



Dunderrow National School

Healthy Eating Policy



Introductory Statement

Dunderrow National School is a Health Promoting School since 2006. Its first Health Promoting Status (HSE) Flag was awarded in 2010 and Health Promoting Status has been maintained every year since, hence a second flag was awarded to Dunderrow NS in June 2015.

Completed surveys, discussion with parents, children, staff, Parents' Association and Board of Management and HSE Guidelines resulted in a Healthy Eating Policy being put in place for Dunderrow National School in 2007. In 2024 Dunderrow NS tendered for the Hot School Meals initiative, the first school in our area to embrace this concept of prepared hot meals being delivered for all children every day. This began in Feb 2025 and prompted a review of our Healthy Eating Policy. The Hot School Meal catering company was awarded to O' Cruaiaoi.

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

Dunderrow National School is committed to promoting the holistic well-being of all of the pupils in its care, developing the spiritual, emotional and physical potential of each individual. The school strives towards developing the full potential of every pupil in communication, literacy, numeracy and relevant life skills. It is acknowledged by all parties that there is an important connection between a healthy diet and a pupil's ability to learn effectively which results in improvements in concentration and behaviour. This in turn assists pupils in achieving their full potential.

Rationale

The purpose of this healthy eating policy is:

- To follow the food and nutrition guidelines issued by the Department of Health and Children - Eat Smart and Move More (published in 2013), DES Guidelines Circular 0013/2016
- As part of the Health Promoting School Initiative the school will make available H.S.E. information with regards to Healthy School Lunches explaining the food pyramid and the benefits of eating a healthy diet. The food pyramid outlines an excellent common sense approach to healthy and balanced eating. (See Food Pyramid, HSE Guidelines in Appendix 1).
- Safefood HSE Healthy Lunches is attached to this policy with practical tips for you and your child on what to include in a healthy lunchbox
- To ensure pupils and parent(s) / guardian(s) become aware of the importance of food for growth and development as part of the S.P.H.E. curriculum through the medium of
 - ❖ Strand Unit: Taking Care of My Body: Food and Nutrition (Curriculum Junior Infants – 6th Class)
 - ❖ Making choices (See Teacher Curriculum Guidelines p 11-13)
 - ❖ Inviting parents and outside agencies to assist in the promotion of healthy living through cookery, nutritional workshops and using HSE initiatives such as Food Dudes Programme which was rolled out during the 2014-2015 and 2019/20 school year.

Aims

The aim of this healthy eating policy is to ensure that all aspects of food and nutrition in Dunderrow National School promote the health and well-being of pupils, staff and visitors to the school.

Our school also acknowledges that it can play a role in the wider community to promote family health.

Through the promotion of healthy eating our school aims to:

- ❖ Improve the health of pupils, staff and their families by helping to influence their eating habits through increasing their knowledge and awareness of food issues.
- ❖ Present **consistent informed messages** about healthy eating within school and encourage pupils and parents to make wise choices about food and nutrition.
- ❖ To raise levels of pupils' concentration within class due to consumption of healthy food.
- ❖ To encourage pupils to eat a healthy lunch.
- ❖ To encourage parents to ensure that children are given a healthy breakfast before school.
- ❖ To encourage pupils to be aware, alert and responsive to litter problems caused by junk food, pre-prepared food, juice cartons etc. and to recycle all food and drinks products, where applicable.

Dunderrow National School will work toward these aims with the parent(s) / guardian(s), teachers and health professionals.

A Healthy Lunch

- 1) Provided by Parent / Guardian
- 2) Supplied by Catering Company under the 'Hot Meals Scheme'. (It is not prepared on site)
- 1) At present we encourage all members of the school community to bring a healthy lunch daily. A healthy lunch is defined as something taken from each of the bottom four shelves of the food pyramid, which is in line with the Dept. of Health directive on Healthy Eating.

Lunches should be composed of a variety of foods and include at least one item from the different food groups.

There should be something in the lunch box from:-

1. Fruit and vegetable group – Some typical choices are a whole fruit, a fruit juice drink, vegetable soup, salad or cooked/raw vegetables.
2. Cereal group – Foods such as bread, rice, pasta, potatoes or pitta bread.
3. Dairy group – Milk, cheese or yoghurt
4. Protein-rich food – Meat, chicken, fish, egg, beans, peas, lentils or cheese.

The following foods outlined below in Category 1 are examples of what is suitable for lunches:

Category 1

Whole fresh fruit	Fruit juice	Vegetable soup	Batons of raw vegetables (not veggie straws/crisps)
Salad vegetables in sandwiches	Wraps and rolls	Crackers	Sandwiches
Fruit chunks in ready to peel packs	Rice cakes (not chocolate coated)	Bread sticks	Pasta salad
Homemade fruit salad	Potato salad	Rice salad	Bean salad
Cheese triangles	Pasta salad	Yoghurt drinks	Smoothies
Tinned fish in brine	Fromage frais	Yogurt pots	Cheese
Chicken	Turkey	Ham	Hummus/tapenade
Egg	Dried Fruits	Scones	Milk/water/non Fizzy drinks

Treats and Celebrations

- Food from the top shelf of the food pyramid - “a treat” (treat size being recommended), will be allowed on Friday or at the end of term as a well done reward. End of Term will be celebrated with a class activity and one treat.
- Food choices for school special occasions and celebrations will be directed towards more healthy options as agreed by all parties (e.g an ice-cream at the final practice for Communion/Confirmation)

One of the following foods in Category 2 is allowed only as a Friday treat/special occasions:

Category 2

Chocolate bars-treat size	Popcorn - treat size	Fruit Winders	Biscuits-all types
Sweets and jellies – treat size	Doughnuts/ Danish pastries	Small piece of cake – including homemade	Nutella sandwich
Croissants	Cereal Bars, e.g. Nature Valley	Flapjacks/oat bars	Muffins/Buns/Fudge

2) Supplied by Catering Company under the ‘Hot Meals Scheme’.

Dundurrow National School is guided by the ‘Nutrition Standards for Hot School Meals’, developed under the Healthy Ireland framework to promote children's health and well-being. These standards, published by the Department of Social Protection in collaboration with the Department of Health, safefood, and the Health Service Executive, aim to ensure that hot meals provided to students are nutritious, balanced, and age-appropriate.

The catering company must offer a varied menu for parents / guardians to choose from on the ‘online catering ordering app’. The menu must be varied and allow for dietary choices i.e. vegetarian, halal and allergen requirements i.e. nuts, gluten etc.

Hot School Meals should include:

a. Meal Composition

Hot School Meals should include a source of;

- Protein to include meat, poultry, fish, eggs, pulses or cheese.
- Wholemeal cereals and breads, potatoes, pasta, or rice.
- Vegetables, salad, or fruit.
- 1 serving of protein: Options include meat (50–75g), poultry (50–75g), fish (100g), eggs (2), beans/peas/lentils (120g), or cheese (25g for vegetarian options).
- 1 serving of wholemeal cereals and breads, potatoes, pasta, or rice: Approximately 100–120g of potatoes or 90g of cooked pasta/rice.
- 2 servings of vegetables, salad, or fruit: For example, 80g of cooked vegetables and 80g of fruit (e.g., apple, pear, orange, or banana).

b. Portion Sizes:

Portion sizes should be age-appropriate, with younger children receiving approximately half an adult portion, gradually increasing to a full adult portion by sixth class.

c. Nutritional Quality:

Meals should be low in saturated fat, added sugars, and salt. Processed meats and fried foods should be limited to no more than once a week. Fish should be offered as an option at least once a week.

d. Food Pyramid Guidance:

The meals should align with the Healthy Food for Life guidelines, emphasizing:

- A variety of foods from all food groups.
- Adequate servings of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains.
- Limited intake of foods high in fats, sugars, and salt.

Health & Safety

- ❖ On the grounds of health & safety chewing gum is not allowed in school at any time
- ❖ Due to different types of food allergies across the school any baking should be an informed decision by the class teacher, having read all files. Cooking lessons are preferred to baking lessons in accordance with our Health Promoting School status.

The following foods are **not** allowed at any time:

Crisps and similar bagged corn/potato products e.g Snax, Hula Hoops, Pringles etc. Nachos/Doritos	Fizzy Drinks Sports Drinks	Chewing Gum
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Lunchbox Guidelines

As children respond better to routine and regular meals (see appendix 3 - HSE Meal Planner guidelines) the following recommendations will be promoted as guidelines for a healthy lunchbox

- * All children should have a lunch on a daily basis.
- * Lunch portions given should be age appropriate so as to maintain a healthy weight for your child (see appendix 2 - Portion Control is Weight Control).
- * Lunch size and content should be determined to meet the needs of an individual child.
- * Using DES Guidelines children will be given time to eat lunch in class before play. It is imperative that children with encouragement from parents and teachers eat lunch during this time.

Drinks

Drinks, which are encouraged, include milk, water, natural fruit juices and yogurt drinks. An outdoor water fountain is available to all children at school. Cartons of juice with high sugar content e.g. Ribena, Capri-sun, etc. should be kept as a Friday treat.

We encourage all parents/guardians to support the policy in the interest of their own child's health, nutrition and the benefits of healthy eating.

A copy of the Healthy Eating Policy will be included as part of the enrolment pack for new pupils enrolling at Dunderrow National School and will be on view in school and on school website.

The Parents' Association of Dunderrow National School will also promote this policy.

Success Criteria

We will know that the Healthy Eating Policy is effective if all the children bring healthy lunches to school. It is essential that there is consistency from all members of staff in promoting our Healthy Eating Policy. The policy may not be broken for rewards – see Code of Discipline for rewards and sanctions. Staff listen to any concerns that the children have who receive Hot School Meals and feed back to the Principal, who in turn gives this information to O' Cruialaoi.

Roles and Responsibility – by all parties involved in your child's education

The Healthy Eating Policy will be supported and developed and the school will co-ordinate the progress of the policy, encourage and accept feedback from parent(s) / guardian(s) and pupils on its implementation.

Timeframe for Implementation

The Healthy Eating Policy has been fully implemented since September 2007. This was updated in 2016 and was reviewed again in February 2020 as part of the Food Dudes Initiative. Review and update took place again in September 2023 in line with the needs of the children attending our school. It was updated again in May 2025 in line with the Hot School Meals addition.

Ratification and Communication

This Healthy Eating Policy has been ratified by the Board of Management of Dunderrow National School at a meeting held on 24th February 2020. It was updated again by all stakeholders, especially the children of our school, in May 2021. It has been reviewed and amended by all staff on 27/09/23 and by Board of Management on 25/09/23 and 17/11/25. Pupils are informed about healthy lunches regularly at assemblies.

Una Feeney, Chairperson

Triona Hannon, Principal

Date:

Healthy Eating Key Points

Friday is treat day. Choose **1 item** from this list:

Chocolate bars-treat size	Popcorn - treat size	Fruit Winders	Biscuits-all types
Sweets and jellies – treat size	Doughnuts/ Danish pastries	Small piece of cake – including homemade	Nutella sandwich
Croissants	Cereal Bars, e.g. Nature Valley	Flapjacks/oat bars	Muffins/Buns/Fudge

Foods that are **not allowed** are listed here:

Crisps and similar bagged corn/potato products e.g Snax, Hula Hoops, Pringles etc. Nachos/Doritos	Fizzy Drinks Sports Drinks Chewing Gum
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Nuts and nut butter are allowed as currently we do not have any children with allergies to nuts.