



Food and Nutrition Policy

1. Rationale and Context

This policy is established to promote a consistent, positive and educational approach to healthy eating within our school environment. We recognise that good nutrition is fundamental to students' physical health, cognitive development, concentration and overall well-being.

The policy is structured around two key pillars: the externally supplied Hot Lunch Programme and standard for individually chosen food brought from home. It is aligned with the principles of the HSE's Healthy Eating Guidelines and the Department of Social Inclusion's aim of ensuring adequate nutrition for all children.

2. Aims

Food provided or consumed within the school day contributes positively to a balanced diet, in line with the Food Pyramid guidelines.

The roles and responsibilities of the external catering company, school staff, parents and pupils regarding children's lunches and the hot lunch programme are clear.

There are clear, consistent and easy-to-follow recommendations for packed lunches and snacks brought from home.

There is a safe environment for all pupils by rigorously managing food allergies and intolerances.

Hydration is promoted through the easy availability of water.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1. The External Hot Lunch Provider (Foodies, Athlone)

The external provider is responsible for the complete provision of the daily hot lunch programme. Their responsibilities are central to this policy:

- **Nutritional Compliance:** Ensuring all meals meet the nutritional criteria set out by the HSE and the Department of Social Inclusion's Hot School Meals Programme standards. This includes providing variety, minimising high-fat, high-salt and high-sugar items and ensuring adequate portion sizes.
- **Quality and Temperature:** Guaranteeing all food is prepared, transported and delivered at the correct, safe temperature.
- **Allergen Management:** Providing comprehensive and easily accessible ingredient and allergen information for every menu item and strictly implementing cross-contamination prevention protocols.
- **Reliability:** Ensuring timely daily delivery to prevent disruption to the school schedule.

3.2. School Management

Contracting and ongoing oversight of the external lunch provider.

Implementing and communicating the school's packed lunch and snack rules to the entire school community.

3.3. School Staff

Supervising meal times and encouraging healthy eating habits and table manners.

Allowing "Water Breaks" policy throughout the day.

Monitoring compliance with the school policy for packed lunches.

Strictly adhering to procedures for administering medication or responding to allergic reactions.

3.4. Parents/ Guardians

Supporting the policy by ensuring snacks for morning break and any packed lunches comply with this policy.

Immediately informing the school of any known food allergies, intolerances or specific dietary requirements.

Encouraging healthy eating habits at home.

4. Policy Components

4.1. The Hot Lunch Programme

The hot lunch programme provides a balanced, nutritious main meal to all participating pupils, meeting Department of Social Inclusion guidelines for quality and substance.

Choice: The provider must offer a menu with at least two main options daily (e.g., one meat/fish option and one vegetarian option) and include at least two portions of vegetables or salad.

Social Inclusion: All children are encouraged to participate in the programme to foster a sense of social inclusion and ensure equitable access to good nutrition.

4.2. Packed Lunches and Snacks

This section applies to all food brought from home (morning break snacks and lunches on days the hot lunch is not taken).

(a) The HSE recommends that lunchboxes include one item from each of the following groups:

Starchy Foods: Bread, rolls, wraps, crackers, rice, pasta.

Protein Foods: Lean meat, poultry, eggs, beans, pulses, cheese.

Fruit and Vegetables: At least one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetables (e.g., apple slices, carrots, cherry tomatoes).

Dairy: A carton of milk, plain yogurt or cheese portion.

(b) To maintain consistency and avoid confusion, the following items are discouraged as they are generally high in sugar, salt and saturated fat:

Confectionery: Sweets, chocolate bars, jelly, processed cereal bars and food containing excessive amounts of icing.

Savoury Snacks: Crisps, crackers labelled as high-salt, or other fried/processed snacks.

Drinks: Fizzy drinks and highly sweetened fruit-based drinks (unless diluted water is the primary ingredient).

Nuts/Nut Products: Due to severe allergy risks (Anaphylaxis), the school operates a strict NO NUT/PEANUT policy. This includes peanut butter, Nutella and any snacks that explicitly state 'may contain nuts.'

4.3. Hydration

Water is the primary drink encouraged.

Water Bottles: Students may bring a reusable, clearly labelled water bottle daily. Access to water is available throughout the school day.

Milk: Plain milk or plain fortified milk alternatives are permitted.

5. Allergy and Anaphylaxis and Individual Needs Management

The school ensures that individual student requirements are met sensitively and confidentially.

An up-to-date register of all known allergies pupils in the school is maintained.

Parents must notify the school immediately by email of new or changing allergies, providing full details.

Where required, in-date EpiPens must be supplied to the school, along with clear instructions.

6. Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly as required. Any updates to national guidelines, including the Healthy Ireland nutrition standards, will be incorporated into the review process.

7. Ratification

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 15/4/26

Signed: , chairperson Board of Management.

Date: 15/4/2026