

People Directorate

**Head Teacher: Mrs Yvonne Templeton**

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Our Ref:  
Your Ref:  
Date: 18<sup>th</sup> August 2020



Dear Parent / Carer

**Mid-morning break – snack proposal**

**National Context**

Scottish schools are part of the national community of Scotland and are overseen by Scottish Government, who dictate national policy, legislation, guidelines and guidance. The main policy driving education, at present, is the National Improvement Framework for Education, the key priorities of which are:

- Improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy
- Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people
- Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing
- Improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people

In Colmonell Primary School and Early Years, children, staff, parents and local community work incredibly hard together, to focus on meeting these priorities.

**Background**

There is a significant amount of research available, regarding increasing concerns about the health of children in Scotland. Growing up in Scotland (2018) reports a prevalence of overweight and obesity in Scotland's 10 year olds and the Scottish Health Survey reports that 26% of children, between the age of 2 and 15, are at risk of being overweight including 13% at risk of obesity. Research also suggests that children who are overweight in Primary 1 are likely to remain so, and that obesity leads to increasingly serious health conditions such as diabetes, cancer, asthma and heart disease in later life. As such, tackling childhood obesity is a national priority.

Food provision within and out with schools is a focus for government policy and since 2007 legislation has been in place to ensure schools provide food and drink of an appropriate nutritional standard. This legislation is due to be updated and will be available from April 2021. Other support documentation is available to provide guidance for schools – *Better Eating Better Learning* (Scottish Government 2014a) and *Beyond the School Gate* (Scottish Government 2014b) seek to "influence the food environment around schools and support children and young people to make healthier choices."

**Our School**

In Colmonell Primary School, we have always endeavoured to ensure all of our children have the healthiest start to their life. We make sure that our children receive enough exercise, learn well, eat well, play and stay safe and healthy, not only in school but out of school, too. No child is excluded from opportunity. We take a holistic view of children's learning, and so everything a child is involved in throughout the school day and beyond, is included in their overall educational experience.

In the last few years, school staff have noticed and been concerned by the increasing amounts of high sugar or high fat sweets and chocolate that some of our children bring to school for break time. We are aware that some children do not, for one reason or another, have the opportunity always to have a healthy breakfast. We also notice an increasing amount of food waste at lunchtime, with some children eating very little of their lunch, whether a school lunch or a home packed lunch. One of the reasons for this, we believe as a staff, is that children are not hungry at lunchtime because of what they have eaten at playtime, only an hour and a half before.

We know also, that many of our children **do** eat well and healthily and, whilst this is most likely to be your child, we do, as a whole school community, have a responsibility to work together to improve outcomes of all of our children. All of the above is what influenced staff in school to consider how to improve what our children eat at playtime, and this has been on our mind for a long time. Then along came Covid 19, which raises a range of new issues for us. At present, lunches provided by the school are packed lunches, due to the reduced level of staffing caused by social distancing requirements in Girvan Kitchens. Children can bring their own packed lunches from home, but we must keep these separate from each other. As such, these are being kept under each child's own desk. It concerns me that we do not have refrigeration facilities available for home packed lunches. Hence, I would encourage those children entitled to, or who wish to pay for a school lunch, to access them. We are also trying to limit the amount of things going back and forward between home and school to prevent the possibility of cross contamination, and this includes school snack. Children bringing snack from home, will need to keep it in their coat pockets or somewhere safe in their own possession.

Furthermore, due to current restrictions, we have had to cease toothbrushing each day in school which will have an impact on the dental health of some of our children who are not being encouraged to brush their teeth at home, during this period.

Therefore, school staff came to the conclusion that it would be better all round, for the school to supply a snack for our children, similar to what our nursery class already do each day. This ensures that all children have something healthy to eat at playtime; no one is left out and there are not the issues caused by eating an excessive amount of sugary or fatty sweets at playtime. By providing snack from school, children are introduced to a variety of new foods and the effect of peer influence can encourage children to try different things. It also means that children's mid-morning snack becomes an appropriate part of their overall daily nutritional intake and a significant learning experience.

Providing snack in school, also takes the pressure off parents in a number of ways. For example, finding something each day for snack; paying for expensive sweets (some parents must be paying in excess of £5 per week for their child's snack) and of trying to get your child to eat something healthy, if they'd rather cause a fuss for a chocolate bar.

We thought the cost of £2 a week per child an appropriate amount. This works out at 40p per day, and when bulk buying, we get better value for money. However, I agree that for some families with three or more children this may become a barrier to children being able to access a cost effective play-piece. Therefore, we have decided to cap it at **£4 per week for a family of children**. Nevertheless, no child in Colmonell Primary School or Early Years has ever been left out of anything because of cost. We always support families discretely and non-judgementally if they struggle financially. In fact, we currently provide snack or lunch on a daily basis for those children who forget to bring something and we do not seek repayment. Therefore, we ask that the £2 is a contribution, rather than a demand. Two pounds is also an easy amount of cash for staff to handle, without looking for change etc. Staff realise, that there may be a small excess of money left over in snack funds, but have thought that this may be used to provide cooking ingredients, allowing us to increase the number of cooking projects we provide for the children. (Buying cooking ingredients for whole school activities is often an unaffordable cost preventing teachers from providing a wider range of cooking activities.) If everyone takes part in the snack project, then there is a fairness to providing all children with ingredients for cooking.

### **Provision and Preparation of Snack- Our Plan**

The school will source snack locally, in order to help the local economy. Snack preparation will be by staff who have their Elementary Food Hygiene certificate. Food provided will adhere to National Nutritional Guidelines, and we will ensure that we are aware of any food intolerance or food allergies. We will use the guidance, 'Better Eating Better Learning', to support parents, children and staff. At this point, due to Covid 19, children will not prepare snack, however, children will be involved in choosing and developing healthy mid-morning snack menus. Children will have a choice each day for snack.

### **Conclusion**

I hope that this letter outlines our thinking behind this project, as it has been something we have been considering for a while. As a school community, we have a responsibility to ensure that all of our children have the opportunity to make healthy choices. Given the issues that we have identified, we need to do something.

However, ultimately, you do, as a parent have a choice, but I would hope that now you are aware of our rationale for changing the mid-morning snack routine within the school, that you will support us with this project, not just for your child but for all children in our school.

If you have any suggestions about how else we can make this change, or what we can do to improve our circumstances, or if you think that this is a project which could be funded for all children using School Budget please let me know by completing the online questionnaire sent in text/Xpressions message. The questionnaire will close on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> August at noon.

Many thanks, and I look forward to your views and suggestions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Yvonne Templeton". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letter of each word being capitalized and larger than the others.

Head Teacher