

Healthy Eating Policy

Introduction

As part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Programme, at Danu Community Special School (Danu CSS) we encourage the students to become more aware of the need for healthy food in their lunch boxes. Danu CSS Healthy Eating Policy outlines how the school supports healthy eating practices through the promotion of healthy lunches and healthy snacks and by other means. The SPHE Guidelines aims to promote personal development and wellbeing of the student to provide a foundation for healthy living in all its aspects.

Danu CSS is committed to facilitating the student's development of skills and attitudes to allow them to make informed decisions about their food intake. There will be a whole school approach, involving Teachers, Special Needs Assistants, Parents and students to ensure healthy eating messages are part of every aspect of school life.

Rationale

What people eat is known to be a key factor influencing health. Research indicates a strong link between diet and performance (e.g., a low sugar intake promotes concentration, lessens hyperactivity, protects teeth and lessens the risk of diabetes). A low salt intake reduces the risk of heart disease in later life.

Children form their eating habits for life from an early age. A good diet and plenty of sleep, fresh air and exercise are essential to the growing child. We ask parents to allow plenty of time in the morning for a healthy breakfast. Breakfast is perhaps the most important meal of the day. Not only does breakfast break the child's long overnight fast and help concentration, it also lays down the foundation for healthy eating for the rest of the day.

Children's lunches sometimes tend to be low in fibre and high in fat and sugar. The food pyramid will offer a guide for a healthy and varied diet for your child. Sandwiches and fruit are healthier than sweets and biscuits. Check with your child that he/she has the right amount to eat.

Aims and Objectives

- To work in partnership with Parents/ Guardians and professionals to support each child to develop healthy eating practices which will become embedded for life.
- To work in partnership with Parents/ Guardians and professionals to support children to deliver an effective and consistent approach to healthy eating practices.
- To promote the personal development and well-being of the child
- To promote the health of the child and provide a foundation for healthy living in all its aspects.
- To deliver an effective and consistent approach to healthy eating practices
- To raise awareness and promote a positive approach to food nutrition and oral health education

- To encourage responsibility and accountability in parents in offering healthy choices to their child.

Healthy Lunch Boxes

Each student will bring their own lunch box to school daily. Lunch is an important meal for school-going children. It should provide one third of their recommended daily allowance of nutrients without being high in fat, sugar or salt. It should also provide dietary fibre (roughage). The Healthy Lunch Box Guide (Appendix 1) is designed to help provide quick, appetizing and nutritious lunches for your child. Danu CSS endorses these guidelines and recommends that parents adhere to them in the preparation of school lunches.

Drinks

It is important that children take in enough fluids during the day. If they do not drink enough they may become dehydrated, thirsty, tired and weak. Drinks should always be included for break-time and lunch. Water and milk are the most suitable drinks for children. Because of its natural sugar content, unsweetened fruit juice should only be consumed with meals ideally diluted (one part to ten parts water).

Suggestions for a Healthy Lunch

- Breads – whole grain breads, rolls, bagels, wraps, soda bread or pitta.
- Bread substitutes – oatcakes, plain rice cakes, pancakes or crackers.
- Fillings – cheese, tuna, hummus, cold meats, pate, egg, lettuce, spinach, cucumber, tomato, onion, peppers, coleslaw, salad or banana.
- Hot leftovers in a flask – curry, pasta, soup, baked beans, rice, stew, lasagne or noodles.
- Cold Left overs.
- Fruit – apple, oranges, banana, grapes, pear, plum, apricots, melon, grapefruit, pineapple, strawberries, raspberries, mango, blackberries or blueberries. Remember to peel and/or cut fruit and vegetables into bite sized pieces.
- Raw Vegetables – tomatoes, sweet corn, peppers, carrot sticks, celery sticks, broccoli, cabbage or cucumber.
- Scones
- Whole grain/fruit bar
- Raisins
- Popcorn for children over 5
- Crackers, whole grain bread, pitta bread

We ask that students do not bring the following food items to school

- Any type of nuts or nut products due to allergies - We are a Nut Free school – no Nutella.
- Fizzy Drinks
- Sports Drinks

We ask parents to limit the following foods below, but note the Behavioural Specialist may suggest these foods to be used as motivators/ reinforcers or for sensory needs

- Chocolate
- Sweets
- Crisps

- Chewing gum

In Addition

- In the interest of parents knowing what their child has eaten in school and in the interest of keeping the school environment clean and free from waste, students will take home all uneaten food, silver paper, wrappings, containers and cartons.
- Students will not bring in cans and glass – for safety reasons
- Staff members will model healthy eating patterns and provide support and encouragement to students and parents in cultivating healthy eating habits.
- On trips out or going to the shops students will be encouraged to choose healthy options
- Each student's birthday will be celebrated in school. Sometimes this can take the form of having a party with students from another class. Parents are welcome to send in a cake or some small treats to celebrate the occasion.

Role of Parents

- To encourage and support school policy on Healthy Eating
- To facilitate and provide healthy choice in lunch boxes for their child

Role of the School

- As part of Social, Personal and Healthy Education (SPHE) and Social Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) at Danu CSS students will develop an awareness of and understanding of Healthy Eating.
- Positions healthy eating in a broader context of healthy living for oral health, cookery, exercise etc.
- To encourage students to make healthier choices and take responsibility for the choices they make
- To promote drinking water as much as possible and provide students with opportunities to drink water on a regular basis at school.
- To promote sugar free reward system in school except on special occasions.
- To invite health care professionals, such as the dentist, dental nurse, doctor and nurse to the school to speak with the students.

Shop Days, Special Days and Celebrations

Once a week students go the shop and buy a small item. Parents will provide their child with money to go to the shop and advise the teacher on what their child may want to purchase. There are specific days during the school year where children may have less healthier options.

- Social Outings
- Students Birthday
- School Trips
- Special occasions and celebrations

Roles and Responsibilities

- Parents are responsible for providing healthy school lunches for their child.
- Children are encouraged to participate in making their own healthy school lunch.
- All members of staff promote this policy through regular verbal and visual reminders and show good examples to the children.

- Teachers will teach about healthy eating as part of the SPHE Curriculum.

N.B. Parents/Guardians of any child with a medical condition which requires a special diet should contact the Principal.

This policy was adopted and ratified by the Board of Management of Danu CSS on 22/3/23.

Signed: Pauline Weir
Chairperson, Board of Management

Patricia Dodder
Principal

Next Review Period: January 2024, October 2021, September 2019

Here's what should go in a healthy lunchbox

Vegetables, salad and fruit

At least one portion from the fruit and vegetables food group...

- 1 medium apple, orange, banana, pear or similar size fruit
- 2 small fruits – plums, kiwis or similar size fruit
- A small glass (150ml) of unsweetened fruit juice
- Half a tin (3 tablespoons or 4 dessertspoons) of fruit in its own juice
- 1 heaped dessertspoon of dried fruit (for example, raisins or sultanas)
- 1 small bunch of grapes (10 grapes)
- 1 small salad (for example, dessert bowl sized salad of lettuce, tomato, cucumber and celery sticks)
- 3 tablespoons or 4 dessertspoons of vegetables (for example, chopped or grated carrots)
- A bowl of homemade vegetable soup in a thermos flask for older children

Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans and nuts

One portion from the meat and meat alternatives food group...

- 2 slices (50–75g) of cooked meat
- 1–2 eggs (hard-boiled, sliced or mashed)
- A small can (100g) of tuna, salmon, mackerel or sardines
- 4 tablespoons of hummus – try out as a dip with carrots or celery

Note: Fish such as tinned tuna or salmon should be included in the lunchbox at least once a week – remove any bones

Did you know?

Lean cuts of meat such as chicken breast are lower in salt than processed meats such as ham and bacon. Choose lean meat more often than processed meat.

Did you know?

To avoid soggy sandwiches put juicy vegetables between some lettuce and other sandwich fillings for example, cheese. For younger children cutting fruit into manageable size chunks will encourage them to eat more fruit.





Wholemeal cereals and breads, potatoes, pasta and rice

One portion from the bread and cereals group which would be...

- 2 thin slices of wholemeal bread
- 1 small bread roll
- 1 tortilla wrap
- 1 pitta bread
- 4-6 crackers or breadsticks
- 1 cup of cooked rice, pasta or couscous
- 1 small bagel

Did you know?

Including wholegrain varieties of breads and cereals in our diet can help us feel fuller for longer and prevent constipation.



Milk, yoghurt and cheese

One portion from the dairy products food group...

- 1 glass or mini-carton of milk (200ml)
- A pot of natural or low-fat yoghurt (125ml) or custard
- 2 cheese triangles
- 2 thumbs (25g) of cheese such as cheddar, edam or gouda varieties

Note: Low-fat dairy products are suitable for children over two years of age. Flavoured milks are also a good source of calcium but have a higher energy and sugar content than plain milk - check labels and compare brands.

Did you know?

Dairy products are especially important in the diets of children and teenagers as they provide calcium to support growing bones and teeth. Low-fat natural yoghurt with fruit is the best option.

SafeFood 'Healthy Lunchboxes- Practical Tips for you and your children on how to prepare a healthy lunchbox' 2018