



Our Lady of Good Counsel BNS

Healthy Lunch Policy

This policy was reviewed in February 2025 following consultation with the Student Council, Staff, Dr Sarah Browne, UCD (who specialises in primary school diet and obesity) and the Parents Association. Information gathered at a recent Wellbeing Survey has also been incorporated.

Aim:

Good food habits set in early childhood can last a lifetime. Lunches provide around one third of our daily nutritional needs. The focus of the policy is to support parents and pupils in relation to healthy eating habits from an early age. Practical suggestions are included relating to snacks as well as possible nutritious lunches.

Ireland has one of the highest levels of obesity in Europe, with over one in five young people living with overweight and obesity. There has been “consistent increases” in the prevalence of overweight and obesity in Europe and no country is on track to reach a target of halting the rise of obesity by 2025, according to the WHO European regional obesity report and the Obesity National Clinical Programme -

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/cspd/ncps/obesity/>

Objectives:

- To help children and parents make healthy food choices
- To improve the children’s concentration and energy levels
- To develop an awareness of nutrition

Our Lady of Good Counsel BNS is part of the Hot Lunch Scheme in conjunction with the Department of Social protection. This is an opt out programme.

-The Hot Lunch Scheme supplies a hot lunch to each pupil every day. It does not supply a drink or snacks for little break.

-We recommend parents look through the menu and plan the week. We strongly suggest opting for only 1 processed meal a week.

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-Lunchboxes will be provided for each child. The boys will bring their hot lunch tray home each day. This will allow parents to assess if they like the meal or not, and if not change the order for the next week and also gauge how much he has eaten on any given day. We ask for the lunchbox to be cleaned out daily and to come back into school the following day(containing break time snacks).

-Wooden forks are provided. Parents may wish to send in a stainless steel fork.

-The trays can be recycled.

-We recommend parents look through the menu and plan the week. We strongly suggest opting for only 1 processed meal a week.

Guidelines for snacks or those not opting for the Hot Lunch Scheme:

A healthy lunchbox contains

- At least 2 portions from the bread/cereals group
- 2-3 portions of fruit and vegetables
- 1 portion from the meat and the meat alternatives group
- 1 portion from the dairy group
- Hot food such as pastas, soups, noodles. Please be vigilant regarding the temperature of the food being put into the flask.
- The following foods do not support a healthy lunch policy and should be excluded from your child's lunch box – crisps, lollipops, crispie buns, fizzy drinks, sweets, chewing gum, nutella or chocolate spreads. Other items not permitted are frubes(in Junior Infants only).
- All classes will revise the food pyramid yearly encouraging healthy eating/living.
- 5th and 6th classes are to be given a talk based on healthy living and exercise.
- Due to the incidence of severe allergy to peanuts and mixed nuts amongst some pupils, we ask you to **omit all peanuts, nuts and nut based products** from your child's lunchbox including nutella, peanut butter, chocolate spread and cereal bars/health bars. We are now a nut free zone.
- If your child has eaten any food containing nuts before coming to school, please be sure your child's hands and face have been thoroughly washed before entering the school

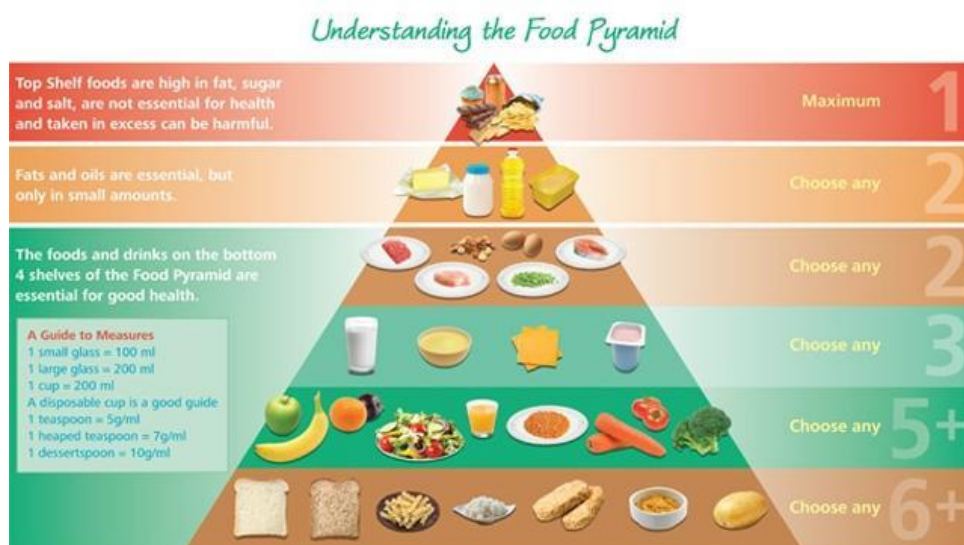
Following consultation with Dr Sarah Browne UCD, it was brought to our attention that foods should not be seen as a 'treat' so we will endeavour to curb our use of this terminology in school and would encourage you to do the same at home. We will also ask that parents pay particular

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attention to the size of the top shelf foods coming in on a Friday. They should be small and proportionate to the size of your child and the rest of their lunch. We would ask that top shelf foods are snack-size for example a 'funsize' bar from a multipack, a mini pack of Haribo or a biscuit for example.

Healthy lunch box options:

Foods from the top tier of the food pyramid should not be included in your child's lunchbox



Snacks:

*Try.....*whole meal muffins, banana muffins, houmous and carrot sticks, scones, healthy flapjacks, washed raw vegetables, fruit for example banana, handful of grapes, easy peel mandarin, ring of pineapple, dried fruit, , crackers and cream cheese, crackers, mini quiche, fromage frais, breadsticks, crispbreads, natural or low fat yogurt with fresh fruit (fresh, frozen or tinned in its own juice), banana bread

Drinks

*Gulp down.....*water, milk, unsweetened fruit juices, homemade smoothies

Carbohydrates

*What about.....*preferably whole-grain breads, rolls, bagels, wraps, oatcakes, crackers, pitta, rice, ricecakes, pasta

Fillings could include: houmous, tuna, cheese, ham and cheese, chicken and cheese, fish fingers, salad, mashed egg

Parent Meeting for New Entrants(Junior Infants):

Parents are given an overview of this policy in their welcome packs.

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Tap-Tastic, Less Plastic:

We encourage the daily use of re-useable bottles for drinks.

Green Flag School:

Children are also asked to:

- ✓ Take home (in their lunchbox) all uneaten food, foil, wrappers, drinks cartons and containers
- ✓ Put only fruit peel into the compost bins
- ✓ Not bring in cans or glass – for safety reasons.

Healthy Rewards in School:

Using food as a reward in school contradicts the messages given as part of the curriculum. Food rewards can interfere with children learning to eat in response to hunger and encourages them to eat when they are not hungry. It encourages them to eat outside of normal meal times and can contribute to tooth decay.

Teachers are asked to have a prize box in school and not to reward children with sweets, in so far as possible.

Events in School:

Some fundraisers/movie days/wellbeing wednesday activities that are organised in school provide children with a goody bag. This bag will be carefully considered by staff and will have the healthiest option incorporated(taking into account that it is a special occasion/once off celebration).

N.B. Parents/guardians of any child with a medical condition which requires a special dietary provision should contact the school.

Ratification:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting. A copy of the policy is available on the school website. Hard copies are available from the school office on request.

Signed: _____ Date: 24th February 2025
Michael Hunt
Chairperson

Signed: _____ Date: 24th February 2025
Michelle Cotterell
Principal