St Joseph's National School Rehins, Ballina, Co. Mayo

Healthy Eating Policy

1. Introduction

As part of St. Joseph's National School Rehins DEIS Plan 2023 - 2025, a subcommittee of the Wellbeing Special Interest Group set about reviewing the school's Healthy Eating Policy. The HSE booklet Healthy Eating Policy Toolkit for Primary Schools was used to assist in the review process. Our Healthy Eating Policy outlines how we as a school support healthy eating practices through the promotion of healthy snacks and healthy lunches and how we help our pupils to gain a greater understanding of the importance of balanced nutrition.

Rehins NS is committed to facilitating our pupils' development of skills and attitudes to allow them to make informed decisions about their food intake. As a school, we believe that key adults in their lives, namely parents/guardians and school staff, should be good role models and support them in understanding how balanced nutrition contributes to a person's health, happiness and general wellbeing.

Our whole school approach to promoting healthy eating will actively involve teachers, parents/guardians and children to ensure that healthy eating messages are part of every aspect of school life. Our pupils will receive consistent messages regarding healthy eating, both at home and at school.

2. Aims of Our Healthy Eating Policy

The aims of our healthy eating policy are:

- To promote a whole school approach to healthy eating and nutrition · To understand the benefit of a healthy well-balanced diet
- To develop an awareness that good eating habits formed in early childhood influence health and wellbeing throughout our lives
- To raise levels of concentration within class through the consumption of healthy food
- To provide members of staff, parents/guardians and those involved in school activities with clear information

3. Benefits of a Good Diet

A good diet:

- Ensures the development of healthy hair, skin, teeth, muscles and strong bones
- Provides energy and aids concentration
- Strengthens the immune system

4. School Actions which Support Our Healthy Eating Policy

As a school, we will implement the following actions to support our Healthy Eating Policy:

- A Healthy Eating Awareness Week will take place annually.
- SPHE lessons on healthy eating will be planned and implemented across all year groups at the same time each year.
- The School Lunch Provider will be invited into the school to show pupils samples of the range of foods available and provide opportunities to taste the different foods.
- Class teachers will open up the School Lunch Provider's online page on the interactive whiteboard and explore with the pupils all the options available to them and discuss the healthier choices with them.
- The School Lunch Provider will adhere to the required Healthy Ireland Nutrition Standards for School Meals.
- Sweets and/or food treats will not be used as daily rewards by teachers
- The HSCL Coordinator will organise regular healthy eating/cookery/baking sessions for parents/guardians

5. Breakfast

A nourishing breakfast is the best start to a child's day giving him/her the energy needed to concentrate and learn. Research has shown that children benefit both nutritionally and behaviourally by eating breakfast. Involving our Student Council, we will be discussing easy, nutritional and delicious Breakfast ideas and delivering

ideas to the children of the school.

6. Break/Lunchtime Guidelines

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.

- Pupils should **NOT SHARE** share their food or drink.
- Pupils should not share food utensils or drinks containers.
- Pupils should eat their food at their own table.
- Any uneaten food should go back into the pupil's lunch box. This will help the parent/guardian to be aware of what their child is actually eating.
- Uneaten Hot Lunches: Hot lunch box to go home each day so parents can monitor what child has/has not eaten

7. Morning Break

Pupils have approximately 5 - 10 minutes to eat at their morning break. Food at this break should be easy to eat, ideally a small sandwich or a piece of fruit. Fruit should be of a manageable size, peeled/chopped if necessary.

8. Lunch Break

There are two lunch breaks in Rehins. Pupils have approximately 10 minutes to eat their lunch.
A healthy lunchbox should contain:

- At least one portion of fruit/vegetables
- One portion of meat, poultry, fish, eggs or beans
- One portion of bread or cereal
- One portion of dairy
- Milk or water.

Please see table below for lunchbox ideas:

Vegetables, Salad & Fruit *5+ portions per day*

Vegetables, Salad Fruit 5+ portions per day	***Meat, Poultry, Fish, Eggs & Beans***	***Cereals, Breads, Potato, Pasta & Rice***
1 Medium Apple, orange, banana, pear or similar size fruit	2 Slices of cooked meat	2 Thin Slices of whole meal bread
1 small Fruits - plums, kiwis or similar size fruit	1 or 2 hardboiled eggs	1 small bread roll
Half a tin of fruit in its own juice	Small can of Tuna, Salmon, Sardines or mackerel	1 tortilla wrap
Handful of dried fruit	4 tablespoons of hummus	1 pitta bread
1 small bunch of grapes		4 to 6 crackers
Chopped vegetables e.g. cucumber, carrot, celery		1 cup of cooked rice or couscous
		1 small bagel

All pupils should bring a refillable water bottle to school every day.
Pupils will be allowed access to water throughout the school day and
can refill their bottles when needed.

Every child in Rehins has access to a free school lunch under the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection's School Meals Programme. This lunch is provided by an external Lunch Provider. Parents/guardians and children can choose their lunch menu online from https://parentordering.martinashomemadefoods.ie. Lunch menus are set up to encourage variety. If pupils are availing of this lunch scheme, they may bring a smaller lunch to school.

9. Foods Not Permitted in Rehins

The following foods do not support our healthy lunch policy and should be

excluded from your child's lunch box:

- Nuts & anything containing traces of Nuts
- Fizzy drinks, sports drinks and drinks or juices with high sugar content · Take away food or hot deli food
- Chewing gum
- Sweets & winders
- Crisps & sweetened popcorn
- · Biscuits, cakes, muffins
- · Cereal Bars
- · Chocolate

Nuts and foods containing nuts are **NOT PERMITTED** due to pupils in our school have severe allergies.

10. Friday Treat Day

Friday is Treat Day in Rehins. The pupils are encouraged to eat the treat after they have eaten their lunch.

On this day, pupils can bring one of the following:

- 1 Treat or fun sized bar
- 1 Treat or fun sized bag of sweets
- 2 Small biscuits
- 1 Small cereal bar (preferably homemade)
- 1 Small home bakes

Other treat days may include:

- End of term parties
- Halloween
- School trips and events
- Class rewards

On these occasions, teachers may provide treats for the class or pupils may be invited to bring in items to share. Teachers will be aware of pupils with allergies and will ensure safety and inclusivity.

We do NOT facilitate birthday parties/cakes at school.

11. Implementation

If a pupil brings prohibited food or drink to school, they will be asked by the teacher to bring it home at the end of the school day, as such foods are not allowed. If the pupil does not have anything else to eat, the teacher will deal with the matter at his/her discretion & may contact a Parent/Guardian to bring in suitable lunch. If a pupil persists in bringing unhealthy food to school, the teacher will organise a meeting with the child's parent/guardian to remind them of Rehins Healthy Eating Policy. School staff will consistently implement the Healthy Eating Policy to ensure that it is adhered to.

12. Allergies

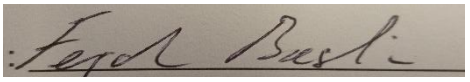
If a child has a serious food allergy, the parents/guardians must notify the school and provide a doctor's report stating the implications of the allergy and listing the foods to be avoided. Parents/guardians will be asked to participate with staff in formulating an individual Allergy Management Plan. This plan will identify how best to minimise the

risk of an allergic reaction for the child and it will outline the protocol to be implemented if an allergic reaction occurs. Further details can be found in Rehins NS Administration of Medication Policy.

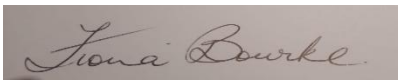
13. Ratification & Communication

This policy is due to be reviewed in **May 2027**.

This policy will be in operation in October of the school year 2026/2027, having been ratified by Staff (27th September 2025) and BOM (16th October 2025). All staff will be emailed a copy of this policy and it will be available on the school website, school shared drive and on request from the school office.

Signed:  Date: 16/10/2025

Chairperson of the board

Signed:  Date: 16/10/2025

Principal

14. Monitoring & Evaluation

The implementation of this Healthy Eating Policy will be monitored by the Principal, staff and Board of Management. It will be reviewed and evaluated at regular intervals, including through formal and informal feedback from parents/guardians, pupils, staff and others. The policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation.