



# Scartaglen National School

## Healthy-Eating Policy

School Address: Scartaglen Co. Kerry

School Website: [www.scartaglenns.ie](http://www.scartaglenns.ie)

Roll Number: 197451

## 1. Introduction

This policy has been developed in consultation with the staff, the parents' council and the Board of Management in response to recent changes and developments, including HSE and Department of Education guidelines and the introduction of the Hot Meals Scheme.

## 2. Overview

As parents and educators, we are all very conscious of the importance of our children's diet and how it impacts on their health, development and wellbeing. Children spend a significant part of the day in school and therefore it is very important that they eat healthy nutritious lunches. This is easier to promote when children are eating similar healthy foods. The successful implementation of this policy is an important step in promoting a healthy lifestyle for our children. All families and pupils are asked to co-operate with its implementation.

In 2024, Scartaglen N.S., applied for and was selected to participate in the Free Hot School Meal Programme. Following careful consideration, The Lunch Bag ([www.thelunchbag.ie](http://www.thelunchbag.ie)) was chosen as the school's provider and the delivery of Hot School Meals commenced in May 2024. This policy has been updated to reflect these changes.

## 3. Rationale

Through this policy, Scartaglen N.S. aim to help all those involved in our school community to develop positive attitudes to food, to promote wellbeing and healthy living.

There will be a whole school approach, involving teachers, parents/guardians and children to ensure that healthy eating messages are a part of school life. A culture of healthy eating is encouraged and modelled by adults in school.

## 4. Aims

- To promote the overall health, wellbeing and personal development of each child.
- To foster positive lifestyle habits that support long-term healthy living.
- To develop children's understanding of the importance of good nutrition for growth, development and overall health.
- To encourage children to make informed choices and develop a balanced, healthy approach to eating.
- To promote healthy eating, nutrition and wellbeing through a whole-school approach, including the SPHE curriculum.
- To support children in developing healthy behaviours, including participation in regular physical activity.
- To ensure staff model positive attitudes and behaviours that encourage healthy eating.
- To support parents as primary educators by sharing up-to-date information on healthy eating from the HSE.
- To protect the health and safety of children with serious food allergies.

## 5. Hot School Meals

We are very fortunate to be able to provide every child in the school with a nutritious, hot lunch, from our hot school meal provider, The Lunch Bag, free of charge under the School Meals Programme operated by the Department of Social Protection.

Parents/guardians who do not wish to avail of the School Meals Programme may opt out and instead provide their child with a healthy, well-balanced lunch each day.

A variety of food options are available. Children are also provided with lunch boxes to bring home any unfinished food and packaging for responsible disposal.

## 6. Healthy Lunch

Parents/guardians are encouraged to provide children with a healthy lunch to help maintain concentration and energy levels throughout the school day. A healthy lunch should, where possible, include a variety of foods from the bottom four shelves of the Food Pyramid.

Bread and rolls, especially whole wheat/grain	Bananas, oranges, apples, kiwi, nectarines, pears, strawberries, etc.
Sandwiches	Cheese and yoghurt
Pitta bread, naan bread, wraps, bagels	Nutritious cereals and muesli
Crackers	Peeled carrot, celery, salads
Pasta, rice	Cooked Meats

**Drinks-** milk – not flavoured, water, diluted drinks, yoghurt drinks, soup, smoothies

## 7. Guidelines

### **A healthy lunch box includes:**

- At least 2 portions from the bread/cereals group.
- One portion from the meat and the meat alternatives group.
- 2-3 portions from fruits and vegetables.
- One portion from the dairy products.

### **Preparation of lunches**

Children will be more likely to eat healthily when the lunch is prepared in a convenient to eat manner. Oranges could be peeled, especially for younger children. Cheese could be grated and mixed with a few grapes or cherry tomatoes. A spoon should be included for eating yoghurts or cereals.

## **8. Foods and drinks not allowed in school:**

In order to encourage healthy, balanced eating habits among children in school the following foods and drinks are prohibited, except on treat days:

- Chocolate, chocolate rice cakes, chocolate spread (e.g. Nutella)
- Bars, including sugary cereal bars
- Biscuits and cakes
- Crisps, Pringles and related products
- Popcorn
- Fizzy drinks – high sugar drinks (e.g. Lucozade sport/ fruit shoots etc.)
- Chewing gum
- Sweets & lollipops, including fruit winder

## **9. Curriculum – S.P.H.E.**

As part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E.) Programme we encourage the children to become more aware of the need for healthy food in their lunch boxes. In addition, the Physical Education programme supports the physical development and fitness of the children. The Science curriculum also looks at the development of the body and deepens the children's understanding of how the body grows and develops.

## **10. Friday is 'Treat Day'**

We all enjoy a treat from time to time. To encourage children to abide by this healthy lunch policy, Friday is designated Special Treat Day. The children are encouraged to eat the treat after they have eaten their lunch.

On this day, children can bring a treat which may only include one of the following;

- small chocolate bar
- biscuit
- small bun/cake
- cereal bar
- chocolate rice cakes

## **11. Birthday party treats:**

In keeping with this policy, teachers are unable to distribute treats from home for birthdays regardless of the day of the week.

## 12. Healthy snack options (Lower in sugar and fat)

Foods from the top tier of the food pyramid should not be included in your child's lunchbox, except on treat days. Sometimes it can be difficult to think of alternatives to these. Here are some tasty alternatives.

- Fruit (for example, an apple or banana, handful of grapes)
- Washed, raw vegetable pieces (for example, sticks of carrot, celery, pepper, and cucumber.
- Washed, raw vegetables (for example, cherry tomatoes)
- Half a tin of fruit (in its own juice)
- Plain breadsticks, unsalted plain or wholewheat crackers, crispbreads or water biscuits served with fruit or cheese.
- Plain rice cakes (not chocolate flavoured)
- Natural or low sugar content yogurt with fresh fruit (fresh, frozen or tinned in its own juice)
- Wholemeal or plain scones.
- Sugar-free jelly pots or fruit jelly.
- Pot of custard or rice pudding.
- Pasta or rice
- Cheese
- Hummus

## 13. Lunch Time Hygiene

In order to promote the health and safety of all children in the school and prevent the spread of infection, guidelines for eating at lunch and break times are necessary. These are essential and therefore mandatory:

- Children are not to share food or drink.
- Children are not to share food utensils or drinks containers.

We would also encourage that:

- All containers are labelled with the child's name.
- As far as practicable, lunches are eaten in one place within the classroom.

It is important to note that the health and safety of children with serious allergies will take precedence over other issues. It may, therefore, be necessary to introduce additional precautions or restrictions in classes in which some children have serious allergies.

#### **14. Children with allergies and special dietary requirements**

Due to the incidence of severe allergies to peanuts and other nuts amongst some pupils, we ask all parents/guardians to be vigilant in the following:

- Do not send peanuts or any other type of nut in school lunches.
- Do not include peanut butter sandwiches, chocolate spreads containing nuts such as Nutella, nut-based breads and cereal/health bars containing nuts or labelled “may contain nut traces” in school lunches.
- Do not allow children to share their lunches with other pupils.
- If your child has eaten peanuts/nuts before coming to school, please be sure your child’s hands and face have been thoroughly washed before entering the school.

Children with special dietary requirements and / or allergies will at all times be facilitated to choose foods to suit their own individual requirements. Parents should discuss this with the class teacher.

#### **Allergies**

In order to protect children who, have serious food allergies, the whole school community will work together to implement age appropriate, responsible measures to minimise the risk of an allergic reaction. All children in the school will be made aware of the implications of food allergies and how they can assist in preventing allergic reactions.

If your child has a serious food allergy, as parents/guardians you must notify the school and provide a doctor’s report stating the implications of the allergy and listing the foods to be avoided. You will be asked to participate with staff in formulating an individual allergy management plan. This plan will identify how best to minimise the risk of an allergic reaction for your child, taking her/his age and class into account. The individual allergy management plan may result in precautions or class specific restrictions, in addition to those of not sharing food or containers, being put in place. They are called class specific restrictions, as they will only apply to the class in which there is a child with a life threatening allergy. Where class specific restrictions are required, the parents/guardians of all children in the affected class will be informed by a letter explaining what the restrictions are and the reasons for them. These will be regularly reviewed and updated and any changes will be communicated in writing.

#### **15. Implementation**

If children bring prohibited food or drink into school, they will be asked by the class teacher to take it home, as it is not permitted under the school’s Healthy Eating Policy. In the event of a continuous breach of the Healthy Eating Policy, the matter will be referred to the Principal. If required, the next step in the process will involve the class teacher contacting the child’s parents/guardians to discuss and support adherence to the policy.

## 16. Roles and Responsibilities

- Parents/guardians have a responsibility to provide lunches, which do not include any of the prohibited foods and if possible, include variety.
- Children have a responsibility to eat their own lunch and not share or trade food, drink or treats with others.
- Teachers have a responsibility to provide a good example through their own healthy eating habits.
- The whole school community - staff, parents/guardians and children – will work together to promote the progress of this policy. All are encouraged to discuss and provide feedback on its performance, which will be reported back as appropriate to the Principal and staff.
- The overall performance of the Policy will be regularly monitored and evaluated by the BOM, responsible for its formulation and review.

## 17. Success Criteria

We will know if the policy is effective by:

- Observing what children have for lunch and during other break times
- The feedback from parents/guardians and school staff
- The level of concentration and performance of children in the classroom

## 18. Review

It is intended to review this plan on a regular basis to ensure implementation of this Healthy Eating Policy.

## 19. Ratification and Communication

This plan was communicated to all members of the Board of Management including parents' nominees on the Board.

This Healthy Eating Policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Scartaglen N.S. at a meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> May 2026

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: \_\_\_\_\_