



Healthy Eating and Oral Health Policy

Morrington Park Primary School 5040

Policy date: February 2025

“Victorian government schools are child safe environments. Our schools actively promote the safety and wellbeing of all students, and all school staff are committed to protecting students from abuse or harm in the school environment in accordance with their legal obligations including the Child Safe Standards.

BACKGROUND

Nourishing foods are important to promote optimum growth and development during childhood.¹ Research suggests eating a variety of foods can also support mental health and improve concentration, memory and academic performance.²⁻⁵ Enjoying a range of different foods across the food groups can also facilitate the development of the oral cavity and maintain oral health.⁶

Just like learning to read or write, learning about food and eating is a gradual process that takes considerable time. Positive experiences and supportive relationships can benefit children’s development and establish solid foundations for learning, health and behaviour.⁷ Schools provide a safe, stable and engaging environment for children to learn and also play an important role in how children learn to feel and think about their bodies. It is imperative that school policies and learning environments are body kind, inclusive of all foods and nurture body trust.

PURPOSE

Leadership and staff acknowledge the importance of positive body-image, nourishing food and oral health behaviours, which contribute to mental, physical and social health and wellbeing. This policy confirms our commitment to:

- Encouraging students to explore and enjoy foods and snacks to nourish their bodies, satisfy hunger, appetite and energy needs.
- Promoting the importance of health behaviours, which includes modelling positive body image, providing drinking water facilities, offering at least 15 minutes to enjoy snacks and lunch and initiatives to support the care of oral health.
- Creating a supportive, age-appropriate and inclusive environment for learning and exploring food and good oral health without restriction or judgement for students, staff, families and external visitors.

As a health promoting school, we will promote food education and oral health behaviours to students, staff and families through learning, policies, the physical and social environment and by developing community links and partnerships.

SCOPE

Body image, self-esteem and adequate nutrition have a major influence on the health and wellbeing of children and a direct impact on their physical, mental and social growth and development.⁸⁻¹⁰

Food choice is complex. Acknowledging how family, social and cultural values, budget, time, appetite, taste, allergies and neurodevelopmental factors can all impact how and what children eat, is important within the school environment.

Good oral health enables children to eat, speak and interact with others without pain or discomfort. Tooth decay is Australia's most prevalent health problem, but can be prevented or even reversed if caught in the early stages.¹¹ What children eat, access to fluoridated drinking water and toothpastes with added fluoride all play a key role in reducing the risk of tooth decay and promoting good oral health.¹²

Whole school engagement

It is recognised that every member of **Mornington Park Primary School** has an impact on students' health and can contribute to creating an environment that promotes safe, inclusive food education and oral health behaviours. All members of our school community, including staff, students, families and volunteers, will be supported to meet this policy.

DEFINITIONS

Food and oral health: For the purposes of this policy and for the '*Healthy Schools Achievement Program*,' the 'Food and Oral Health' health priority area focuses on

1. Creating a supportive, safe, age-appropriate and inclusive environment for learning about food and good oral health without restriction or judgement.
2. Supporting students to explore and enjoy foods to nourish their bodies, satisfy hunger, appetite and energy needs.
3. Understanding nutrition requirements, positive food habits and food literacy, and supporting oral health and hygiene practices.

Eating for nourishment: Eating a variety of foods from the five food groups each day. These include:

- fruit
- vegetables and legumes/beans
- grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain
- milk, yoghurt, cheese and alternatives
- lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans.

Eating for nourishment also means eating in a way that honours social and cultural beliefs, having regular meals and snacks and eating food to satisfy hunger, appetite and energy needs.¹³

Nutrition: The process of providing or obtaining the food necessary for health and growth.¹⁴

Food morality labels: intentionally or unintentionally categorising food with labels such as ‘healthy’ or ‘unhealthy’ and ‘sometimes’ or ‘everyday.’

Up until late primary school age, children are concrete thinkers and activities that enable them to explore new concepts through their senses – sight, smell, hearing, touch and taste, will encourage learning and understanding.¹⁵ Concepts such as fibre, vitamins, ‘healthy’ and ‘everyday’ or ‘unhealthy’ and ‘sometimes’ foods for example, are abstract – they cannot be seen or touched and are difficult for younger children to understand. When food and drinks are given a moral values and labelled as good, bad, healthy or unhealthy, children may believe that ‘bad’ or ‘unhealthy’ choices are made by bad or unhealthy people and feel guilt or shame about their food choices.

Eating a variety of core foods is more important for long-term health and preventing disease, than not eating foods that may be considered less nutritious.¹⁶ However, accepting and eating a wide variety of foods may not be achievable for some people and an understanding of individual approaches to eating enough food in a way that accommodates unique sensory and executive functioning needs is required.¹⁷

Food literacy education that engages the senses, nurtures body trust, explores diversity and describes foods using neutral language can help establish positive attitudes and safe relationships with food.¹⁸

Oral health: A standard of health of the oral cavity and related tissues that enables an individual to eat, speak and socialise without active disease, discomfort or embarrassment and that contributes to general wellbeing.¹⁹

Food literacy: A collection of inter-related knowledge, skills and behaviours required to explore, plan, manage, select, prepare, enjoy and eat food to meet mental, physical and emotional needs.²⁰

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SCHOOL PROFILE

Mornington Park Primary School is committed to improving student learning and the development of its staff. The school is in a beautiful setting and is nestled away from busy streets in parkland behind the historic Mornington Park Homestead and Mornington Park Reserve.

Mornington Park Primary School's purpose is to provide our students with the opportunity, motivation, environment and programs to each reach their full potential as kind and thoughtful individuals and contributing members of the community; emotionally, socially, creatively and academically. The school's approach will have as its foundation, the development of productive and cooperative relationships between all members of the school community.

SCHOOL VALUES, PHILOSOPHY AND VISION

Mornington Park Primary School's Statement of Values and School Philosophy is integral to the work that we do and is the foundation of our school community. Students, staff and members of our school community are encouraged to live and demonstrate our core values of respect, responsibility, safety and kindness at every opportunity.

We aim to provide a stimulating and positive environment where every student strives toward their personal best; academically, socially and physically. We value: Respect, Responsibility. Safety and Kindness.

Our Statement of Values is available online at: <https://ballamparkps.com.au/>

PROCEDURES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

LEADERSHIP AND COMMITMENT

- Staff, families and students are involved in guiding the development and implementation of the whole school Food and Oral Health Policy and are seen as key partners in promoting safe, inclusive food education and oral health behaviours initiatives in the school.
- Staff, families and students are provided with information about policy requirements, with opportunities to provide feedback and input.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Water (preferably tap water) is accessible for drinking at all times.
- A variety of core food and drinks, without restriction, are promoted for snacks and lunches brought into the school.
- All school-provided food and drinks consider the *School Canteens and Other School Food Services Policy* and the canteen menu has been assessed using the Healthy Eating Advisory Service (HEAS) FoodChecker tool.
- School fundraising, sponsorship, advertising and marketing activities with a food focus will celebrate a variety of foods, the diversity of food culture within the school community and promote initiatives that encourage health behaviours.
- Safety practices, such as mouth guards, are implemented for contact sports.
- Students and staff are provided with inviting spaces and sufficient time to eat (at least 15 minutes for lunch and snacks).
- Safe food handling practices are followed, including safe procedures for food storage, handling, preparation and disposal and food safety training.

WELCOMING CULTURE

- Diversity and cultural practices are considered when implementing this policy and safe, inclusive food education and oral health practices.
- Free play, stickers, stamps and/or games for example are used as an incentive or reward instead of food, drinks or food vouchers.
- Staff and visitors role model positive body image and promote age-appropriate food education and oral health behaviours.
- Celebrations and events include a variety of core food options, without restriction.

- Oral hygiene practices are promoted and undertaken at the school where appropriate.

STUDENT TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Body kind, age-appropriate food education and oral health messages are embedded in the curriculum. The curriculum guides students to develop food literacy knowledge and skills to build a safe relationship with food and their bodies, to enable students to make food and drink choices to support their physical, mental and social growth and development.
- Staff are supported to access professional development and resources about body kind, age-appropriate food education and oral health education.
- Students are included in the design and implementation of body kind, age-appropriate food education and oral health initiatives.

SUPPORTED STAFF

- Staff are supported to enjoy a variety of nourishing food and drinks and maintain good oral health practices at work.
- Body kind, age-appropriate food education and oral health information and policy requirements are included in staff orientation/induction.
- When food is provided to staff for meetings, celebrations and events, a variety of socially and culturally appropriate food options are included, without restriction.

FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- Body kind, age-appropriate food education and oral health information is provided to families and the wider community, such as information about local dental services and how to create safe, body-kind environments and explore and learn about food as a family.
- Partnerships are established with relevant organisations and health professionals to support body kind, age-appropriate food education and oral health practices where appropriate.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND POLICY DOCUMENTS

- School Canteens 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
- Butterfly Foundation – prevention programs for schools
- National Eating Disorders Strategy

- DET Safe Food Handling
- Section 2.3.5 of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006
- Food Act 1984
- Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code.

RELATED SCHOOL POLICIES

- Mornington Park Physical Activity and Movement Policy
- Mornington Park Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Bullying Prevention
- Staff Health and Wellbeing
- Child Safety

MONITORING AND REVIEW

This School Food and Oral Health Policy will be monitored and reviewed by the staff, school council, student representatives and the health and wellbeing team at least once every three years.

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	February 2025
Consultation	School Council
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	February 2028

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