



Pelletstown Educate Together National School

Healthy Eating Policy

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on: 19th June 2025

Review due: June 2029

Pelletstown Educate Together N.S.

Healthy Eating Policy

2025

Introduction

This policy was originally devised in 2021, and was reviewed in 2025 to take account of the provision of hot lunches at the school, through the School Meals Scheme, which was introduced in Term 3 2024.

Rationale

According to the World Health Organisation (2021) 'Schools play an important role in promoting healthy diets and good nutrition and can create an enabling environment for children.'

Good nutrition is critical for every child's short- and long-term health and development. The HSE states that 'a healthy eating policy enables schools to develop and maintain a shared philosophy on all aspects of food and drink.' These aspects include:

- Developing consistent messages about healthy eating across the curriculum.
- Ensuring consistency between the messages within the curriculum and food available in the school.
- Ensuring food provision at school is in line with healthy eating guidelines
- Creating a positive eating environment, both social and physical, at mealtimes.

To this, we would like to add the creation of an environment that fosters and maintains a positive body image culture in our school. Our policy outlines our school's commitment to promote a balanced approach to food and health. This policy aims to support parents/carers and staff to support pupils in developing healthy, balanced eating habits and a positive body image from an early age.

A number of key documents and resources guided the review of this school policy (2025).

- [Health Eating Policy Toolkit for Primary Schools: Supporting Wellbeing in Schools](#)
- [BodyWhys Education Section](#)
- [Nutrition Standards for Hot School Meals](#)
- [Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice](#)
- [Fuel for School: Our Nutrition Guide \(The Lunch Bag\)](#)

Aims

The aims of this policy are:

1. To promote a whole-school awareness of balanced nutrition, consistent with national healthy eating guidelines and the Primary Curriculum Framework.
2. To provide consistent messages about balanced nutrition through classroom and whole-school practices.
3. To positively impact the nutrition of the pupils of the school.
4. To support our school's sustainability practices and to encourage the pupils to be aware, alert and responsive to them.
5. To support our pupil's concentration, learning and energy levels.
6. To promote and support a healthy and positive body image for pupils, staff and the wider school community.
7. To inform and guide the approach to the provision of hot school meals in our school.

8. To ensure that food provision in school reflects the ethical and medical requirements of staff and pupils, e.g. religious, ethnic, vegetarian, medical and allergenic needs.
9. To make the provision and consumption of food an enjoyable and safe experience in our school.

Culture and Environment

- Drinking water is provided in all classrooms and children are encouraged to bring refillable water containers to school.
- Adequate time is provided for children to eat, recognising the importance of eating as a social activity and acknowledging that, with the exception of wet breaks or teaching activities, screens do not feature as part of eating time.
- Non-food rewards are promoted over those related to food.
- Birthdays are celebrated and marked in ways that do not involve food, within the classroom.
- Bodies, in all of their diversities, are represented and discussed in the classroom.
- Opportunities to grow food will be provided through the provision of class planters and an after-school gardening club (which will be seasonal and dependent on staff availability).
- Through local links with Reilly's Community Garden, our pupils will be able to engage in gardening activities to prepare for and support the growth of different types of food crops.
- Opportunities to share culture and language through food will be provided through events such as 'Intercultural Day'.
- It is understood that some children may experience restrictive eating or Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake (ARFID) and that flexibility in relation to this policy may be required in *exceptional circumstances*. This will be discussed with parents/carers on an individual basis.

Curriculum (teaching and learning)

In Pelletstown ETNS, our approach to health and balanced eating will be supported by teaching and learning opportunities throughout the curriculum, as well as through the culture of the school. In terms of our curricular approach, healthy and balanced nutrition, sustainability, food and the environment, body image, physical health and bodily systems will be addressed within the curricular areas below.

- Wellbeing (See relevant curricular policies: Social, Personal and Health Education and Physical Education)
- STEM Education (See relevant curriculum policy: Science)
- Social and Environmental Education (See relevant curriculum policy: Geography)
- Learn Together (See relevant curriculum policy: An Ethical Approach to the Environment)

Staff will also pay attention to the 'DOs and DON'Ts' provided by Bodywhys (See *Appendix A*). Specifically, in supporting and promoting children's learning in relation to body image, staff may use particular lessons from the 'Happy to Be Me' resource from Bodywhys. If appropriate for a particular class, a Bodywhys workshop can be arranged to support learning around positive body image.

Policy & Planning

- External coaches/tutors that support the school curriculum will be advised of our policy approach to healthy eating, where relevant.
- Our contracted hot school meals provider will work to ensure that the school lunch offerings in Pelletstown ETNS adhere to the 'Nutrition Standards for Hot School Meals,' as outlined by Healthy Ireland, the national framework which aims to improve the health and wellbeing of the population of Ireland. The standards have been created in conjunction with the HSE, the Department of Social Protection, the Department of Health and Safefood Ireland. See 'Key Documents' section of this policy for additional information.

Relationships and Partnerships

- Parents and carers will be consulted with in terms of the content of this policy, as part of the policy-making process.
- Occasionally, our PTA may organise food-related events, such as bake sales. In such events, attention will be drawn to the foods that are not permitted, giving due consideration to the allergies present in the school.
- In the event of an external speaker/workshop for staff or students that may relate to this policy, we will request an advance copy of slides/materials to be used, so that we can ensure that the spirit of this policy is reflected (e.g. balanced nutrition approach, rather than a framing of good/bad foods).

General Guidelines

- All children will have two breaks each day. Parents/carers are asked to provide fresh fruit and vegetables and other appropriate foods as snacks to accompany the hot school meals that are provided within the school.
- Parents/carers should remember that **there is a total ban on kiwi and all nuts and nut-based products (including peanut butter, chocolate spread, any cereal bars with nuts, drinks containing nut products e.g. almond milk and nut-based pesto) because of the serious allergies of some pupils in the school.**
- Parents/carers should note the following:
 - Lollipops, chewing gum and hot liquids (including tea/coffee/herbal tea) are not allowed for all pupils
 - Only pupils from 1st – 6th Class are permitted to have popcorn as part of their lunch/snack
 - For junior and senior infants, if providing grapes, cherry tomatoes or sausages, they should be sliced lengthways to avoid a choking hazard
 - Any meat that is provided should be off the bone
- Children should eat only their own food (either that brought from home, or as ordered through the school lunch scheme). Children should not share or swap food, outside of particular school events such as bake sales or Intercultural Food Day.
- Cultural and religious dietary habits are respected. Parents/carers are requested to provide details of foods to be avoided by the child for such reasons.
- All uneaten food and related waste will be sent home with your child and cannot be disposed of in school. Children should bring a plastic box (provided by the lunch company) to school every day. Waste and leftovers from hot school lunches will be returned in this box every day from school. **To further reduce waste, parents/carers are asked to cancel their child's hot school lunch in the event of absence.**

- Children should be provided with a drink every day, in a refillable container. Water bottles can be refilled using drinking water taps in the classrooms. Because of its natural sugar content, unsweetened fruit juice (i.e. only 100% fruit juice) should only be consumed with meals. Sweetened fruit juice is not tooth-friendly so is not allowed in school.
- In keeping with our status as a Green Flag school and our work on sustainability within the Learn Together curriculum, please remove all packaging from food wherever possible. Instead, we encourage the use of reusable containers, flasks, beakers etc. Glass bottles and containers are not allowed.
- Parents/carers are asked, in general, when providing foods and snacks for school, **not** to include the following items:
 - caffeine drinks and products
 - crisps/sweets/chocolate
 - bars/biscuits/cakes/buns
 - fizzy drinks/energy drinks.

Exceptions

We recognise that avoiding the foods listed above may not be possible for everyone and that there may be some children for whom such foods are central to their needs at school. We ask that parents and carers make their child's teacher aware of this, where applicable, so that accommodations can be made.

During the school year, food-based treats may be organised by school staff from time to time, on special occasions e.g. cinema days, school trips, baking days etc. On these days, all pupils will receive the same treats. Careful attention will be given to any dietary requirements, food allergies or religious observances when selecting treats for the pupils.

Occasionally, staff may advise children that they can bring a small treat on a school trip. A small treat counts as an individual portion, not a large bag, packet or box that is meant for sharing. Sharing-sized treats will be taken and stored by the class teacher, in any such event. After school clubs hosted by staff may wish to organise treats on special occasions and will abide by this policy.

Food Allergies

If a child has a serious food allergy or a special dietary requirement, parents/carers are responsible for notifying the school and completing the medical conditions/allergies form upon registration, and the administration of medication form, where necessary.

School Support

Our strong pastoral care ethic and the Educate Together principle of child-centredness will ensure that no child goes hungry at school. If a child has forgotten their lunch, the school will contact their parents/carers to make arrangements for the delivery of their lunch. If this is not possible, the school will cater for the child.

All relevant curricular lessons which support this Healthy Eating Policy will be taught at all class levels (see 'Curriculum' section above).

Consultation, communication and dissemination of this policy:

This policy was drawn up in consultation with staff, pupils and parents. The attention of all new families will be drawn to this policy upon registration in the school. All new and staff will be informed of the details of the plan by the Deputy Principal and NQT mentor.

This policy will be published on the school website and made available to pupils and parents and be subject to ongoing review as needed.

Ratification of the plan:

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 19th June 2025, and will be reviewed in June 2029. It may be reviewed at an earlier date, to reflect relevant updates or changes.

Signed:

 (Chairperson, BOM) Date: 19/6/25

Caitiona A O'Leary (School Principal) Date: 19th June 2025

Appendix A: Bodywhys

Staff and the wider school community should endeavour to consider the following (as outlined by Bodywhys):

- ☒ DO reflect on your own attitudes to food and weight and be a positive role model.
- ☒ DO encourage students to listen to their body, to rest when needed and eat when hungry.
- ☒ DO emphasise that how we look is only one part of who we are.
- ☒ DO focus on the things that bodies can do rather than how they look
- ☒ DO praise students for their talents and positive attributes.
- ☒ DO encourage your students to find activities they enjoy and emphasise that everyone will have different interests
- ☒ DO emphasise that healthy bodies come in all shapes and sizes.
- ☒ DO (if mentioning healthy eating) focus on balance and eating a range of foods and remember that food is something to be enjoyed.

- ☐ DON'T talk about dieting in front of students.
- ☐ DON'T pass comment on people's bodies in front of students.
- ☐ DON'T promote 'No Sugar', 'Clean Eating' or any diet approach that results in guilt around food.
- ☐ DON'T encourage excessive exercise. Emphasise the importance of rest days and listening to what our body needs.
- ☐ DON'T focus on beauty. Be sure to emphasise the value of personality traits and qualities over appearance.
- ☐ DON'T compare students to others. Emphasise that we are individuals and that we all have our own talents.
- ☐ DON'T endorse media beauty ideals by complimenting body shapes we see in the media.
- ☐ DON'T label foods as "good" vs. "bad".
- ☐ DON'T make comparisons between body types.
- ☐ DON'T be overly critical of students in general. Try to be supportive and ensure criticism is constructive and helpful.