

Monaleen N.S.

HEALTHY EATING POLICY



Healthy Eating for Life

Rationale

Monaleen N.S. is dedicated to supporting the health and well-being of the school community, therefore the focus of this policy is to support parents, pupils and staff in relation to the promotion of healthy eating habits from an early age. Eating habits throughout life are established at a young age. Therefore learning to choose and enjoy different foods in childhood provides the foundation for healthy food choices in adulthood.

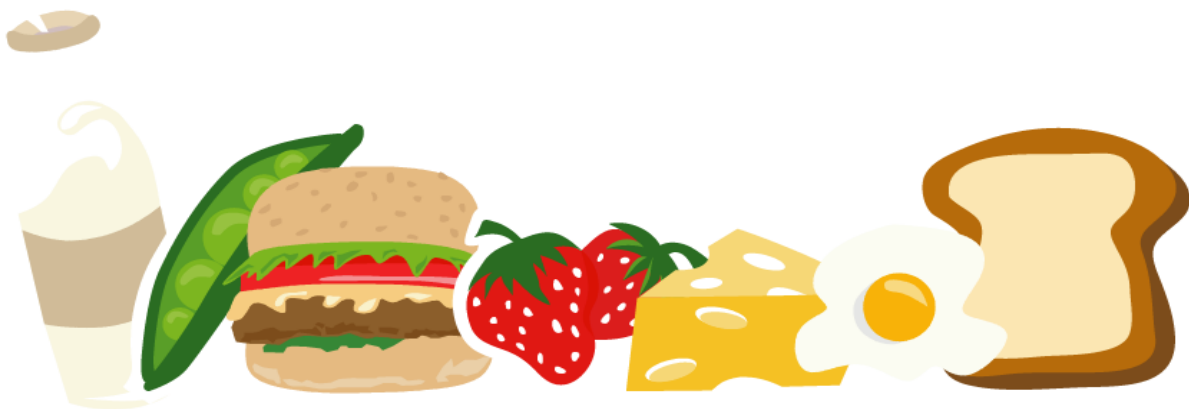
This policy was formulated by consultation with staff, parents, pupils, Health Promoting School Team and the Board of Management of our school and from information gathered in healthy eating surveys in October and November 2018 (children, parents and staff were surveyed). The development of the policy was supported by the community Dietitian, Christine Gurnett, as part of the Health Promoting School Initiative and by past pupil Emma Heffernan, who is a qualified nutritionist.

The school participates in the Health Promoting School Initiative which is organized through the H.S.E and supported by the Department of Education.

Healthy Eating Committee; Fiachra Mac Craith, Sylvia Kelly, Elaine Linehan, Aisling Ní Thiarnaí (teachers), Amy Martin, Marie Reddan (parents), Cillian McNamara, Alice Sheedy, Eugene Ruskulis, Sarah O'Flaherty, Robbie Widger, Darragh Brown, Ella McDonald, Lucy Morgan (pupils).
The previous policy has been in place since 2008.

AIM

To ensure that all aspects of food and drink in school promote the health and wellbeing of the whole school community and that the children receive high quality education on healthy eating from a very young age.



Guidelines

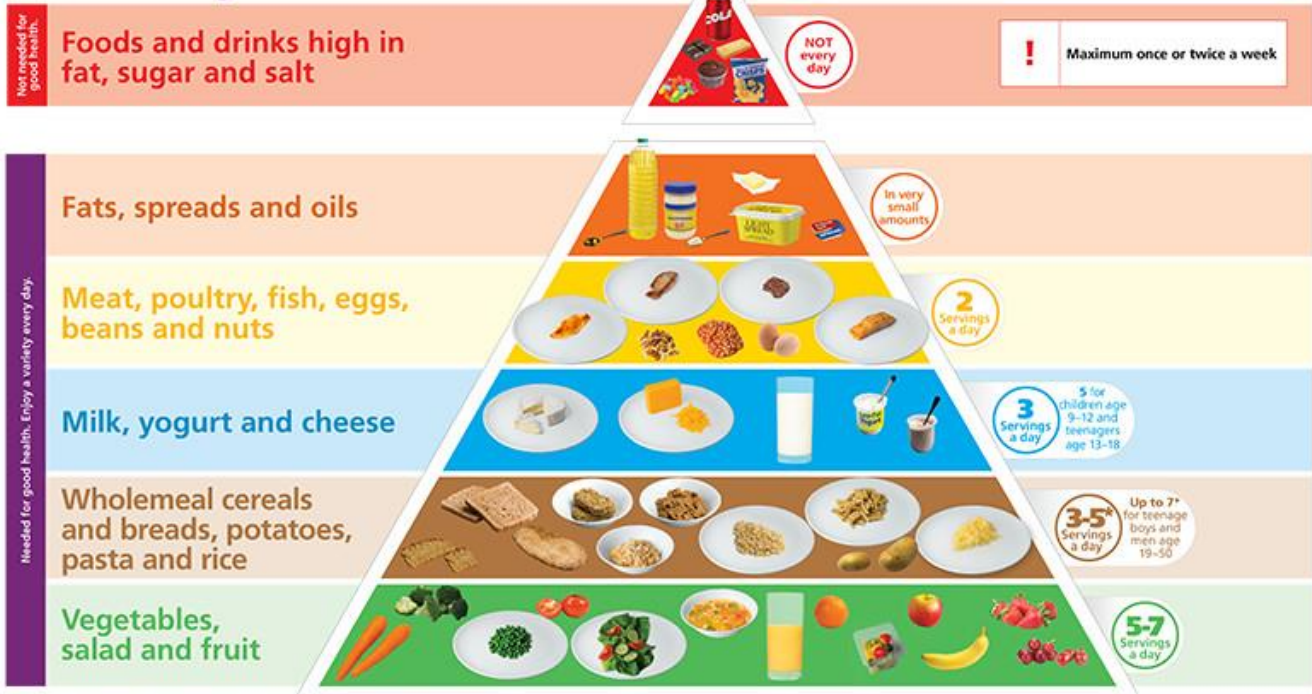
Our consultations with parents, children, teachers and experts from the HSE gave us some clear direction on how to shape our Healthy Eating Policy. The survey findings are included in the appendix.

The following guidelines reflect the actions Monaleen National School will undertake under the 4 key areas of the Health Promoting School (Curriculum and Learning, Policy and Planning, Partnerships and Social and Physical Environment) in order to ensure a whole school policy approach:

- Education on healthy eating using the Food Pyramid provided by the HSE will be done at least once a year from 1st to 6th class. The topic will be introduced in a simplified way in Juniors and Seniors. It will be integrated with science and with holistic education on health and well being. This should be done in September of every year.
- The Food Pyramid will be on display in every classroom, and updated in the School Journal for the school year 2019/20 and will be updated as appropriate over time.
- An annual Healthy Eating week will be held every year in January. Children may be surveyed on their healthy eating habits and we will promote healthy choices. The surveys can provide us with an annual insight on how healthy eating is going in the school. Surveys can be done in the classrooms and compared to the 2018 baseline data – integration with maths and science is encouraged.
- Initiatives such as ‘my favourite fruit/veg and why’ will be introduced in classes, especially around the time of Healthy Eating week and when the curriculum is being taught.
- Initiatives such as ‘Food Dudes’ and ‘Super Troopers’ will be encouraged in the school as often as possible.
- Ideas for healthy lunchboxes will be shared using the school App and social media.
- Children will be encouraged to be active agents in choosing healthy options both for school lunch and at home. Healthy Eating links will be promoted through the App to encourage variety.
- More time will be provided for the children to eat their lunch. This will be done within the existing framework of lunch and small break timetabling, but suggestions of adding a ‘fruit break’ at another time of day can be incorporated, while more opportunities to bring food outside can be provided. Teachers will endeavour to provide enough time inside during break in order for the children to eat their lunches.
- The primary role models for the children – parents and teachers, will endeavour to lead by example.
- Alternative rewards such as activity treats and homework passes will be encouraged instead of sweets as rewards.
- Sweets and treats for sharing will be allowed only on special occasions such as end of term and Halloween (not birthdays). The class teacher will ensure that appropriate portions will be given to the children, the rest will be returned home.

The **Food Pyramid**

For adults, teenagers and children aged five and over





*Daily Servings Guide – wholemeal cereals and breads, potatoes, pasta and rice

Active	Child (5-12)	Teenager (13-18)	Adult (19-50)	Adult (51+)	Inactive	Teenager (13-18)	Adult (19-50)	Adult (51+)
		3-4	4	4-5		3-4		3
	3-5	5-7	5-7	4-5		4-5	4-6	4

There is no guideline for inactive children as it is essential that all children are active.

Source: Department of Health, December 2016.

 Drink at least 8 cups of fluid a day – water is best

 **Get Active!**
To maintain a healthy weight adults need at least 30 minutes a day of moderate activity on 5 days a week (or 150 minutes a week); children need to be active at a moderate to vigorous level for at least 60 minutes every day.

Healthy School Lunch Policy

- A healthy lunch at school can contain;
 - A serving of bread (roll, wrap, wholemeal bread etc.)
 - A serving of meat, cheese, eggs, fish
 - A serving of vegetables or salad
 - A dip such as hummus or salsa
 - A serving of fruit
 - Other healthy alternatives such as pasta, rice, couscous, soup (warm, not hot) are encouraged.
 - Crackers
 - Portion of dairy (yoghurt, cheese)
 - A bottle of water or milk
- Lunch cannot contain;
 - Nuts (due to allergies in the school)
 - Fast Food (take-away food)
 - Chocolate/sweets/bars*
 - Biscuits
 - Cake
 - Crisps/tortilla chips
 - Popcorn
 - Fizzy drinks
- A small personal sized treat is allowed on **Friday only**;
 - Funsized bar
 - Up to 2 biscuits
 - Home made baked item (please ensure it is nut-free)
 - Slice of cake/muffin
 - Pastry
 - Cereal Bar

Drinking **juice** or **smoothies** while at school is **discouraged** as hydrating with juice is bad for teeth and provides a 'sugar rush' without the fibre of the fruit. It is best for juice to be consumed with a meal at home and for water or milk to be the primary source of hydration at school.

Some classes may enforce a ban on certain items if there is a child with a serious food allergy in that room.

***Cereal bars** are **discouraged** due to the high sugar content. Cereal bars that are sugar coated/iced or contain chocolate or nuts are not allowed. Please read the food label carefully.

All uneaten food must be put back into lunch box and be sent home.

Food that is **not allowed** under the Healthy Eating Policy must be **returned home**.

Special Occasions: Sharing packs may be brought in by the children on special occasions such as end of term and Halloween (not birthdays). The class teacher will ensure that an appropriate portion will be given to each child. A child may bring a **personal treat** to school on his or her own birthday.

Environment and Recycling

- Children are asked to limit the use of single use plastics, tin foil, cling film etc. by using a lunchbox and a re-usable water bottle.
- Wrappers may not be taken onto the yard.
- All uneaten food and rubbish that can't be recycled must go home in the lunch box.

Communication with parents

- This policy will be published on the school website and promoted on the school App. All children will be made aware of the new policy.

IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

This policy will be launched in January 2019 and implemented fully from January 2019. The policy will be reviewed on a two year cycle.

The school management team and the teachers will implement this policy.

The Board of Management ratified this policy on _____.

Chairperson

Date

Date of Implementation: _____ **Review Date:** _____

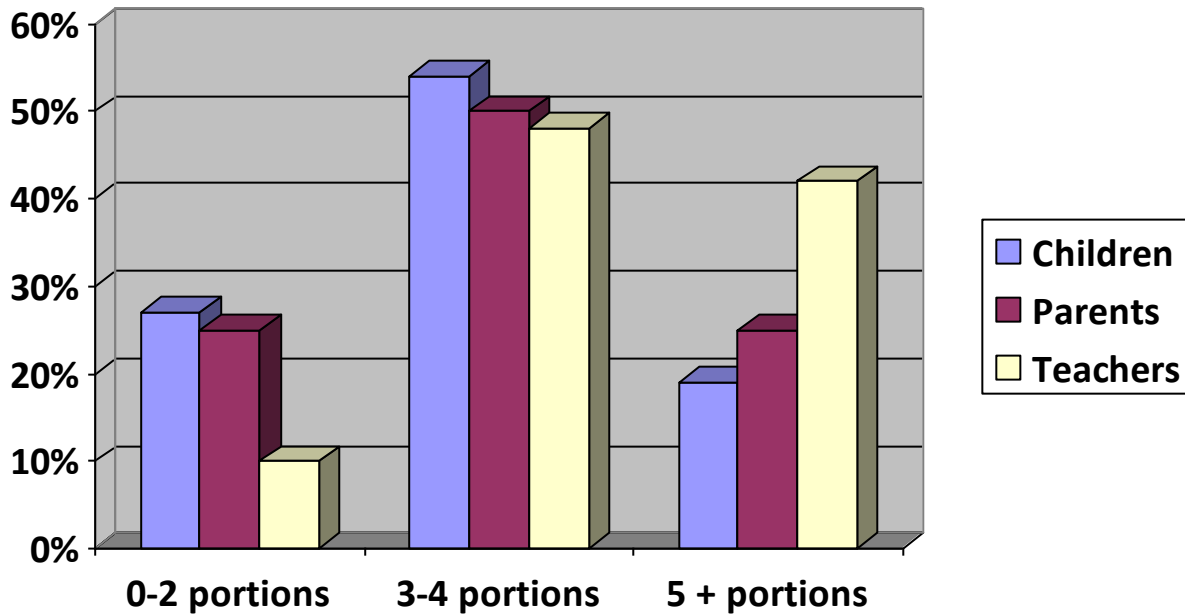
Appendix:

Healthy Eating Surveys – Carried out in October 2018. Questions devised by the Healthy Eating Committee.

737 Children’s surveys, 150 parents surveys and 40 teachers surveys were returned.

Key findings:

1. We asked how much fruit and veg was being consumed each day.



These statistics show that only 19% of children surveyed in Monaleen National School are getting 5+ portions of fruit and veg each day. 27% of children are getting 0-2 portions a day. As a control, we also asked the parents how much fruit and veg their children were getting each day. The results were very similar, with parents saying that 16% of children were getting 5+ and that 29% were getting 0-2. We noted that the parents’ graph is very similar to the childrens’ and that the teachers’ graph also indicated that less than half were getting the recommended 5+ each day. This will be important to factor into the education of the children (how important habit forming at a young age is).

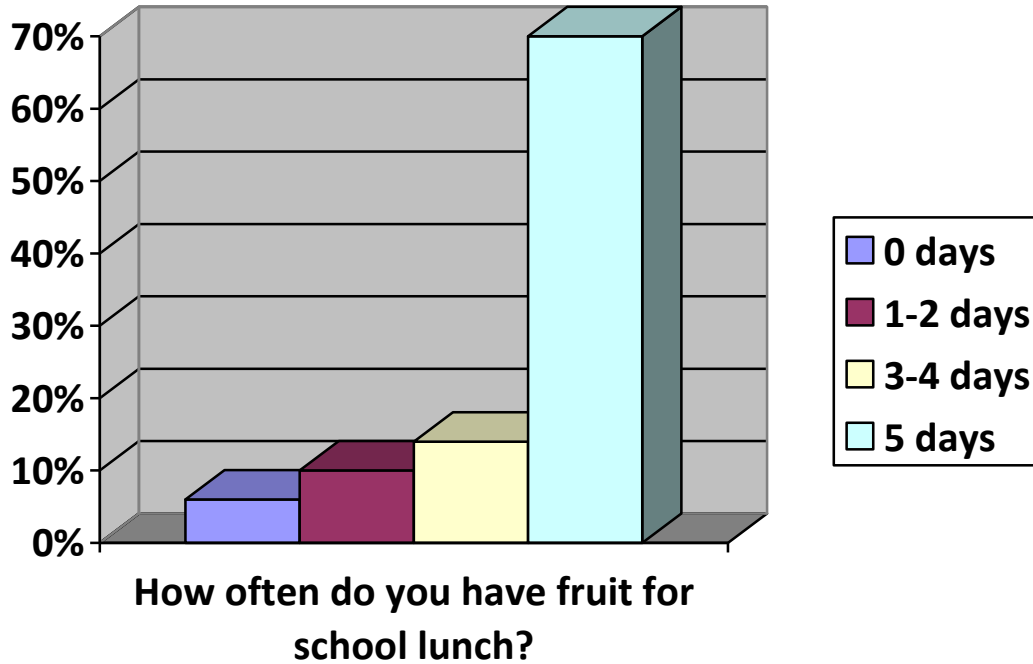
2. We asked how much water was being consumed each day and what children mainly drank for hydration.

76% of children drank at least 500ml of water each day. This rose to over 85% in 5th and 6th. 81% of children drink mostly water to hydrate at home and at school.

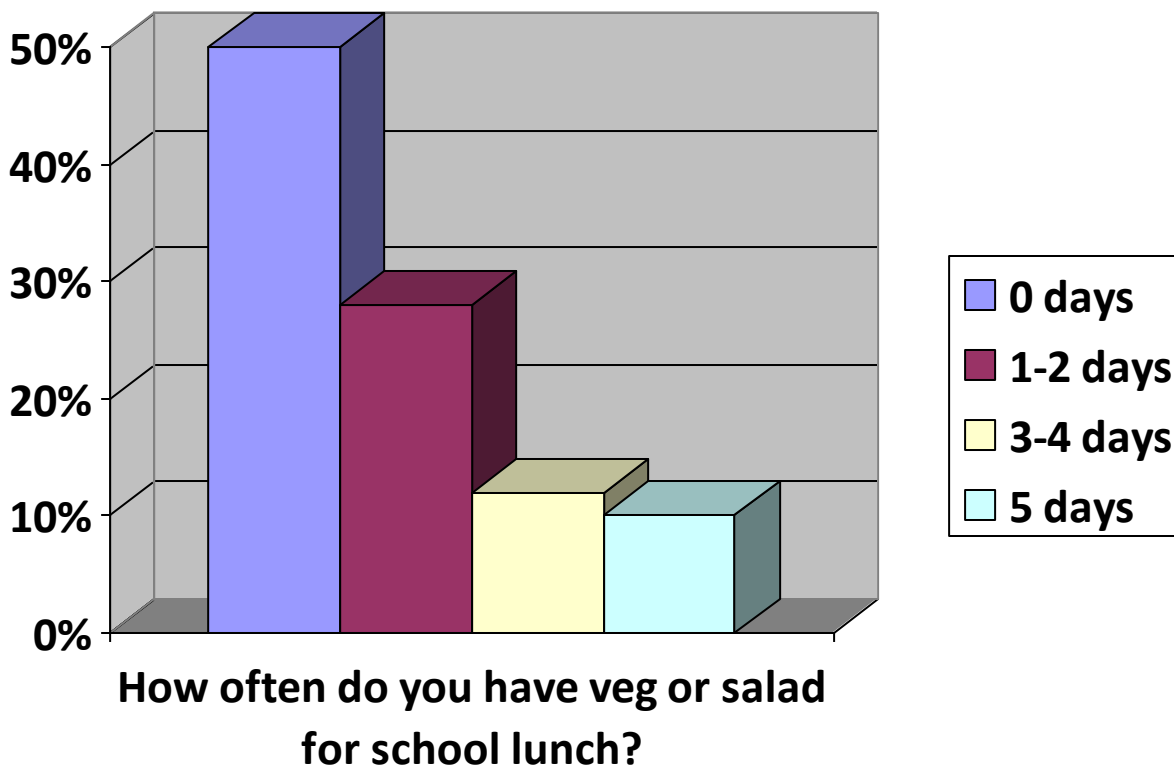
The other popular drinks were milk and juice, with a low prevalence of fizzy drinks (76% of children never/hardly ever have fizzy drinks). 20% of children have fizzy drinks 2 days a week or less, with that percentage rising to 30% in 5th and 6th classes.

3. We asked **how much fruit and veg** the children had for their school lunch and what their **favourite things for lunch** were. Fruit is far more popular than veg or salad, with 70% having it every day. 10% have veg or salad every day with 50% never having it for school lunch. This is an area that clearly needs positive promotion both at home and at school!

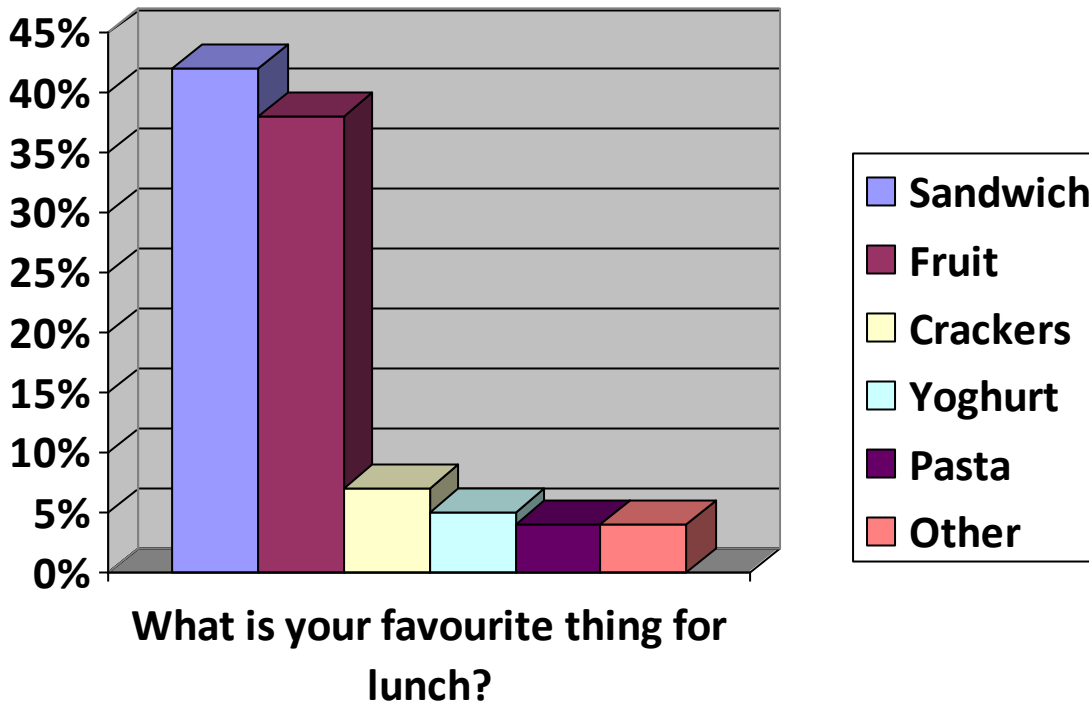
How often do you have fruit for your school lunch?



How often do you have vegetables for your school lunch?



What is your favourite thing for lunch?

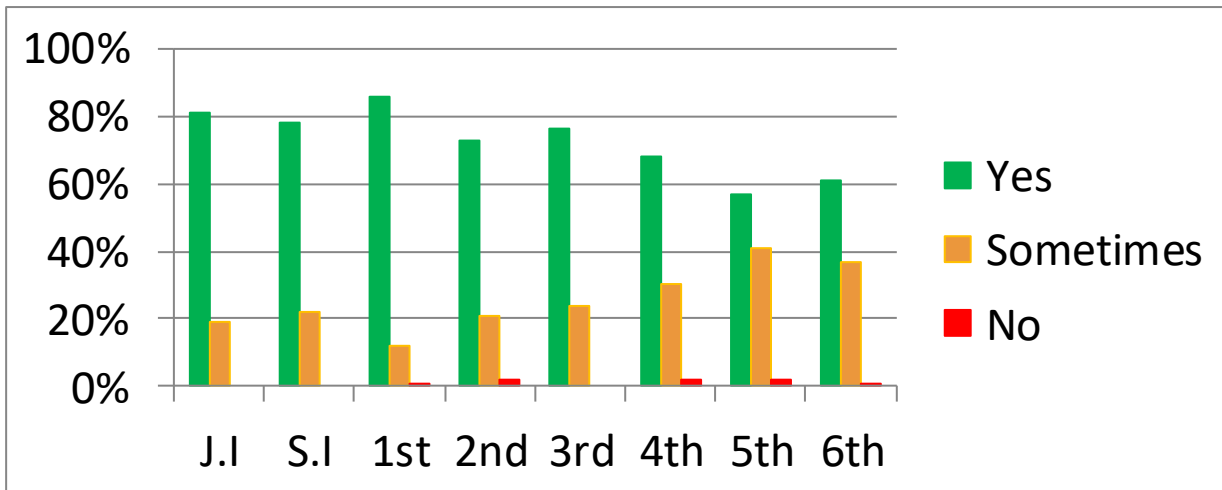


Sandwiches were the favourite amongst the senior side and overall, with fruit being more popular in the junior classes. All options that featured amongst the favourites (this was an open-ended question, not tick an option) were healthy options.

4. We asked the parents what is most likely to come home uneaten in the lunchbox. We also asked what the most challenging part of providing a healthy lunch was. We asked the parents, teachers and the children what would contribute to more enjoyment and a healthier lunch.
 - Food sometimes goes home uneaten in 45% of cases – half of uneaten food is sandwiches and the rest is usually fruit, occasionally dairy.
 - The most challenging part of filling a lunchbox was providing food that will be eaten (70% gave this answer).
 - Both children and parents stressed that having more time to eat would improve enjoyment (30% of children and 33% of parents said this).
 - 37% of children said that eating more fruit and veg would improve healthy eating. 16% said that more education would help. 30% of parents said that more exposure to fruit and veg would help while 31% said that more education would help. 35% of teachers said that promoting and modelling healthy eating would help, while 20% said that clearer instruction and education would help.

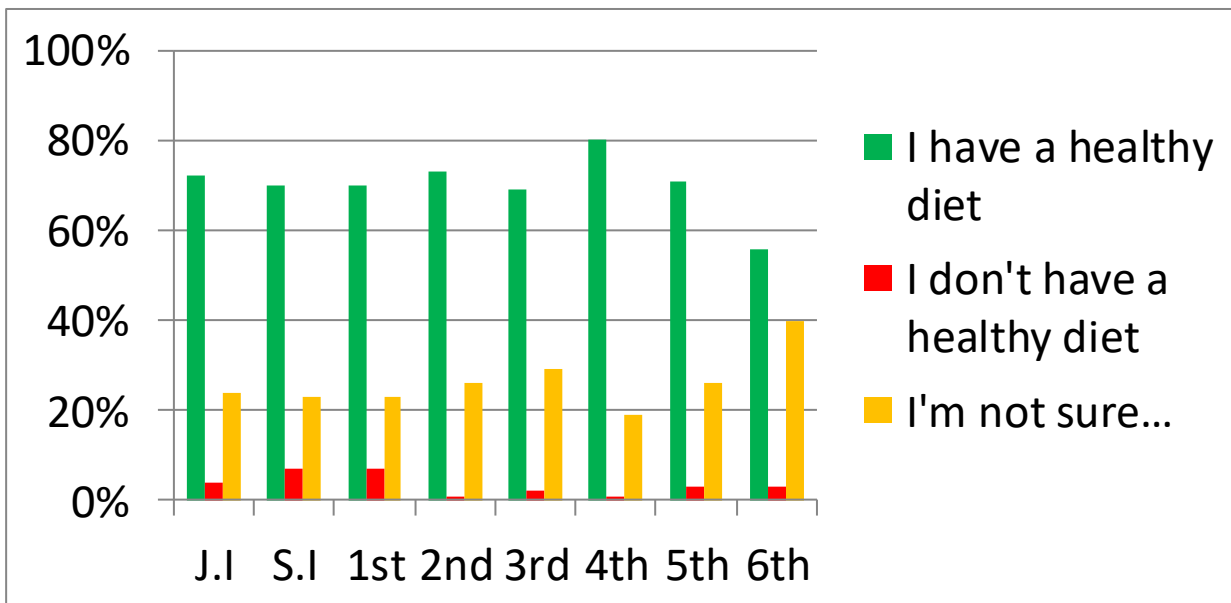
5. We asked children about their attitude to school lunch and their feelings about their own diet. These questions were echoed on the parent surveys as a control.

Do you like your school lunch?



Children were more positive in junior classes – 81% of Junior infants always like their school lunch with 0% disliking it. By 6th class, 61% always like their lunch. The figures were very similar on the parent surveys (73% overall). It highlighted the need to be positive about food and healthy eating throughout the school.

The attitude to school lunches followed a similar trend when we asked the children if they thought they had a **healthy diet** overall.



We did not anticipate that the number of children unsure about whether or not their diet was healthy would increase in the senior classes. It rose to 40% of children in 6th class! Discussions with classes, teachers and amongst the committee attributed this to a wide range of reasons, including mixed messages from various sources about ‘healthy’ diets, role models not following a healthy diet, being unsure how many treats is too many, being unsure of how much of every food type they should have etc. It underlined that education in this area from parents and from school was of paramount importance.

6. Knowledge about the food pyramid, teaching patterns, children as active agents in choosing healthy options.

Do you make our choose your own lunch?

- 32% of children in 6th class make their own lunch – the percentage was relatively low in all the other classes, ranging from 2% in Juniors to 15% in 5th.
- However, parents said that 83% of children choose (at least sometimes) what goes into the lunchbox.

We asked the children if they knew about the food pyramid.

- While 39% of Junior Infants said they knew about it, this rises to 94% in 5th and 6th classes.

We asked the teachers how often they taught specific lesson on healthy eating as part of their SPHE program. Our SPHE plan allows for the strands of the curriculum to be taught during 1 out of every 2 year cycle – ensuring that all aspects are covered in each two year cycle.

- 52% of teachers taught healthy eating once a year, with a further 35% teaching it twice a year. 13% did not teach it every year. While the minimum is once every two years, 'Food and Nutrition' is being covered by 87% of teachers every year.

Annual Healthy Eating Survey

1. How many portions of fruit and veg do you have each day?
 - 0-2 portions
 - 3-4 portions
 - 5+ portions

2. How often do you have fruit for school lunch?
 - Never
 - 1-4 days
 - Every day

3. How often do you have veg for school lunch?
 - Never
 - 1-4 days
 - Every day

4. Do you have a healthy diet?
 - Yes
 - No
 - I'm not sure

5. Do you have enough time to eat lunch?
 - Yes, usually
 - Sometimes
 - Never, hardly ever

6. How much water do you drink each day?
 - Not a lot
 - Less than 500ml
 - 500ml or more

7. How often do you bring a treat for school lunch?
 - Never/Hardly ever
 - Friday only
 - 2 or more days

8. What is your favourite food for lunch?
