

# Healthy Eating Policy

In Ballintubber National School, we recognise the importance of healthy eating and the benefits which the children gain from being “informed” regarding healthy eating habits.

## Introduction

Healthy eating in childhood:

- Can help improve performance in class and at play
- Can help improve concentration
- Meet children’s nutrient needs for growth and development
- Encourages good eating habits for life
- Assists in the continuous management of our Green School Code and care of our environment

The children are made aware of the advantages of healthy eating in the course of their “Health Education” programme.

## Rationale

The Healthy Eating Policy is an essential part of the school plan because:

- It improves the nutrition standard and eating habits of all in the school
- It helps to clarify the school’s position on foods encouraged/discouraged
- It acts as a guideline for any new staff or families joining the school
- It ensures that the message children receive from both teachers and parents is consistent
- It ensures that what is taught in the classroom is put into practice outside the classroom

## Policy Content

### Promoting Healthy Eating in Ballintubber National School Healthy eating within the S.P.H.E Curriculum.

The S.P.H.E. Food and Nutrition Curriculum implemented by the teachers in Ballintubber National School outlines key issues relating to food and nutrition and these are explored to the depths appropriate for each class.

In the delivery of S.P.H.E., an overview of healthy eating includes reference to the following points:

- Food and nutrition are important for growth and development
- Variety, balance and moderation: The Food Groups and different nutrients
- Food hygiene
- Food choices and factors influencing them
- Food with respect to health, illness and special conditions

### Promoting healthy eating messages

The following points are considered in the implementation of our healthy eating programme:

- Good nutrition is essential for school children. They need to receive a sound understanding about why a variety of food is important for their optimum growth

development and health.

- They should be encouraged to have practical experience in preparing their own lunches and meals.
- A positive attitude to food should be encouraged. Children should enjoy their food. It is important to communicate the message that all foods have a place in a balanced diet. Foods should not be labelled as “good” or “bad”. Food should never be used as a reward.
- Children may need three meals and three snacks each day to ensure that their appetite and energy needs are met. The size of meals and the number of snacks required will depend on the child’s age and stage of development.
- Physical activity is integral to any healthy eating programme, and hence is also promoted and encouraged.
- Informing parents by means of regular Health Board leaflets/handouts/circulars relating to health eating/lunches ensures that children receive consistent messages both as school and at home.

## **Communicating the Healthy Eating Message**

The Food Pyramid is the primary educational tool used in Ballintubber National School to communicate the healthy eating message and as the basis for healthy eating training. It is the fun way to teach children about the different food groups and nutrients in each group. Children’s knowledge regarding the food pyramid is refreshed each year to ensure continuity in the healthy eating programmes.

## **The Healthy Lunchbox**

The children are encouraged to bring a healthy lunch to school each day. Sweets, crisp type products, chocolate or biscuit bars, and fizzy drinks are banned. All children are encouraged to use a lunchbox and to wrap their food in kitchen paper. Plastic screw top bottles are recommended as they can be reused, and they hold sufficient liquid for daily intake.

## **The “Eating” Environment**

Children eat their lunches in their classrooms.  
They are encouraged to sit while eating.  
They are not rushed while eating.  
Fruit may be eaten in the yard and compost bins are provided.

## **Conclusion**

The “Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Primary Schools” produced by the Department of Health and Children will be used as a reference for all issues relating to healthy eating in Ballintubber National School. The policy will be reviewed/revised on a regular basis in keeping with departmental guidelines.