

Educating for Health



Shaping our Future

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ii. Forward

There is widespread concern about the safety and nutrition of the diets of young people on the island of Ireland. Poor food choices are being made and the proficiency necessary for the preparation of safe food is being lost. Basic hygiene skills can prevent food poisoning and much is known about the links between poor nutrition and disease in later life. Children need basic life skills, not just in cooking but also skills as consumers, in problem solving and in decision making.

safefood, the Food Safety Promotion Board (FSPB) was set up in 1999 and our mission is to protect and improve public health by fostering and maintaining confidence in the food supply on the island of Ireland by working in partnership with others. Historically, schools may have always been concerned with children's health and wellbeing. This has been given added impetus over the last decade and many exciting and innovative projects are underway. We are committed to making schools healthier places in which to study and work, and are anxious to promote healthy and safe eating within a whole school approach, on the island of Ireland. To this end, your opinions are vital and we look forward to you identifying opportunities that could be provided for pupils.

*Martin Higgins
Chief Executive*

iii. Submissions to safefood

Please complete your details and the following questions below. The finished document should be sent to:

Claire Mac Evilly
safefood
7 Eastgate Avenue, Little Island, Cork

Name:	
Title (Miss/Ms/Mr/Dr/Mrs etc):	
Position (if applicable):	
Organisation (if applicable):	
Address:	
County:	
Telephone:	Fax:
Email:	www:
Date:	
Is this submission a personal view or is it made on behalf of your organisation?	

1. Introduction

Children and young people need to understand the contributing role of food to their health, the need for food hygiene and opportunities that food and the food industry provide for employment. Schools can make an important contribution to this understanding. Furthermore, controversial issues such as GM foods highlight the need to increase public understanding of many food issues, including consumer choice and the need for clear labelling of food.

To understand the role of schools in teaching food safety and nutrition, *safefood* carried out a review of the curriculum, food safety and nutrition education initiatives, and food policies and practices in schools. Food safety and nutrition education resources available for schools, teachers and children were also identified. The review covered primary and post-primary (second level) education on the island of Ireland. The aim of this review was to establish the level of food safety and nutrition in schools on the island.

The next phase involves asking stakeholders in education what their concerns are and what best works. We would also like to identify the needs of students regarding their current knowledge of food safety and nutrition issues. These gaps will need to be filled, whether that involves influencing education policy or developing materials will remain to be seen, but the aim is to gain knowledge to improve the outcomes of education.

This document is divided into eight sections:

Aims and Objectives, Equality, Priorities, Food in Schools, Parental/ Community/Student Involvement, the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning and Evaluation. Some of the sections may be of no relevance to you or your work. Please feel free to ignore those sections.

Who is this consultation document aimed at?

This document is intended for:

- teachers and teacher trainers
- health educators and promoters
- health professionals
- school advisors and principals
- third parties with an interest in education
- parents
- anyone else who is involved in nutrition and food safety in schools.

It is primarily aimed at people who work at the school level to stimulate thinking and discussion.

The document is intended to help the reader influence what *safefood* can do in schools and influence what happens at policy level (ie including senior politicians, policy makers, civil servants and academics).

2. Aims and Objectives

Why do we need *Educating for Health*?

Nutrition and food safety are two key factors which influence health. If people eat healthy, safe food they can avoid many preventable diseases and can live longer lives, free of illness. Though health professionals can clearly see the relationship between diet and health, most people's diet and food preferences are determined less by social, economic, geographical factors and by religion and customs than by a concern for health.

Food and eating are powerful expressions of cultural and social identity. Any attempts to encourage people to eat safe and healthy food must take into account Ireland's rich cultural diversity. In addition many people born outside Ireland now have their home here and have brought other food traditions with them. Many people within Ireland do not have enough money to provide themselves and their families with a healthy diet. Nutrition and food safety education, therefore, needs to consider all of these issues.

The title for the document, *Educating for Health*, was borne from the fact that by providing students with the knowledge and skills about food safety and nutrition, we hope will enable them to make the right food choices and make a difference to their health. *Educating for Health* aims to provide our youth with the knowledge and skills to choose a safe and healthy diet. It sets out a broad range of areas where action could make a significant difference by tackling these issues.

The principles underlying *Educating for Health* are:

- to address the needs of children in a social context
- to be clearly understandable by providing simple objectives and goals
- to target inequalities
- to focus public policies towards improving conditions in schools
- to send consistent dietary messages
- to maximize opportunities for schools to protect and improve children's health
- to encourage cohesion within schools by developing an all island approach to the teaching of food safety and nutrition.

What is your opinion of the principles of *Educating for Health*?

3. Equality

We are not alone in facing the challenge of improving the teaching of food safety and nutrition in schools. We can learn from experience and benefit from experience elsewhere, particularly from international co-operation.

All government departments and public agencies are required by law to promote equality of opportunity between people of different population groups. This includes people of different religious beliefs, political opinions, racial groups, age, marital status or sexual orientation. All major policies and programmes, including *Educating for Health* must have an equality impact assessment.

Do you think there are potential equality implications in *Educating for Health*? Yes: No:

If yes, what do you consider these to be?

If you work in a school, is your school: Mixed: Boys only: Girls only:

Is Home Economics offered in your school? Yes: No:

If your school is a second level school, is Home Economics offered at all levels?

Is Science a core subject? Yes: No:

What Science subjects do you offer at:

Key stage 3

Key stage 4

Post 16

or

Junior Cycle

Established Leaving Certificate

Leaving Certificate Applied

Leaving Certificate Vocational

4. Priorities

Priority Groups

We would like to identify three priority groups which we feel would particularly benefit from *Educating for Health*. These groups, set out below, were identified because they are potentially at risk from a lack of knowledge about food safety and nutrition:

- boys and girls age 4–6
- primary school boys age 10–12
- teenage girls and boys.

Priority Settings

We also propose to focus on four priority settings which will be outlined in more detail in the following sections. These settings, set out below, we feel provide many opportunities to develop knowledge about food safety and nutrition:

- food in schools
- parental/community/student involvement
- the curriculum
- teaching and learning.

Priority Topics

We have identified nine priority topics that could be addressed as part of the whole school approach to food safety and nutrition. These are:

- foodborne pathogens
(clean, separate, cook, chill)
- chemical contamination of food
- enabling consumer choice
(labelling, health claims)
- nutrients
- dietary requirements
- information to make healthy food choices
(use of the pyramid/plate)
- diet and disease
- allergies
- physical activity.

5. Food in Schools

Children and young people spend a long time in school and eat at the very least a snack or a meal during their schoolday. The experience of eating in schools can either reinforce food safety and nutrition as taught in the formal curriculum or it can contradict it. Consideration of the school environment and food safety and nutrition policies may be worthwhile. A whole school approach to food safety and nutrition would ensure that school custom and practice supports the taught curriculum and reflects the health promoting school concept.

What type of school are you? (eg primary, secondary)

The physical and social environment of the school

Can you describe your hand washing facilities for the pupils?

Excellent: Good: Poor:

Please describe your facilities:

Does your school provide food for the pupils? (eg canteen, tuck shop, vending machines) Yes: No:

If yes, please describe:

Can you please describe where children eat their food?

In the classroom: In the canteen: In the playground:

Other:

Healthy Eating Campaigns

Do you ever run healthy eating campaigns/initiatives in your school? Yes: No:

If yes, please describe:

Food safety and nutrition policies

Healthy eating should be a school policy and promoted through a whole school approach. This includes healthy eating as part of the school canteen and the school tuck shop. We believe that school policy should reinforce the basic principles of food hygiene both in classrooms when involved in food preparation and throughout the school. These policies should consider:

- access to hot water, soap and towels
- the provision of healthy school meals
- the provision of food during school breaks and provision of special or subsidised food *ie* snacks
- regulations relating to type and quality of food provided
- responsibility for decisions with respect to food and for catering
- provision of materials for practical classes.

Do you agree with these policies? Yes: No:

(Is there anything further that you would like to add?)

The following is applicable to Republic of Ireland only as Northern Ireland have compulsory national nutritional standards for school lunches

Does your Health Board provide you with any guidance in the area of nutrition *eg* healthy school lunch guidelines and guidelines for school tuck shops and canteens?

How could your Health Promotion Officer assist your school?

6. Parental/Community/Student Involvement

Adult and peer role models are crucial in changing attitudes in school and strategies related to families and the community are sometimes referred to as the 'parallel curriculum'. It comprises all out-of-school activities that involve students, families and the community. While undoubtedly the role of schools in fostering health promoting behaviours should not be underestimated, it is essential that other environments and attitudes to which children and young people are exposed are also supportive.

FOR TEACHERS

Please identify the age of your pupils and the subject you teach?

Do parents have any input into food safety and nutrition in your school?

Do you ever bring in experts in food safety and nutrition to talk to your students? Yes: No:

If yes, please explain:

Do you ever talk about careers in the food industry to your students or do you have any resources explaining careers in the food industry? Yes: No:

If yes, please outline:

How could *safefood* encourage more students to continue to study the area of food safety and nutrition and develop careers in this field?

FOR PARENTS

What nutrition and food safety issues are of biggest concern to you?

How could *safefood* encourage more students to continue to study the area of food safety and nutrition and develop careers in this field?

Do you think your child's school could improve standards of food safety and nutrition? Yes: No:
If yes, how?

7. The Curriculum

Food safety and nutrition in schools has a very wide remit. It covers both the curriculum and the preparation and consumption of food in schools. As part of the *safe*food review, three aspects of food safety and nutrition education were identified. They are:

- **food for health - nutrition and healthy eating**
- **food hygiene - food safety and food preparation**
- **working with food.**

Food for health focuses on food and diet, teaching children and young people the link between a balanced diet and good health and includes how to choose and enjoy appropriate food. Food hygiene focuses on food safety and food preparation. Teaching about food safety and food preparation includes the principles of food hygiene and how to work with food in a hygienic way. Working with food is a means of providing children and young people with information about the opportunities for employment in food-related industries and identifies the required skills and qualifications for such employment.

This section examines the curriculum in detail and asks a number of relevant questions.

Food safety and nutrition at primary level

In Northern Ireland, health education is one of the educational (cross-curricula) themes for compulsory education at primary level. Nutrition is one aspect of the theme. In health education, pupils should be able to make responsible decisions about their diet. They should know and understand the contribution of food to growth, energy and health. This occurs through a variety of subjects. Food hygiene is also covered in health education, however, working with food is currently lacking in the primary level curriculum in Northern Ireland.

In the Republic of Ireland, 'Social, Personal and Health Education' (SPHE) is one of the curriculum areas of the revised primary curriculum. The aim of SPHE is to promote the health of the child and provide a foundation for healthy living in all its aspects. It is an enabling curriculum for schools. Food safety and nutrition is part of the programme. Support for SPHE began in 2001 and it will be introduced in all primary schools in 2002. Similar to the curriculum in Northern Ireland, working with food is not covered by the primary level curriculum in the Republic of Ireland.

Do you agree with the information given above about the current primary school curriculum?

Yes : No:

Please expand:

Food safety and nutrition at second level – Key Stage 3 and Junior Cycle (pupils aged 11-14)

In Northern Ireland, the curriculum focuses again on food for health and as home economics becomes a separate subject there is a clearer focus on food hygiene and food preparation begins to appear.

At Key Stage 3 all students take science, geography and history. In science, pupils should have opportunities to appreciate the complexity of the human body and how it can be kept healthy. Geography and history provide opportunities to consider the relationship between diet and health. Home economics is a subject in the environment and society area of study and is provided in most schools. In home economics, pupils focus on the contribution of food to growth, energy and health and the need to make responsible decisions about their diet and to prepare and cook food in a hygienic manner. Careers education, as one of the educational (cross-curricula) themes, begins to be part of the curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to become aware how science, home economics and other subjects can provide opportunities for careers and suitable employment.

Within the curriculum in Northern Ireland, food for health, food hygiene and working with food are covered by the subjects outlined below:

Food Safety and Food Nutrition Education	Food for Health	Food Hygiene	Working with Food
Post-Primary Key Stage 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science • Home Economics • Geography • History • Health Education • PSE (Personal and Social Education) in development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home Economics • Science • Health Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home Economics • Career Education

In the Republic of Ireland science provides opportunities for students to develop an understanding of our nutritional needs and a healthy diet. There is an optional unit on food science. In home economics, food safety and nutrition are an inherent part of the course. Post-primary SPHE builds on the aims of SPHE in the primary school, to promote physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing. It has physical health as a module in the junior cycle programme. This includes topics such as body care, healthy eating and diet. Within the curriculum in the Republic of Ireland, food for health, food hygiene and working with food are covered by the subjects outlined below:

Food Safety and Nutrition Education	Food for Health	Food Hygiene	Working with Food
Post-Primary Exam Junior Cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPHE • Science • Home economics • Geography • History • Physical Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home Economics • Science • SPHE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Junior Certificate practical

Do you agree with the information given about the current Key Stage 3 and Junior Certificate Cycle curriculum? Yes : No:

Please expand:

Food safety and nutrition at Key Stage 4 (pupils aged 14–16)

In Northern Ireland, students move to Key Stage 4 in Year 11. They must follow courses in Science and Technology and the Environment and Society areas of study. Science is the only compulsory subject; students must follow a full course in balanced science. Students must take a course in the Environment and Society area of study, among which subjects are history, geography, home economics and social and environmental studies. There are programmes of study/outline programmes of study for science, home economics, geography, history, social and environmental studies and PE at Key Stage 4. Health education and career education remain educational (cross-curricular) themes. Within the curriculum in Northern Ireland, food for health, food hygiene and working with food are covered by the subjects outlined below in Key Stage 4:

	Food For Health	Food Hygiene	Working with Food
KS4/GCSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GCSE Science • GCSE Biology • Health Education • GCSE Home Economics • GCSE Social and Environmental Education (Health and drugs module) • Entry Level Qualifications (Childcare, Food Studies, Home Economics, Lifeskills Health Education) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GCSE Home Economics (Food and Nutrition) • Entry Level Qualifications (Food Studies, Lifeskills Home Economics) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career Education

Do you agree with the information given about the current key stage 4 curriculum?

Yes : No:

Please expand:

Food safety and nutrition at post-16 and senior cycle

In both syllabuses, there is a wide variety in the subject areas that support food safety and nutrition education. In Northern Ireland, it is mainly covered in Biology, Human Biology, Home Economics, Science and possibly Design & Technology: Food Technology. Within the curriculum in Northern Ireland, food for health, food hygiene and working with food are covered by the subjects outlined below:

	Food For Health	Food Hygiene	Working with Food
Post-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AS/A Biology • AS/A Human Biology • AS/A Home Economics • AS/A Science • Vocational A Levels (Hospitality and Catering Health and Social Care Science) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AS/A Home Economics • AS/A Biology • AS/A Human Biology • AS/A Science • AS/A Food Technology • Vocational A Levels (Hospitality and Catering) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational A Level (Hospitality and Catering Health and Social Care, Science)

In the Senior Cycle in the Republic of Ireland there is no prescribed programme for Transition Year. Schools are free to devise their own programme and may or may not include elements of food safety and nutrition education on a compulsory or optional basis eg 'safefood for Life' Transition Year Programme.

Established Leaving Certificate subjects such as Biology, Agricultural Science, Home Economics (Social & Scientific and General) contribute to food safety and nutrition education. In the Leaving Certificate Applied a range of compulsory and optional modules have topics such as food, nutrition, health, human body and hygiene. These are Social Education, Active Leisure Studies, Agriculture/Horticulture, Childcare/Community Care, Hair and Beauty, Hotel Catering and Tourism and Science. In the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, food and catering are seen as important as shown by the grouping of Home Economics and Agricultural Science or Biology as specialist subjects and Home Economics and Business or Accounting or Agricultural Science and Business or Accounting as service subject groupings.

The Link Modules provide opportunities for students to investigate food manufacturing or catering through their work experience and career preparation investigation. Within the curriculum in the Republic of Ireland, food for health, food hygiene and working with food are covered by the subjects outlined below within the Senior Cycle:

How do you think the three aspects of food safety and nutrition as outlined could be supported further within Key Stage 3 and the Junior Cycle?

How could *safefood* provide information to support the Key Stage 3 and Junior Cycle curriculum?

How do you think the three aspects of food safety and nutrition as outlined could be supported further within Key Stage 4?

How could *safefood* provide information to support the Key Stage 4 curriculum?

How do you think the three aspects of food safety and nutrition as outlined could be supported further within the Post 16 and Senior Cycle?

How could *safefood* provide information to support the Post 16 and Senior Cycle curriculum?

How could *safefood* or other agencies ensure the consistency of the information on food safety and nutrition across subject areas?

Teaching and learning about food for health should include:

- the link between a balanced diet and good health
- how to choose and enjoy food
- development of skills in food preparation.

Teaching and learning about food safety should include:

- the rules of simple food hygiene and how to adopt hygienic practices.

Teaching and learning about food and employments should include:

- the opportunities for employment in food-related industries and the skills and routes into the qualifications needed for employment in those industries.

A number of initiatives have already been introduced in schools to educate children about food safety and nutrition. These include:

- *safe*food for Life – Transition Year Project
- School Nutrition Action Groups
- Health Promoting School Award
- Healthy Eating Guidelines – A Resource Pack for Primary Schools.

Are you aware of them? Yes : No:

Do you use them in your current teaching? Yes : No:

Are you familiar with any other initiatives which aid in the teaching of food safety and nutrition in schools? Yes : No:

If yes, please expand:

Do students have to pay for the materials they use in Home Economics? Yes : No:

If you work in a primary school, do you ever do any cooking with the children? Yes : No:

If yes, please expand:

How is your kitchen or science laboratory equipped? Excellent: Good: Poor:

Please expand:

10. Next Steps

The role of this document is to put forward some ideas on how *safefood* will assist in the teaching of food safety and nutrition. *safefood* is seeking views in relation to the functions for which it has responsibility. Views are requested in relation to any of the issues raised in Sections 2–9 of this document.

Submissions are invited on this document and full details about the submission procedure can be found in the enclosed letter.

After the completion of the formal review process on responses to this document, it will be a matter for *safefood* to advance with the issues raised in this document. Please note that the publication of this document is merely one of the consultative steps of many in the work of *safefood*.