



St Patrick's Parish Primary School

Healthy Eating and Oral Health Policy

Rationale

St Patrick's Parish Primary School acknowledges the importance of oral health behaviours that contribute to overall health and overall wellbeing.

This policy confirms our commitment to:

- encourage children to make healthy food and drink choices.
- promoting the importance of a healthy lifestyle, which includes drinking water, eating healthy food and maintaining oral health
- creating a supportive environment for healthy eating and good oral health for students, staff, families and external visitors.

As a health promoting school, we will promote healthy eating and oral health to students, staff and families through learning, policies, creating a safe and healthy physical and social environment and developing community links and partnerships.

Definitions

Healthy eating: Eating a wide variety of foods from the five food groups each day. Healthy eating also means eating in a way that is socially and culturally appropriate, having regular meals and snacks and eating food to satisfy hunger, appetite and energy needs.¹

Nutrition: Everyone needs food to provide the right balance of vitamins, minerals and nutrients (like protein, carbohydrate and fats) to feel energised and to help them grow and stay healthy. The meals we eat and the drinks we drink satisfy hunger and thirst throughout the day as well as fuel the body. Preparing and sharing meals with friends, family or community is a significant way to build relationships and is an important part of our culture.

'Occasional' foods and drink: Also referred to as 'extra foods' or 'discretionary foods' (sometimes called junk foods), these are foods like potato chips, chocolate, cakes, lollies, soft drinks and some takeaway food like hamburgers and hotdogs. These foods are usually low in nutrients and high in salt, sugar or fat.²

'Select carefully' foods and drink: Include foods like commercially prepared pastas, noodles and soups, meat products and fruit juice.

'Everyday' foods and drink: Include whole foods such as fresh fruit, wholegrain breads and cereals, lean cuts of meat, legumes, canteen made soups, reduced fat dairy products and water.

Oral Health: Defined as 'eating, speaking and socialising without pain, discomfort or embarrassment'.³

Policy Statement

Healthy eating and good nutrition have a major influence on the health and wellbeing of children and young people and a direct impact on their growth and development. Acknowledging the social and cultural role of food, and the wide range of attitudes to it, is important within our school environment.

Childhood is a time when lifelong oral health behaviours are being formed. Oral health is essential for children's overall health and wellbeing. Oral diseases can negatively affect individuals through pain,

¹ Nutrition Australia Victorian Division, www.nutritionaustralia.org

² DEECD 2012 School Canteen and other School Food Services Policy

³ UK Department of Health (1994) in Spencer, JA, Australian Health Policy Institute, Commissioned Paper Series 2004

discomfort, general health and quality of life. The main oral health condition experienced by children is tooth decay with one in four Victorian children aged 5 -12 years having filled teeth. Tooth decay is Australia's most prevalent health problem despite being almost entirely preventable.⁴ It is recognised that every member of St Patrick's has an impact on students' health and can contribute to creating an environment that promotes healthy eating and good oral health. All members of our school including staff, children, families and volunteers will be supported to meet this policy.

Principles

*This policy is consistent with the *School Canteen and other School Food Services Policy* and *Australian Dietary Guidelines*.

- Staff, families and students are involved in guiding the development and implementation of the whole school healthy eating and oral health policy and are seen as key partners in promoting and supporting healthy eating and oral health initiatives in the school.
- Staff, families and students are provided with information about policy requirements.

Guidelines

Healthy Physical Environments

- The school canteen menu is assessed by the 'Healthy Together Healthy Eating Advisory Service' as compliant with the 'School Canteen and other School Food Services Policy'. The school canteen or food service works towards increasing the availability of 'everyday' foods and limits 'occasional' and 'select carefully' food and drinks.
- Occasional foods and sweetened drinks (juices, cordial and soft drinks) are not provided by the school and are discouraged from being sent from home.
- Families are encouraged to provide healthy lunchboxes.
- Safe drinking water (preferably tap water) is available at all times and is accessible to students. Students are encouraged to drink water regularly.
- The school seeks to ensure any sponsorship, advertisements or marketing of food and drinks are consistent with the school's healthy eating and oral health policies. Fundraising activities, as far as possible, reflect the healthy eating and oral health policy and promote healthy lifestyle messages.
- Students are encouraged to undertake safe practices to prevent against dental injuries, such as using mouth guards while participating in sport.
- The school will provide information to staff and in first aid/sick bay areas on what to do in the event of a dental injury (i.e. when a tooth is knocked out).

Healthy social environment

- Food vouchers and sweets are not used as an incentive or reward.
- Students are given adequate time to eat their food in suitable and inviting eating spaces, which encourage the social interaction of students.
- To support positive role modelling, staff and families are encouraged to bring food and drinks which are in line with the school's healthy eating policy.
- The school respects and celebrates the cultural diversity of its community through recognising and valuing cultural and traditional beliefs about food and oral health.

Learning and skills

- Healthy eating and oral health are incorporated into the curriculum, across multiple key learning areas.
- Students have the opportunity to engage in regular food-related activities, such as planning and shopping for meals, growing and cooking and eating foods which are culturally appropriate and varied.
- Teachers will discuss tooth brushing practices and why they are important with students.
- Staff are supported to access resources, tools and professional learning to enhance their knowledge and capacity to promote healthy eating and oral health across the curriculum.

⁴ Rogers JG. 2011, Evidence based oral health promotion resource. Prevention and Population Health Branch, Government of Victoria, Department of Health, Melbourne.

Engaging children, young people, staff and families

- Students are consulted about healthy eating and oral health initiatives via student leaders, student actions teams or other representative structures.
- Families and staff are, on a regular basis, provided with information, ideas and practical strategies to promote and support healthy eating and oral health at school and at home.
- Families are encouraged to be involved in healthy eating and oral health initiatives at school.
- Families and students from culturally diverse backgrounds are engaged to ensure cultural values and expectations about food, eating and oral health are respected.
- Important key oral health messages in 'Oral Health messages for the Australian public' should be emphasised to families.⁵

Community partnerships

- The school will work with local health professionals, services, businesses or agencies, where possible, to support staff, students and families to promote healthy eating.

Resources

DET School Canteen and other School Food Services Policy
National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Dietary Guidelines
DET School Policy and Advisory Guide - Health Education Approaches
Oral Health Messages for the Australian Public

Reflective Materials

Anaphylaxis Management Policy

Monitoring and Review

This healthy eating and oral health policy will be monitored and reviewed by staff, School Advisory Council, student representatives and the health and wellbeing team. It will be reviewed as part of our policy review schedule.

Developed: November 2013
Ratified: December 2013
Reviewed: October 2018
Ratified: November 2018
Review: 2022

⁵ National Oral Health Promotion Clearing House. 2011. Oral health messages for the Australian public. Findings of a national consensus workshop. Australian Dental Journal, 56:331-335