be published on our School Website.

New infants will be made aware of our Whole School Healthy Eating Policy at the New Infants Information Day in June annually. Any new pupils who join during the school year will also be made aware of the policy.

Reminders and tips for healthy lunches will be included in newsletters throughout the academic year.

**Implementation**

Role of Children:

* To eat their lunch in a timely manner.
* To bring home any uneaten lunch.
* To help make their lunches and remind parents/guardians of the Healthy Eating Policy.

Role of Parents:

* Provide a healthy well-balanced lunch for children.
* Encourage and praise healthy eating.
* **N.B. to inform school of any child’s special dietary needs** **and/or allergies**.
* To implement the whole school healthy eating policy by only allowing their children to bring nutritious and wholesome foods to school as suggested above.

The school will be open to negotiating the food and fluid needs of a particular child with special dietary or educational needs.

Role of Staff:

* To promote and encourage healthy eating, as appropriate.
* To educate children on healthy foods and fluids by teaching them the appropriate content from the curriculum.
* To encourage and praise a culture of Healthy Eating as best practice.
* May give reminders to parents of the Healthy Eating Policy is deemed necessary.

Responsibility for review:

A policy review will take place in autumn 2020 co-ordinated by Marie Moore, Health Promoting Schools Team co-ordinator.

Ratification:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

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

Chairperson