



# St Mary's Primary School Healthy Eating and Lifestyle Policy

September 2017



The rise in childhood obesity and illnesses such as the early onset of Type 2 diabetes and heart disease has highlighted the dangers of unhealthy lifestyles. We at St. Mary's believe schools have an important role to play in encouraging children to make healthy life choices. Educating children on the benefits of healthy eating and regular exercise can bring about both immediate and long-term improvements to their quality of life.

A healthy diet is essential for maintaining and protecting children's health, for ensuring they perform to their full potential during the school day (both academically and physically) and for their growth and development. Our aim is to help them establish a healthy lifestyle that, we hope, will continue into adulthood.

Proper nutrition is essential for good health and effective learning. The benefits of Healthy Eating include:

- Helps young people develop, grow and do well in school
- Prevents childhood and adolescent health problems such as obesity, eating disorders, tooth decay and anaemia
- May help prevent health problems later in life, including heart disease and cancer
- Establishing healthy eating habits at a young age is critical because changing poor eating patterns in adulthood can be difficult
- Sitting down to a meal with other children is an important part of a child's social education

Consequences of Unhealthy Eating include:

- Hungry children are more likely to have behavioural, emotional and academic problems at school
- Research suggests that not having breakfast can affect children's intellectual performance
- Poor eating habits and inactivity are the root cause of overweight and obesity. The percentage of young people who are overweight has almost doubled in the last twenty years
- Eating disorders are extremely common among young people
- 76% of teachers believe overweight school children are bullied more than any other group.

## **Aim and Objectives**

We aim to:

- Provide a consistent programme of cross-curricular nutrition education that enables pupils to make informed choices without guilt or anxiety.
- Provide a 'whole school' approach to nutrition.
- Work in partnership with catering staff to ensure that nutritional standards are implemented by providing attractive, value for money meals that are appropriate for our particular children.
- Work in partnership to achieve a pleasant and sociable dining experience which enhances the social development of each pupil.

Nutritional aims:

- To encourage pupils to choose a variety of foods to ensure a balanced intake in line with the National nutrition guide and nutrition standards.
- Encourage foods which are rich in vitamins, iron and calcium,
- Encourage starchy foods as a source of energy.
- Encourage the consumption of milk and water.
- Discourage sugary drinks and snacks between meals.

## **Water**

Research indicates that school children do not drink enough water during the school day and that this affects their concentration and behaviour.

The school recognises that children concentrate better, are healthier and more comfortable if they are not dehydrated, and the best way of ensuring adequate fluid intake is to provide access to water as needed.

All children are encouraged to bring a bottle of water to school each day. This is kept in an accessible place according to the rules of each particular class.

## **School Break**

Subsidised milk, if available or water should be drunk during the day. Fizzy drinks are not allowed to be consumed in school and fruit drinks etc are only permitted to be taken at lunchtime. These drinks are not allowed during break times or at any other time of the school day.

Children from Nursery class to Primary two are supplied with a healthy snack at break at a cost of £2 per week in Nursery and £3 in Primary one and two. From Primary three to Primary seven, parents are asked to supply their child with **fresh** fruit or vegetable portions, natural/fruit yoghurt or a small sandwich/roll with healthy filling for breaktime. Other snacks such as crisps, snackbars, cereal bars, crackers, pancakes etc. **will not** be allowed to be consumed at breaktime. Special needs and allergies are taken into consideration. Please do not supply any nut based snack or product. St Mary's is a Not Free School.

It is impossible for staff to check every child's snack. We rely on our parents to send an appropriate snack following the above guidelines. It is important that the snack sent to school is **fresh** as many processed or dried snacks contain high amounts of sugar.

## **Packed Lunches**

Packed lunches should include some fruit or vegetables e.g. a piece of fruit, dried fruit, cherry tomato, raw carrot, cucumber wedge. Sugary drinks and chocolate snacks should be avoided and fruit juice or diluted squash should be consumed at lunchtimes only. All uneaten food is kept in the lunch box so parents can keep a check on what their children have eaten.

## **Sweets, chewing gum and fizzy drinks are not allowed in school.**

Teachers may provide the children with a sweet/chocolate bar on occasions such as class parties.

### **School meals**

For many children, the lunchtime meal is the main meal of the day. It is important that meals served are nutritionally balanced. Under-nutrition, even in its milder forms, can have detrimental effects on cognitive development, behaviour, concentration and school performance.

The subtle message that pupils receive about food and health from the daily life of school are as important as those given during lessons, e.g. school menus, peer pressure to eat certain snacks in packed lunches. By working together, we can promote healthier eating habits.

Healthy option weeks, the removal of salt from dining tables, the introduction of more fruit as a snack option will improve children's diet.

Special needs and allergies are taken into consideration.

### **School Ethos, Environment and Organisation**

School meals are eaten in the canteen tables and chairs being set out by the dinner staff. Packed lunches are usually eaten in the classroom supervised by the class teacher.

The school recognises:

- The importance of lunchtime organisation on the behaviour of pupils.
- The value of promoting social skills.

Teachers, caterers and lunchtime organisers work together to create a good dining room ambience and the development of appropriate table manners.

Non-teaching members of staff are involved and are supported by the school behaviour policy.

### **Curriculum, Teaching and Learning**

Healthy eating and the exploration of diet and health are covered at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in the Curriculum. Through topic work, science and PFSE children are encouraged to think about diet, health and personal development. This is supported by visits and assemblies lead by our Area Community Dental Services, visits to and from local dentists, visits from dieticians, Healthy School's Week, the active encouragement to participate in extra curricular activities and active health food promotions from canteen staff.

### **Physical Exercise**

Exercise plays an important role in the promotion of a healthy lifestyle. It not only brings physical benefits but psychological ones too. Research has shown that it can help combat depression and raise self-esteem. All children are encouraged to actively participate in Physical Education and swimming lessons. A variety of extra curricular activities including Gaelic Football, Netball and

soccer are available for children to join. Additional information is available in the school's PE Policy.

Most classes in school now participate in the Daily Mile initiative, whereby children from each class walk, jog or run with their classmates in the safety of the playground. This helps children improve their physical, emotional and social health and well-being by doing at least 15 minutes of physical activity each day.