

## Holy Family Senior School Healthy Eating Policy



### Introductory Statement

This document is a statement of the aims and objectives, principles and strategies for healthy eating in Holy Family Senior School. Our Healthy Eating Policy outlines how we as a school support healthy eating practices through the promotion of healthy snacks and healthy lunches and how we help our pupils to gain a greater understanding of the importance of balanced nutrition. The policy was drafted and reviewed during the academic year 2023/24 through a process of consultation with the teaching staff, pupils and parents.

The HSE booklet Healthy Eating Policy Toolkit for Primary Schools was used to assist in the review process.

### Rationale

HFSS aims to help all those in our school community in developing positive and responsible attitudes to eating and to appreciate the contribution that good food choices make to our health. We wish to improve the health of our students by educating them on how to establish and maintain healthy eating habits. HFSS is committed to facilitating our pupils' development of skills and attitudes to allow them to make informed decisions about their food intake.

As a school, we believe that key adults in their lives, namely parents/guardians and school staff, should be good role models and support them in understanding how balanced nutrition contributes to a person's health, happiness and general wellbeing. Our whole school approach to promoting healthy eating will actively involve teachers, parents/guardians and children to ensure that healthy eating messages are part of every aspect of school life. Our pupils will receive consistent messages regarding healthy eating, both at home and at school.

### Aims and Objectives

- To improve the health of pupils and the whole school community by helping to influence eating habits through increasing knowledge and awareness of food issues including what constitutes a healthy diet.
- To promote healthy eating across school life, consistent with national healthy eating guidelines and school curriculum.
- To make the provision and consumption of food an enjoyable and safe experience.
- To ensure pupils are well nourished at school and that every pupil has access to safe, tasty and nutritious food and a safe, easily available water supply during the school day.

- To ensure that lunchtimes in the school acknowledge the ethical, religious, sensory and medical requirements of staff and pupils
- To introduce and promote practices within the school to reinforce these aims and to remove or discourage practices that contradict them.
- To enable the child to accept some personal responsibility for making wise food choices and adopting a healthy balanced diet.
- To encourage and promote the recycling of lunch packaging, the reduction of waste food and the reuse of food containers and bottles/flasks.
- To encourage families to participate in the Healthy Eating programme

### **Organisational Actions which support our Healthy Eating Policy**

As a school, we will implement the following actions to support our Healthy Eating Policy:

- Healthy Eating Awareness initiatives and activities will take place during the year for different year groups.
- The School Lunch Provider (Carambola) will be invited into the school to show pupils samples of the range of foods available and provide opportunities to taste the different foods.
- The School Lunch Provider (Carambola) will offer a weekly online service for parents to order hot or packed lunches for their children
- The School Lunch Provider (Carambola) will adhere to the required Healthy Ireland Nutrition Standards for School Meals.
- All staff members will be made aware of the existence of the policy at a staff meeting. New staff members will be informed of the policy.
- Sweets and/or food treats will not be used as daily rewards by teachers.
- The HSCL Coordinator will organise healthy eating/cookery/baking sessions for parents/guardians.

### **Curricular Actions which support our Healthy Eating Policy**

We regard healthy eating education as a whole-school issue and we believe that opportunities to teach about the importance of living a healthy lifestyle occur throughout the curriculum.

- Healthy eating education forms an important part of our school's curriculum. The importance of balanced nutrition and healthy food choices is explicitly taught through the Science and SPHE curriculum.
- Oide continues to support the SPHE and PE curricula and, through the wider lens of this curriculum support, promotes healthy eating and activity policies (relevant material is available on [www.pdst.ie](http://www.pdst.ie) and [www.sphe.ie](http://www.sphe.ie)).
- All pupils have the opportunity to learn about food hygiene and safe food preparation and to learn about where food has come from.
- Pupils learn about the requirements for plant growth, the food chain and the components of a healthy diet through the Science curriculum. Through the SPHE curriculum, children will learn about food and nutrition as part of the strand unit; taking care of my body.

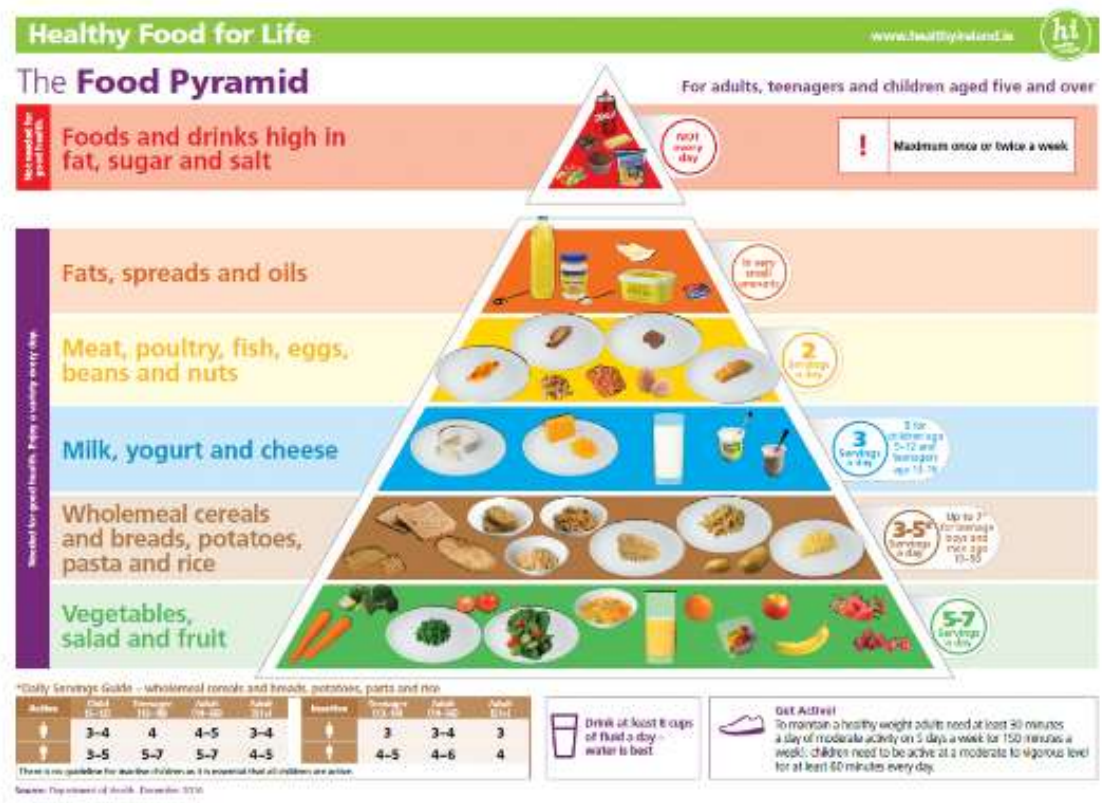
### **The Role of Parents**

The school is aware that the primary role model in children’s healthy eating education lies with parents. We wish to build a positive and supportive relationship with the parents of children at our school through mutual understanding, trust and co-operation. In promoting this objective, Holy Family Senior School will:

- Support parents and their children in making good food choices and provide a balanced, nutritious lunch.
- Inform parents about the school healthy eating education policy and practice. A copy of our policy will be on our website.
- Encourage parents to be involved in reviewing school policy and making modifications to it as necessary (Through survey responses and invited feedback).
- Inform parents about the best practice known with regard to healthy eating so that they can support the key messages being given to children at school (Aladdin/newletter/website communication about Healthy Lunchboxes, Discouraged Foods & Drinks, the Food Pyramid, SPHE topics etc.)
- Support parents to safely manage their child’s food allergies within our school setting.
- The parents’ association will continue to aid development and implementation of the policy.

### The Food Pyramid

The Food Pyramid provides a sample guide to healthy eating. A healthy, balanced lunch should, if possible, include a variety of foods from the bottom four shelves of the pyramid.



### School Meals Programme

The School Meals Programme operated by the Department of Social Protection provides funding towards provision of food services for school children through two schemes. It aims to provide regular, nutritious food to children to support them in taking full advantage of the education provided to them. Research has shown that inadequate nutrition impacts negatively on children's ability to learn and benefit from education.

In September 2017 the Minister for Health, the Minister for Education and Skills and the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection jointly launched new Nutrition Standards for the State's School Meals Programme. These will ensure the programme follows the national Healthy Eating Guidelines. The introduction of the new nutrition standards means that only healthy food choices that meet the Standards will be funded for breakfast clubs, school lunches and snacks, afterschool clubs and school dinners. The Standards outline healthy and balanced choices for each meal or snack, which align with the revised food pyramid and guidelines. The Standards also emphasise that milk and water are the best drinks to serve children.

Carambola is our School Meals Programme provider. Their lunches are of the highest standard possible, with an expansive choice of fresh foods to choose from. Pupils and parents have their own login and can change their lunches throughout the school year.

### **Breakfast / Breakfast Club**

A nourishing breakfast is the best start to a child's day giving him/her the energy needed to concentrate and learn. Research has shown that children benefit both nutritionally and behaviourally by eating breakfast.

In Holy Family Senior School, Breakfast Club operates in the Café every morning from 8.40am to 9.00am. Breakfast Club is open to all pupils, and some families in particular are encouraged to attend. The food available at Breakfast Club adheres to the required Healthy Ireland Nutrition Standards for School Meals.

### **Break/Lunchtime Guidelines**

In order to promote the health and safety of all children in the school and prevent the spread of infection, guidelines for eating at lunch and break times are necessary.

- Pupils should not share their food or drink.
- Pupils should not share food utensils or drinks containers.
- Pupils should eat their food at their own table.
- Any uneaten cold food should go back into the pupil's lunch box. This will help the parent/guardian to be aware of what their child is actually eating.
- All recycling/rubbish should be taken home.

### **Sos**

Sos in HFSS is 10.45-10.55. Children are encouraged to eat their snack when they return from the yard after this time. Food at this break should be easy to eat, ideally a small sandwich or a piece of fruit. Fruit should be of a manageable size, peeled/chopped if necessary. Our School Lunch Provider (Carambola) offers varied healthy snacks for this break, all of which adhere to the required Healthy Ireland Nutrition Standards for School Meals.

## Lunch Break(s)

There are two lunch breaks in HFSS:

- Senior Lunch (12.30-1.05) – 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> eat in Café 12.30-12.48
- Junior Lunch (1.10-1.45) – 2<sup>nd</sup> eat in the Café 1.10-1.28 / 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> eat in the Café 1.28-1.45

Every child in HFSS has access to a free school lunch under the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection's School Meals Programme. If pupils are availing of this lunch scheme, they will not need to bring any other lunch to school.

Parents of children that do bring their own lunches to school are recommended to follow the guidelines for a healthy lunchbox when preparing this. A healthy lunchbox should contain:

- At least one portion of fruit, vegetables or salad
- One portion of meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans or nuts
- One portion of bread or cereal
- One portion of yogurt or cheese
- Milk or water

For those who avail of the School Meals Programme but wish to bring in a snack for sos, a healthy lunchbox should contain:

- One portion of fruit, vegetables or salad
- One portion of yogurt or cheese
- Milk or water

Please see table below for lunchbox ideas:

Vegetables, Salad & Fruit	Meat, Poultry, Fish, Eggs, Beans & Nuts	Cereals, Breads, Potatoes, Pasta & Rice	Milk, Yogurt & Cheese
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1 medium apple, orange, banana, pear or similar size fruit</li> <li>▪ 2 small fruits - plums, kiwis or similar size fruit.</li> <li>▪ Half a tin of fruit in its own juice</li> <li>▪ Handful of dried fruit</li> <li>▪ 1 small bunch of grapes</li> <li>▪ Chopped vegetables, e.g. cucumber, carrot, celery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 2 slices of cooked meat</li> <li>▪ 1 to 2 hardboiled eggs</li> <li>▪ Small can of tuna, salmon, sardines or mackerel</li> <li>▪ 4 tablespoons of hummus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 2 thin slices of wholemeal bread</li> <li>▪ 1 small bread roll</li> <li>▪ 1 tortilla wrap</li> <li>▪ 1 pitta bread</li> <li>▪ 4 to 6 crackers or breadsticks</li> <li>▪ 1 cup of cooked rice or pasta or couscous</li> <li>▪ 1 small bagel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1 pot of yogurt or custard</li> <li>▪ 2 cheese triangles</li> <li>▪ 2 thumbs of cheese</li> </ul>

All pupils are encouraged to bring a refillable water bottle to school every day. Pupils will bring their own water to school in the refillable bottles provided to them and allowed access to water throughout the school day to refill their bottles when needed. Additionally, (recyclable) bottled water is offered by our School Lunch Provider (Carambola).

### **Discouraged Foods in HFSS**

The following foods do not support our healthy lunch policy and should be excluded from your child's lunch box:

- Fizzy drinks, sports drinks, energy drinks and drinks or juices with high sugar content
- Take away food or hot deli food
- Chewing gum (exception in the case of sensory need and stated in School Support Plan)
- Sweets, lollipops, fruit winders
- Crisps & sweetened popcorn
- Biscuits, cakes, iced buns, muffins
- Chocolate

Please note that for certain year groups where there are pupils with nut allergies, nuts and foods containing nuts are not permitted.

### **Treat Days**

Certain occasions in schools can allow for treats for the children. These include:

- End of term parties
- Halloween
- School trips and events
- Birthdays
- Class rewards

On these occasions, teachers may provide treats for the class or pupils may be invited to bring in items to share. Teachers will be aware of pupils with allergies and will ensure safety and inclusivity.

### **Implementation**

If a pupil brings an item from the discouraged food or drink list to school, they will be asked by the teacher to bring it home at the end of the school day. If the pupil does not have anything else to eat, the teacher will deal with the matter at his/her discretion (i.e. provide an alternative snack as offered by School Lunch Provider). If a pupil persists in bringing unhealthy food to school, the teacher will make contact (call or in-person meeting) with the child's parent/guardian to remind them of Holy Family Senior School's Healthy Eating Policy. School staff will consistently implement the Healthy Eating Policy to ensure that it is adhered to.

### **Allergies**

If a child has a serious food allergy, the parents/guardians must notify the school and School Lunch Provider (Carambola) and provide a doctor's report stating the implications of the allergy and listing the foods to be avoided. Parents/guardians will be asked to participate with staff in formulating an individual Care Plan. This plan will identify how best to minimise the risk of an allergic reaction for the child and it will outline the protocol to be implemented if an allergic reaction occurs. Further details can be found in Holy Family Senior School's Administration of Medication Policy.

### **Useful Links:**

Bord Bia – Tips, Recipes & General Information

<https://www.bordbia.ie/nutrition/primary-school-children/>

Dental Health Foundation Ireland – Resources for Healthy Teeth

<https://www.dentalhealth.ie/resources/educational/>

Healthy Ireland – Nutrition Standards for School Meals:

<https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/15978/6ade4b9f4810445e8c6516b3a33d330b.pdf#page=null>

Irish Heart Foundation – Lessons and Recipes

<https://irishheart.ie/schools/primary-schools/healthy-eating/>

NHS – Healthy Recipes

<https://www.nhs.uk/change4life/recipes>

SafeFood – Healthy Lunchboxes

<https://www.safefood.eu/Publications/Consumer-info/Healthy-lunchboxes.aspx>

SafeFood – START Programme for Families

<https://www.safefood.net/start>

Taste Buds – Healthy Eating Programme

<https://www.safefood.net/tastebuds>

### **Ratification & Communication**

This Healthy Eating Policy was reviewed and updated by the Board of Management in April 2024, following consultation with staff, pupils and parents/guardians. The policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents Association.

### **Monitoring & Evaluation**

The implementation of this Healthy Eating Policy will be monitored by the Principal, staff and Board of Management. It will be reviewed and evaluated at regular intervals, including through formal and informal feedback from parents/guardians, pupils, staff and others. In addition, a culture of improvement relating to the promotion of healthy lifestyles in schools will be supported through whole-school evaluations, as well as through subject inspections of Physical Education and SPHE. The policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation.