

Healthy Promoting School Policy



Scoil Bhréanainn Portmagee

'A health promoting school can be characterised as a school which is constantly strengthening its capacity as a healthy place in which to live, learn and work.' (WHO, 1997)

Mission statement

Scoil Bhréanainn, through these guidelines, aims to help all those involved in our school community, children, staff and parents, to develop positive attitudes to healthy living. We wish to promote 'the personal development and well being of the child and to provide a foundation for healthy living in all its aspects'. (SPHE Guidelines) We wish to promote this on a whole school basis to involve healthy eating, physical activity, mindfulness and positive mental health strategies.

Healthy Eating

To help achieve this, part of our guidelines will reflect good eating habits. These should be established at an early age. All children have a right to learn about different foods so that they may make informed choices throughout their life. Habits formed early in life stay with them through to adulthood.

The purpose of making healthy food choices enables children to attain their optimum growth, development and health potential.

Through a whole school approach and within the context of SPHE the children, parents and staff will learn about nutrition, healthy eating and healthy living. Our healthy eating guidelines hope to enable the children to develop and understand the concept of healthy living, and an ability to implement healthy behaviour as well as willingness to participate in activities that promote and sustain health. This includes physical activity as well as positive attitudes and mindful techniques to deal with today's busy society.

We feel that, in developing the policy, parents, children, teachers, school staff and the BOM should be involved in a collaborative way. We also hope to review these guidelines periodically.

- School staff will provide supportive attitudes to encourage healthy eating.
- The Health Promoting Committee will meet regularly.
- We will also hold a Healthy Eating Awareness week annually.
- Parents will be supported in their role as Primary Educators by providing them with up to date information on healthy eating habits from the Department of Health.

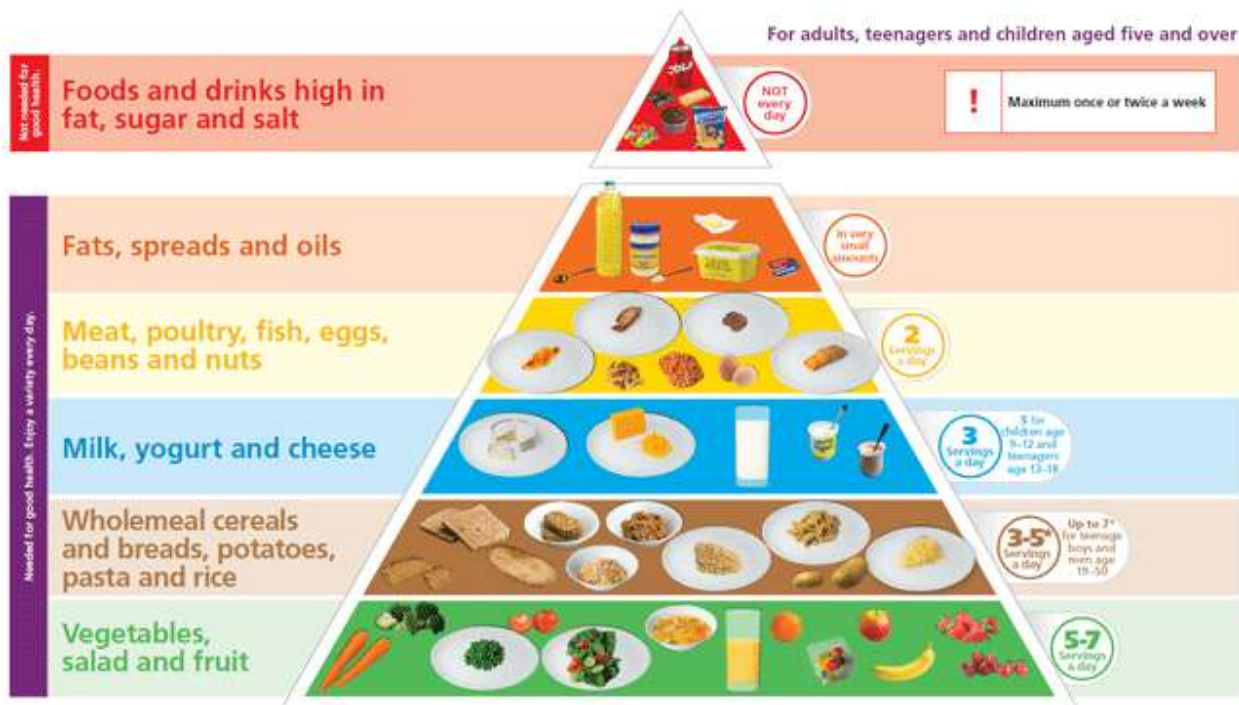
- Using school (cooking) facilities to promote healthy recipes and simple treats that the children will be able to take home and try with their parents.
- As suggested by the Healthy Eating Committee, we will try a variety of different fruits as part of school lunch to include carrots, pineapple, melon, oranges and strawberries.
- As a reward for lining up promptly and efficiently both in the morning and at break-times, the best class receives a star on a daily basis which goes on the physical activity board and amounts to extra PE.
- Students are introduced to the online programme 'Go noodle' which features a number of short dance / PE workouts used in the classroom to 'wake children up' and helps promote healthy attitudes to exercise.
- The school league, which began in 2016, will run in the final term of every school year aimed at increasing exercise, team co-operation, and football skills and so contributes to the physical and mental well-being of all children 2nd to 6th class.
- Children will practice mindfulness in school – to include mindful breathing, relaxation techniques, mindful listening and will also be encouraged to write their thoughts, feelings and reflections in their copies from time to time.
- We will allocate a clear section of the GP room to raise awareness about healthy minds and bodies. The revised food pyramid along with children's own work and research will be displayed for the school community.
- Yard equipment is provided at lunchtimes, to ensure as many children as possible can participate in physical activities.

Healthy Eating Guidelines.

A healthy lunch box includes:

1. Portion from the bread, pasta, wrap, bagel, scones, cereals group
2. One portion from the meat and the meat alternatives group.
3. 2/3 portions of fruits and vegetables.
4. One portion from the dairy products.
5. **One small treat is allowed on a Friday.** Lollipops, chewing gum and fizzy drinks and crisps are **not allowed at any time.**

6. **Due to several pupils having severe allergy to peanuts and mixed nuts, we ask you to be vigilant and exclude them from lunchboxes.**



Sometimes it can be difficult to think of alternatives to these. Here are some tasty alternatives.

- Fruit (for example, an apple or banana, handful of grapes)
- Washed, raw vegetable pieces (for example, sticks of carrot, celery, pepper and cucumber.)
- Washed, raw vegetables (for example, cherry tomatoes)
- Half a tin of fruit (in its own juice)
- Sandwich, wrap, bap, crackers, pitta bread, bagels, scone, roll, brown bread or rice cakes
- Soup
- Yogurt
- Sugar-free jelly pots or fruit jelly.
- Pot of custard or rice pudding.
- Pasta, rice or cous cous
- Cheese
- Hummus
- Olives

Healthy choices of drink include water, milk and unsweetened natural juice. Children will be encouraged to use re-useable containers for safety and litter reasons. Cans and glass bottles are not permitted. According to the HSE; "there are no recommendations for the amount of water or other fluids children need. However, like adults, to stay healthy it is important for

children to replace the water they lose to prevent dehydration. It is also important to remember that children will lose more water in hotter climates and when they have been physically active.”

Health Promoting School

With regard to promoting health in schools it should be noted that the inter-dependence of the Education and Health sectors is significant. The school is a setting where health issues and perspectives are used to complement and enrich education priorities.

The Education Act states that schools should ‘promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of pupils and provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school’ (Education Act, 1998). In addition the Inspectorate publication School Self-Evaluation: Guidelines for Primary Schools (2012) provides practical support to primary schools in examining evidence, identifying needs, agreeing on where improvement is needed, setting targets and evaluating and reporting on outcomes. Both the Education Act (1998) and the School Self Evaluation: Guidelines for Primary Schools (2012), fits very well with the concept of the Health Promoting School (HPS) which was introduced and developed by the World Health Organization (WHO).

As stated in the introduction, the Health Promoting School has been defined as ‘a school which is constantly strengthening its capacity as a healthy place in which to live, learn and work’ (WHO, 1997). The context for the HPS within the Irish educational system is considered in terms of policy and strategy, the curriculum, planning and evaluation. Scoil Bhréanainn is proud to consider itself HPS and to continually work towards improving its health promoting messages for the whole school community.

Promotion of Physical Activity

The benefits of being active for physical and mental health are huge. Being active helps release chemicals in your brain (endorphins), which have a positive effect on your mood, not to mention the benefits to your heart, lungs, muscles and bones. Getting out and being active is also a great way to manage stress.

Regular physical activity can help you reduce the risk of developing diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and cancer. For children and young people being active helps reduce their risk of developing these diseases in later life too. Increased levels of physical activity will help reduce body fat and maintain a healthy weight.

Here at Scoil Bhréanainn, there is a long culture of varied physical activity in the school. The pupils are enthusiastic about physical activity. We have PE at least twice a week. As mentioned already, extra PE is used as a carrot for lining up in a mannerly fashion in the yard. We get visits from outside role models.

Healthy Minds

In school, children are encouraged to talk openly. SPHE is a vital subject that often gets extra discretionary curriculum time. Children from second to sixth class are encouraged to write down an issue in their SPHE copy if they feel they cannot say it out loud to a teacher. We celebrate effort, fair play and participation in all activities – not just results. Children are praised and encouraged as much as possible and realistic achievable goals are set to cater for all differences among pupils. In children good mental health allows children to:

- Think clearly
- Develop socially
- Learn new skills
- Build self esteem
- Develop a positive mental outlook.

We teach children Zippy Friends Programme in first and second class which develops coping and social skills in children. It enables children to communicate effectively, cope with anxieties and difficulties and develop social skills for life.

Friends for Life Programme will also begin in school in the 2017/2018 school year and continue thereafter with fifth and sixth class. It is a school based positive mental health programme. The programme helps pupils to develop effective strategies to deal with worry, stress, change and teaches the skills required to reduce anxiety and promote resilience.

The classes practice mindfulness and meditation.

Pupils are often consulted and involved in decision making processes in the school, for example; Green School Committee, Student Council, Healthy Eating Committee as well as in class in general.

This Policy is promoted by the staff, at break times in the school, in the class-room and by visual displays around the school.

The Principal must be notified of special dietary requirements of pupils in case of allergies etc.

The Policy will be reviewed regularly. The Policy was discussed by Board of Management and ratified on 19 June 2017.

Denis Courneau

Chairperson