



ST. FRANCIS PS, AGHADERG

Healthy Eating and Break Policy

Last Reviewed: 2018

Ratified by Board of Governors: _____

For review: ____June 2026____ (or in line with updated guidance or Circulars)

Phone: 028 4062 8044

Fax: 028 4062 8044

E.Mail: info@stfrancis.aghaderg.ni.sch.uk

Website www.stfrancisaghaderg.com

Healthy Eating at St. Francis'

St. Francis' Primary school recognises that, in order for pupils to achieve their full potential, there is an important connection between a healthy diet and a pupil's ability to learn effectively. Proper nutrition is essential for good health and effective teaching and learning. The school recognises the role it can play, as part of the wider community to promote family health. Therefore, as a school we want to help establish and maintain life-long healthy eating and drinking habits.

Why?

Childhood is a time of rapid growth and development. Good nutrition during this time is important, as it impacts on children's general and oral (dental) health now and in the future. Children usually need to eat more frequently than adults to meet their nutritional requirements, so it is also important that snacks should be beneficial to their health.

Research has indicated that eating patterns developed in childhood tend to be continued into adulthood, and that poor dietary patterns can store up problems resulting in obesity and heart disease later in life (British Nutrition Foundation, 2002).

At St. Francis' PS we aim to encourage children to adopt and sustain healthy eating patterns from an early age. The pupils will be encouraged to take only a healthy snack (fruit, vegetables, bread, water and milk) at break time.

They will **not** be permitted to eat chocolate/ crisps/ items with a high sugar content at break time. A 'treat' item is permitted at lunch **in addition to a healthy packed lunch** and not as an alternative to a healthy packed lunch.

We offer information on what constitutes a healthy lunch annually, but further information is available at:

<https://www.nhs.uk/change4life/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes>

Follow the leader

It is often difficult to encourage children to eat healthily, especially if their friends are seen to be having more tempting snacks. By adopting a Healthy Break policy at St. Francis' PS we will actively encourage the pupils to eat a healthy snack at break time. As the scheme gains momentum it is hoped that Healthy Breaks will set off a "domino effect" in that children and staff will encourage their peers to enjoy a healthy break with them.

Our school environment is well placed to promote the ideals of healthy eating. The effect of diet on health is taught to children at various stages throughout the curriculum and having healthy food to eat within the school environment supports this teaching.

We recognise that the ultimate success of Healthy Breaks depends on the support of parents, pupils and teachers.

Promoting Healthy Break in our school

As part of our Healthy Break policy the children will be encouraged to have only

the following foods and drink at break time:

Milk or water

Any fruit or vegetables. Dried fruit will be allowed.

Any bread product from the following list:

Wholemeal, granary or white bread (can be toasted)

Examples: scones, wheaten, bread muffin, soda, pancake, potato bread, crumpets (spread butter thinly)

Avoid sugary spreads e.g. jam, marmalade, honey or chocolate spread.

Catering

- School meals are provided by St. Francis' catering staff.
- We currently have one fully qualified cook and one catering assistant.
- All catering staff have completed training and received qualifications in food hygiene. Our cook has achieved certificates in nutrition.
- St. Francis' have achieved a five star rating from the 'Food Standards Agency'. This reflects very good food safety management which complies with food safety regulation.
- Individual dietary requirements are catered for within the framework of nutritional standards. The catering manager encourages parents of children with specific dietary requirements to discuss these needs with her so that the child's requirements can be best met.
- Children are encouraged to drink water/milk with their midday meal.
- Portion sizes are according to guidelines laid down by EA.
- As a school we strive to integrate healthy eating and drinking habits in all aspects of school life.

Equal opportunities

St. Francis' Primary School is committed towards equal opportunities in all aspects of school life. All resources used and teaching and learning will support this commitment.

Ethnic and Cultural Diversity

Different ethnic and cultural groups may have different attitudes and beliefs around food. Where this arises, our school will consult children and parents or carers about their needs, take account of their views and promote respect for and understanding of the requirements and beliefs of different ethnic and cultural groups in relation to food and eating.

Curriculum content

There are opportunities for raising awareness of healthy eating in all areas of school life. Specifically many aspects of healthy eating will be found in the 'Personal

Development and Mutual Understanding' (PDMU) and 'World Around Us' schemes of work, (Previously the science scheme).

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring of more general aspects of healthy eating such as break time snacks and drinking water, will be carried out informally through observation, discussion and consultation with staff (both teaching and non-teaching), as well as the children. Where staff have concerns about a pupil's eating, these will be raised with a parent taking full cognisance of the fact that we have only part of the picture of a child's food intake for the day; we are broaching the conversation without judgement and with the intention of sharing information and maintaining open, positive communication for the benefit of the pupil.

Break time

In St. Francis' we offer a 'Canteen Style' snack bar – 'Mini meals'. Food is served from the school canteen and includes several options including hot food.

Objectives of the snack bar:

- To offer a healthy affordable break to all children attending the school.
- To enable pupils to make confident choices about a balanced diet.
- To offer opportunities to try new things.

St. Francis' snack bar is operated by school catering staff and the classroom assistants. We believe that the continuity of staff allows good relationships to be built with pupils.

Children who bring their own snack to school can enjoy a piece of fruit, snack vegetables, crackers, a yoghurt with no 'tip in' treats or a sandwich. Pupils are permitted plain water as their drink.

-The only exception to this will be in the case of medical or SEN-related food sensory issues and will need to be discussed and agreed with the class teacher or SENCO.

Dilute, carbonated or 'fizzy' drinks are not permitted. Chocolate bars/ biscuits or crisps (baked or fried varieties), brioche items with chocolate are not permitted at break time so please, do not send children in with these items.

Lunch time

School meals:

School meal provision meets education board guidelines. Menus comply with 'Nutritional Standards' guidelines and portion sizes are regulated by the EA. Food is provided to meet the needs of the children and staff.

Packed lunches:

Parents and carers are encouraged to provide healthy packed lunches for their children. This might include a sandwich/ roll; a piece of fruit and a small treat e.g biscuit/ baked-type crisp.

Please see the PHA publication 'Are you packing a Healthy Lunch?' for further ideas.

All packed lunches are stored away from direct sunlight and pupils are advised to bring their packed lunch in a cool bag. Within reason, uneaten food is returned in the children's lunch boxes so the parent/carers can be aware of what the child has eaten while at school.

The school canteen offers all parents/children the option of buying a healthy break or dinner. This includes toast, scones, fruit, yoghurt, milk, occasional fruit juice on celebration days/events or plain water.

Additional information

Water Provision:

All children and staff have access to drinking water at all times. Consumption is permitted both in class and during break and lunch times. Children may refill water bottles at the tap. We recommend use of anti-shatter, BPA-free bottles where possible.

Increasing awareness:

At St. Francis' we work closely with the EA's catering services and the school's catering manager in planning menus and in increasing awareness of healthy eating and healthy lifestyles both within the school and the local community. When possible, EA's nutritional Standards Co-ordinator has addressed curriculum meetings and met with the parents of our new Primary 1 children. Numerous posters displayed throughout the school to remind pupils of the benefit of a healthy lifestyle. The school Catering Manager runs class competitions through out the year to promote healthy eating, including our annual 'Eat them to Defeat them' campaign.

Special Events:

The school ensures that healthy options are available at special events, like class Christmas parties.

Allergies:

Parents and carers must inform the school if a child suffers from a food allergy as soon as they become aware of this, providing information on the foods to which the child reacts and the usual symptoms of the reaction. Parents are also made aware that some children in the school may suffer from food allergies. To ensure all staff are aware of child allergies, a list of class health issues is part of the 'class information' given to each teacher. Children with allergies are also identified for kitchen, lunchtime and school staff.

Hygiene:

Children are encouraged to wash their hands after going to the toilet and before handling food. All staff employed in food preparation hold a food and hygiene certificate.

External Links:

At St. Francis', external agencies, such as the Dairy Council, DE/Ulster Council Fundamental coaches and ABC District Council are used to promote a healthy lifestyle.