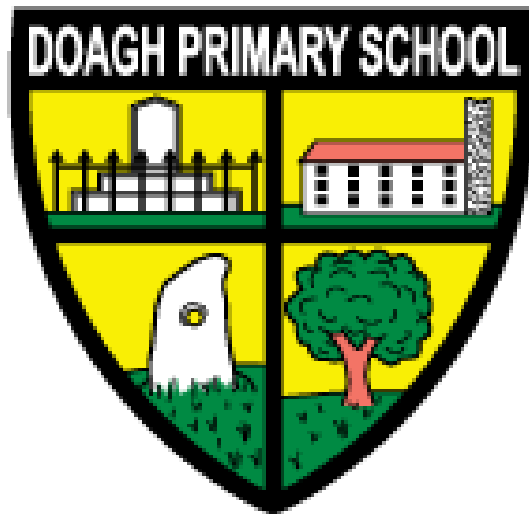


# Doagh Primary School



Aspire, Aim, Achieve....



## Food in School/Healthy Eating Policy

March 2024

## Rationale

This policy articulates the DENI's policy in relation to all food in schools, support available, roles, responsibilities, and funding. It has been established in consultation with parents, staff, children and governors and has taken guidance from:

- Every School a Good School: Healthy Food for Healthy Outcomes – Food in Schools Policy (DENI/DHSSPSNI – 2009-2010)
- Establishing a Whole School Food Policy (HPA/School Food – Top Marks Programme DENI/DHSSPSNO – 2009/10)
- Nutritional Standards for School Lunches – A guide for implementation (HPANI) \*\*currently under review\*\*
- Nutritional Standards for other food and drinks in school – A guide for implementation (HPANI)
- Healthy Breaks for Schools: A guide for Pupils and Parents (PHA 2013)
- A Fitter Future for all: Framework for Preventing and Addressing Overweight and Obesity in NI 2012 – 2022 (DHSSPSNI)
- ETI Chief Inspector's report (2016-18)
- ETI Primary Phase report (2018 – 20)

This policy applies to all grant aided schools and came into effect from 24 September 2013 (DENI 2013/21) where it states:

'It is widely known that a healthy, balanced diet is vital for children's growth and development and for their long-term health and well-being. We also know that there is a well-documented relationship between poor health, nutrition and low school achievement. This is particularly important in early years when life-time habits are formed but also in teenage years as we educate the parents of the future.'

'We also know that the school environment can have a significant influence on the health behaviours of children and young people and, in particular, their food choices. Schools therefore play an important role in educating children and young people in the importance of a balanced diet and a healthy lifestyle, providing healthy and nutritious food choices and giving consistent health messages.'

The ETI Chief Inspector's report (2016-18) states:

'Over one fifth of NI children entering primary school are already overweight or obese; high quality provision in PE, together with the promotion of healthy lifestyles and better dietary education are key to reducing childhood obesity.'

This Food in School policy is a significant component of a healthy school linking together healthy eating, physical activity, emotional health and well-being and personal development.

School-based approaches to supporting child health and well-being can only be effective if they adopt a whole school approach. This involves addressing the full range of issues that impact on childhood nutrition and on the food choices that children make in school, including:

- School meals (encompassing nutritional standards, choice, balance, access, availability and cost)
- Other food provided in school (tuck shops, drinks and breakfast club)
- Food brought into school (packed lunches, snacks)
- Quality of the dining experience
- Education on nutrition and healthy eating

- Development of food preparation and cooking skills
- Training and development of staff working in schools
- Parental attitudes and involvement
- Linkage with school development planning
- Advertisement and promotion of food in school

### Statistics

‘School Food – The essential guide’ states:

- Most children in the UK have a diet that is too high in fat, sugar and salt
- A survey of children’s eating habits in NI showed that nearly three quarters of children had biscuits daily, with half of all children eating confectionery and savoury snacks such as crisps at least once a day
- Dental decay in children continues to be a significant public health problem in NI, with three fifths of five year olds showing signs of dental decay compared to the UK average 43%
- The main cause of tooth decay is related to the frequency and amount of sugars consumed in both food and drinks
- According to recent studies, the main source of non-milk extrinsic sugar or added sugar in the diet is soft drinks, sugar, preserves and confectionery, especially chocolate
- Nutrition is central to health, and children’s diet can be an important influence of their health now and in the future. Good nutrition in childhood can therefore help protect against chronic diseases in later life
- International research shows that diets rich in fruit and vegetables are protective against cardiovascular disease, including heart disease and stroke

### Our Whole School Approach

In Doagh Primary School, we aim to play an effective role to promoting ‘change’ and providing a curriculum that supports a whole school approach towards healthy lifestyles.

Our healthy school is one in which the Board of Governors, staff, members of the wider community and relevant agencies work together in a planned way to promote the health of everyone in the school by developing policies, practice and structures to underpin a sustainable programme of action.

Our healthy school adopts a process of self-evaluation and action planning which aims to improve health and well-being in relation to the three key elements of:

- Ethos and environment
- Quality of learning and teaching
- Quality of management

These key elements are closely linked to our Pastoral Care policies and procedures within the School Development Plan.

This policy enables our school to develop and maintain a shared philosophy of all aspects of food and drink. It makes a public statement which demonstrates how our school cares for and makes a positive contribution to the health and well-being of children, staff and other stakeholders. This policy:

- Sets out a co-ordinated approach to food and drink to increase the availability of healthier options
- Ensures equality of access and participation for all

- Reinforces appropriate messages relating to food and drink, e.g. ensuring consistency between the curriculum and provision of school food and drink
- Engages the whole school community in taking part in policy development
- Establishes effective school-caterer, teacher-parent working partnerships, working towards a common goal
- Ensures greater sustainability through planned actions as part of our school development plan
- Communicates our school's shared vision, ethos and values to children, staff, parents and other stakeholders (including the wider community)

This policy is a shared, evolving document for all stakeholders that interact with our school. It expresses a common vision of the ethos, status and role of all aspects of nutrition within our school. In particular, it aims to develop a coherent approach to healthy eating activities in our school. It also encourages all aspects of food and drink to be brought together, clearly, coherently and consistently, including:

- The formal curriculum: e.g. the Arts, Science and Technology and PDMU
- The school garden: e.g. cultivating fruit and vegetables
- Participating in initiatives such as Refillution and our healthy break scheme
- Provision of food and drink at school: e.g. Breakfast club, school lunch, water consumption and use of food and drink as a reward
- Consumption of food and drink at school: e.g. the dining hall environment, pupils bringing food to schools and commercial food vans (at PTA fairs etc.)
- Pastoral care and welfare issues: e.g. Free School Meals

Establishing this policy is key to improving the health and well-being of our school. It is also an important aspect, with good working practices, that helps us work towards being a healthy school. We have used the following process to establish this policy:

- *Discuss the policy with children, parents, staff and governors*
- *Audit all stakeholders regarding current practice (February 2023)*
- *Create a draft policy and consult on its contents and practicalities*
- *Establish a policy in light of consultation*
- *Disseminate and implement the new policy*
- *Monitor and evaluate the effect of the policy*

One of our school aims is to:

‘prepare children for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. We want to cultivate our good citizens of the future.’

The provision of a healthy curriculum and daily routine supports our overall ethos, enabling our children to gain the knowledge and life skills necessary to ‘Aspire, Aim and Achieve’ now and in the future.

At Doagh Primary School we actively support the belief that a balanced diet and proper fluid intake are essential to all members of the school community if they are to fulfil their potential in life. Proper nutrition is essential for good health and effective learning and teaching. We believe that all messages about food and drink within school should be consistent and, as a school, we want to play our role in establishing and maintaining life-long healthy and environmentally sustainable eating and drinking habits. A good and balanced diet is important for good health. A healthy and varied diet can also help to maintain a healthy body weight, enhance general well-being and reduce the number of conditions such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and osteoporosis.

We believe that:

- As children spend on average one quarter of their waking lives in school, one big step to improving their nutrition is to offer and promote healthy food and drink choices throughout the school day
- Our school environment, the attitudes of staff and children, as well as what the children learn in the classroom, will all have a major influence on their knowledge and understanding of health
- If we encourage children to enjoy healthy food and drinks early on, it is much more likely that we will reinforce positive behaviours that will remain with them throughout life

Doagh Primary School recognises the important connection between a healthy diet and a child's ability to learn effectively and achieve high standards in school. The school also recognises its role as part of the wider community in promoting family health.

It is therefore our responsibility to:

- Adopt a whole school approach to food and nutrition
- Comply fully with the nutritional standards for school lunches/other food and drinks in school (currently under review)
- Ensure that children have easy access at all times to free, fresh drinking water
- Provide a consistent, informed and up to date curriculum for all children, including practical opportunities to explore ways to develop a healthy diet and to develop practical skills in the safe, hygienic, healthy and creative use of food, e.g. visits from a chef/dietician, taster sessions, competitions
- Ensure that the school curriculum allows for connected learning by developing effective links and an awareness between the teacher of nutrition/health matters and teaching in relation to PE
- Encourage the support from health and education partners and voluntary organisations that have developed a range of educational programmes on nutrition and healthy eating (School Nurse last visited for whole school Healthy Eating talks 6/6/24)
- Improve the health of children, staff and families by helping to support and influence their eating habits and knowledge in order to hopefully create life-long healthy habits
- Increase an awareness of food issues, including what constitutes a healthy and environmentally sustainable diet
- Help children improve concentration, learning and energy levels
- Protect the health and safety of children with serious food allergies

However, DENI, alongside Doagh Primary School, recognises that, while schools have the leading role in Food in School policy, this is within the context that:

- Parents, and those with ultimate responsibility, are the primary influencers of, and have ultimate responsibility for, the eating habits of their children
- Children, and particularly young people, have the right to make informed choices in regard to the food they eat
- For many children the food they eat has implications beyond its nutritional content. This may be because of disability, medical conditions or allergies or for religious and cultural reasons
- The Food in School policy can only be truly effective within the context of a school that addresses personal development and emotional health and well-being and will work best when linked closely to PE and physical activity in school.

This policy is therefore an overarching policy advocating our whole school approach to all food provided and consumed in schools and developing knowledge and skills in relation to healthy eating and lifestyle.

### Roles and Responsibilities

#### Pupils

Pupils will play a vital role in making this policy a success. They are actively involved in decision making around all food in school eg, audits, Children's Voice (council), assemblies, focus groups etc.

Whilst the standards are mandatory, pupils are nonetheless given the opportunity to give their opinion on school lunches (quality, choices and service) and how they are educated about healthy eating.

Pupils are given the opportunity to input the rules about the discretionary elements of the policy e.g. packed lunches, length of break and lunchtimes.

As part of this policy, pupils are encouraged to develop healthy eating patterns and make sensible and informed choices by:

- Bringing a healthy break to school each day (with the exception of Friday Treat Day)
- Eating fruit, vegetables, dairy products or bread-based products at break time and lunch time
- Drinking non-fizzy/energy drinks
- Bringing water to class to drink throughout the day. The children should use their refillable bottles. In response to our recent consultation (February 2023), we consider it acceptable that children who do not like water may bring sugar-free flavoured water as an alternative option. This must be still (not fizzy). Our preferred choice, however, remains water.

#### Parents

If this policy is to be effective there is a need for parents to be effectively informed and engaged.

Parental involvement is essential in developing any kind of the discretionary elements of the policy and, in particular, in supporting school policies on packed lunches/breaks.

The school dinner menu is available on the school website. The catering staff provide:

- Meals that follow the Nutritional Standards
- Milk or water for the children to drink every day
- Fresh fruit with every meal
- Meals that are low in salt

Nuts are not available/permitted in school as we are an allergy aware school. We take into account religious and cultural requirements, allergies and special dietary requirements. Appropriate risk assessments are undertaken and provisions made in consultation with the Catering staff. Supervisors are also informed.

At the start of each year, all parents are informed of the procedures available to access free school meals for their child. Doagh Primary School is pleased that almost all eligible parents complete these forms and access the meals on a regular basis.

#### Staff

As part of this policy, staff are encouraged to:

- Eat fruit, vegetables, dairy products or bread based products at break time and lunch time
- Drink non-sugar based drinks – water, tea or coffee at break time and lunch time

### The Curriculum

Doagh Primary School reinforces healthy eating messages throughout the school year with a whole school approach encouraged and promoted by all members of the school community, from the Board of Governors to teachers and catering staff. The delivery of this healthy eating policy is carried out in a variety of ways which include:

- Topic based classroom work
- Planned aspects of PDMU
- Special assemblies, visits by agencies (e.g. Cancer Focus NI, Dairy Council, PHA)
- Pastoral Time (e.g. Circle time)
- Special class or individual projects

In order to achieve a healthy diet, our school believes in the importance of the ‘eatwell’ plate which clearly outlines the types and proportions of foods people need for a healthy and well-balanced diet.

*Children aged five and over should try to eat the following:*

- *Plenty of fruit and vegetables, aim for 5 portions a day: fresh, frozen, tinned, dried or juiced*
- *Plenty of carbohydrates, such as bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods like breakfast cereals and noodles. Choose wholegrain varieties wherever you can. Starchy foods should make up one third of our daily food intake*
- *Some milk and dairy foods as they are good sources of protein, vitamin A, B12 and calcium. Try to look for low-fat products*
- *Moderate amounts of meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein. They are good sources on protein and they also provide vitamins and minerals, especially iron, vitamin D and B12. Some types of meat are high in fat so it is best to choose a lean cut, remove skin or rind and try not to add oil or fry*
- *Just a small amount of foods and drinks high in fat or sugar or both*

(More information is available at [www.eatwell.gov.uk](http://www.eatwell.gov.uk))

### Routines

#### Break Time

Suitable healthy breaks could include:

- Fresh fruit/vegetables (chopped for children under 5)
- Salad pots
- Bread/pancakes
- Scones (plain or wholemeal)
- Cheese strings or dipping cheese

Children are asked to avoid foods such as crisps, chocolate, biscuits and sweets. These are permitted (in small quantity) on Friday Treat Day.

Fizzy or Energy drinks and chewing gum are not permitted at any time.

#### Lunch Time

Parents and carers are encouraged to provide well-balanced healthy packed lunches for their children. Fizzy drinks should not be included in the children’s packed lunches. Care should be taken

to adhere to the 'eatwell plate' and creating a balanced lunchbox containing suitable foods and food groups.

A good packed lunch, coupled with a healthy breakfast, can provide up to two thirds of the energy and nutrients required by a growing and developing body and mind. In a child's packed lunch, parents should aim to get a least one portion from each of the food groups on the 'eatwell plate'

- Carbohydrates: bread (brown, white or multigrain), pitta bread, ryvita, pasta or rice
- Fruits and/or vegetables: Salad, tomatoes, cucumber, celery, carrots, pepper sticks, fruit (chopped for under 5s) fresh or canned in fruit juice
- Meat, fish and alternatives: sliced pork, chicken, turkey. Alternatives lentils, beans, pulses and meat alternatives such as quorn. Fish is a good source of protein as are eggs, milk and cheese
- Dairy foods: Fromage Frais, yoghurts, cheese spread with dipping sticks, cheesy strings
- Fatty and Sugary foods: Better for a child's teeth if a limited amount is included in their lunch box rather than at break times

Parents are reminded that the best drink is always water. However, if their child doesn't like water, sugar-free squashes for break/lunch time are encouraged. Fruit juices and milkshakes are also good ideas for lunch boxes but parents should watch out for the sugar content.

All children will require a container of water (not fizzy) to drink during learning Sessions (including PE). No fizzy or energy drinks are permitted in school.

Drinks should be sent to school in a separate bag from class books to avoid spills in school bags. Children should not at any time bring glass bottles to school.

**Chewing gum and nuts are not permitted. We are a NUT FREE ZONE.**

School meals, provided by catering staff in the local area, are carefully prepared so as to follow the nutritional guidelines put in place by DENI.

Our school has a very structured lunch time routine in order to ensure that all children and staff have adequate access to eat, rest and/or play.

Some children who eat packed lunches go to the appropriate classroom. Others eat these in the school hall.

Children who take school dinners go to the hall and sit at tables.

Dinners are served to the children (with some P7 helpers).

#### Food brought into School

All children and parents are aware that no nuts are allowed in school due to the effect this may have on children with allergies.

Children are not allowed to bring birthday cakes into school.

#### Advertising and sponsorships

Doagh Primary School is aware of its responsibility in the effective organisation of its sponsorship and advertising arrangements. As a primary school, we know it is irresponsible to advertise or receive financial gain from any 'unhealthy' product or company that may consequently be perceived as our support for that product or company.



### Food made available in school

Doagh Primary School does not have any vending machines.

No chocolate, biscuits, buns, cakes, sweets, crisps, cereal bars or juices are sold in school, although there are occasions when these may be sold by PTA Tuck shop (end of term) or by children (charity/school bun sales) or they may be given as the occasional prize by a class teacher. This is in the understanding that they are acceptable as a very small part of a balanced diet. This is also applicable to school parties or discos.

All children have access to fresh water. Children should have a water bottle in school daily.

Water and milk are available in the hall at dinner time.

Ice cream is available occasionally with school dinner.

### Dietary/Medical or Special Educational Needs

As previously stated, Doagh Primary School is a 'nut free' school. It is the policy that children and staff do not bring nuts or nut-based products to school. This is to protect any children enrolled at our school that may suffer an anaphylactic shock if they come into contact with nut or nut-based products.

A child's specific dietary requirement will be adhered to in line with medical advice supplied by the parent. Meal provision by the catering staff also reflects religious, ethnic and vegetarian needs of children and staff.

Doagh Primary School recognises that some children may be unable to adhere to our healthy eating policy due to conditions such as ASD. In such cases, parents are requested to discuss these with the school Principal where necessary accommodations may be made.

### The School Garden: Eat, Taste and Grow

We are very proud of our developing garden and the fact that children, under adult supervision, can plant, grow and then taste fresh produce such as carrots, lettuce, potatoes and strawberries.

### Dissemination of this Policy and Procedures

All staff members are aware of the contents of this policy.

This policy is available to all parents of pupils enrolled in Doagh Primary School. A summary is included in the September booklet, distributed to all parents annually.

The school dinner menu is available on the school website.

### Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The effectiveness of this policy will be continually monitored by all stakeholders and evaluated annually in line with school routines and any new advice from DENI or other agencies.

DENI has the lead responsibility for monitoring the implementation of this policy.

