



Healthy Eating Policy

Ratified at BOM Meeting on 25th April, 2023

Signed *L. Smyth* Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed *Noel Reilly* Principal

Date *25th April 2023*

Date of next review: April 2026 (or if there are national/curricular changes before this)

1. Introduction & Rationale

The Board of Management advocates a Healthy Eating Policy. Research has shown that a child's behaviour and ability to learn is affected by the food that they eat. This policy was developed in consultation with staff, children and our PGTA Committee. 'Healthy Eating Policy Toolkit' was a key document in guiding this policy document.

2. Breakfast

It is essential to highlight the importance of children having a healthy breakfast each morning before coming to school as it provides them with the energy they need for the day. Advice for healthy eating at home can be found at <https://www2.hse.ie/living-well/healthy-eating/families/>

3. School Lunches

Here are some suggestions to help you provide a healthy lunch for your child:

- Roll or sandwich with cheese, meat or salad filling.
- Scone and butter
- Rice cakes (plain or yoghurt)
- Crackers
- Pasta/Pasta salad
- Raw vegetables, cheese
- Fruit, raisins
- Yoghurt
- Milk, water, fruit juice, diluted sugar-free drink



The following items should **not** be given for lunch:

- Fizzy drinks such as Coke, 7-Up, Fanta and drinks with high sugar content, including energy drinks
- Crisps and crisp-type snacks
- Sweets
- Popcorn (due to the fact that it is regarded as a possible choking hazard amongst children)

The following foods are **strictly forbidden**:

- ❖ All products containing nuts including peanut butter and nutella. Please check that lunch items brought to school do not contain nut-traces.
- ❖ Chewing gum is not allowed on the school premises!

Children are permitted to bring one small treat to school on a Friday. A treat could be a biscuit or small piece of chocolate or one mini-bar. Sharing bags should not be brought to school.

As some children may have a serious intolerance to particular foods (e.g. nuts, gluten products, dairy products, certain fruits), please talk to your child about the danger of sharing certain foods with classmates.

4. Sharing Food in School

Parents:

Parents are not permitted to send in birthday treats for their child's classmates nor should children bring in sweets to share with other children. Having consulted with children on the topic, they felt that this can be exclusive and upsetting as they can sometimes feel left out.

Teachers & SNAs:

If a teacher is giving food as a reward or as part of a class celebration, it is important to be mindful and inclusive of dietary and medical needs (diabetes, coeliac disease, epilepsy and allergies) and dietary preferences (vegetarian and vegan). Teachers should provide alternatives for children and ensure that this is kept separate from the other food being given to the whole class. Teachers/SNAs should wash their hands before handling the alternative food for children. As it is regarded as being a choking hazard, popcorn should not be given to children by staff.

Children:

At times, children will be allowed to bring in food to share with the class as part of a special celebration (for example Harvest, Culture Week etc.). Children should list the ingredients included in their produce if it is homemade.

5. Culture and Environment

We endeavour to promote a positive relationship with food and healthy eating habits within the school. To do this, we must consider the culture and environment when eating as it heavily influences food choices. Healthy eating culture and environment is explored below under the following headings:

- *Healthy Rewards*
- *Staff as Role Models*
- *Water*



Healthy Rewards

Rewarding good behaviour with food contradicts the messages given as part of the curriculum. Food rewards can interfere with children learning to eat in response to hunger and satiety clues and encourages them to eat when they are not hungry. Ideally, alternatives to food rewards should be used in school instead as a way of promoting positive behaviour.

Examples

Some examples include; a positive note in the diary, sticker, certificate, homework pass, class privilege etc.

Staff as Role Models

Staff are important role models for children, including food choices for their lunch. The RaLET Staff Wellbeing Committee will endeavour to have a balance of healthy food as well as treats when sharing celebrations with food together.

Water

Children are encouraged to bring a water bottle with them to school and can refill them if needed. Depending on the class rules, children can either store their water bottles in their bag or on their table. They are encouraged to drink water throughout the day.



6. PGTA Events

The PGTA have created guidelines (*Learning to Live Together RaLET PGTA Event Guidelines 2021*) for PGTA events to ensure inclusivity of all children. The key areas included in these guidelines relating to this Healthy Eating Policy are:

- **Medical needs** - including diabetes, coeliac disease and allergies
- **Dietary needs** - including allergies (nut, egg, fish, dairy, gluten, oats, soy & sesame), coeliac disease (including barley, rye, oats, wheat & spelt) and lactose intolerance.
- **Dietary Preferences** - Vegetarian and Vegan

Checklists have been created for various events organised by the PGTA, to ensure that events are inclusive to all participants. Whilst it is recognised that it is the responsibility of every member of the PGTA Committee, volunteers and the parent/guardian of each child to ensure that each event is inclusive and appropriate for participants, the Event Inclusion Officer has special responsibility for;

- Reminding parents/guardians that the PGTA do not have access to the school's information on each child and must be notified of any needs in advance before each individual event.
- Obtaining ingredients information to supply to parents/guardians if requested.
- Sourcing an alternative if a child has a specific dietary need, ensuring that this is kept away from other foods and that hands are washed before touching to give to the child. The same will also be done if a parent/guardian would rather provide their own alternative for their child themselves.
- Ensuring that the volunteers at each event are made aware of the individual children with special needs and the protocols to accommodate their needs.

7. Student Healthy Eating Committee

In 2022, a Student Healthy Eating Committee was set up to help with this policy. The committee produced a video which promotes healthy lunches. This video has been shared with children and is available for viewing on the school website. See <http://ralet.ie/parents/healthy-lunch-video/>



8. Resources

Junior – Senior Infants

- ‘When Sally met Sammy’ & ‘Sammy & Sally grow together’ – storybooks from Safefood
- ‘Clean hands’ song activity to promote handwashing – from Safefood
- ‘Mediawise’ an online resource to develop children’s media literacy skills – from Safefood
- ‘Seedlings’ programme – from Bord Bia
- ‘Mighty Mouth school programme’ from Dental Health Foundation
- Food Dudes – healthy eating activities for all ages.

1st-2nd Class

- ‘Tastebuds’ CD/online resource for 8-10yrs – from Safefood
- ‘Seedlings’ programme – from Bord Bia
- ‘Moo Crew’ activities on dairy foods – from National Dairy Council
- Food Dudes – healthy eating activities for all ages
- ‘Mediawise’ an online resource to develop children’s media literacy skills – from Safefood

3rd-4th Class

- ‘Tastebuds’ CD/online resource for 8-10yrs – from Safefood
- ‘Hands of doom’ drama kit promoting handwashing – from Safefood
- ‘Moo Crew’ activities on dairy foods – from National Dairy Council
- Food Dudes – healthy eating activities for all ages
- ‘Mediawise’ an online resource to develop children’s media literacy skills – from Safefood

5th-6th Class:

- ‘Hands of doom’ drama kit promoting handwashing – from Safefood
- ‘Mediawise’ an online resource to develop children’s media literacy skills – from Safefood
- ‘Moo Crew’ activities on dairy foods – from National Dairy Council
- Food Dudes – healthy eating activities for all ages

9. Communication

This policy has been disseminated to all staff. At the beginning of each school year it is brought to the attention of any new staff, and current staff are reminded of its content. It is available to parents on the school website or in hard copy format from the office on request.

10. Ratification and Review

This policy was reviewed in March & April 2023 and ratified by the Board of Management on the 25th of April 2023.