



## **Hanafin urges “give up your ‘oul junk food” at launch of guide for School Food Initiatives**

*Over 200,000 children to benefit from School Meals Programme in 2009*

**“Providing a healthy and nutritious food programme for children can help overcome educational underachievement as well as reduce a pattern of early school leaving. There are also wider community health benefits through these programmes, as well as more family involvement in their child’s schooling”** said Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Mary Hanafin T.D. today (24<sup>th</sup> June 2009). The Minister was launching **A Good Practice Guide for School Food Initiatives** on behalf of Healthy Food for All at Rutland Street National School new school building in Dublin.

Addressing pupils, parents, teachers and staff at the school Minister Hanafin said **“the *Good Practice Guide for School Food Initiatives* contains advice on funding for school meals initiatives, how to provide school lunches, how to set up and run breakfast and after school clubs. The guide also advises on how to plan a school food initiative as well as how to devise a Healthy School Food policy, including introducing healthier snacks and lunchboxes. ”**

Healthy Food for All (HFfA) is a multi-agency, all-island initiative which promotes access, availability and affordability of healthy food for low income groups. The main objective is to increase the range and effectiveness of school and community food initiatives for low-income groups. The *Good Practice Guide for School Food Initiatives* will be distributed free of charge to all schools in the DEIS programme and is also available to download free from the website of the HFfA.

The School Meals Programme is operated by the Department of Social and Family Affairs. Minister Hanafin said **“the Department**



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**funds the school meals programme with particular emphasis on disadvantaged children. The budget for the School Meals Programme in 2009 is €35 million and will benefit over 200,000 children in over 1,960 schools.”**

The school meals programme gives funding towards provision of food services - schools identified by the Department of Education and Science under its 'Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools' (DEIS) action plan are prioritised for inclusion in the programme.

Minister Hanafin went on to say **“the benefits of providing quality, nutritious food to children are well documented both here and in and other countries. International research has shown that good nutrition and cognitive ability are linked. Inadequate nutrition impacts negatively on a child’s ability to learn and benefit from education.”**

Minister concluded by congratulating all those involved in the production of the ***Good Practice Guide for School Food Initiatives***, particularly Healthy Food for All and the main contributors of the guide, the Combat Poverty Agency and the Department of Health and Children. Minister Hanafin also thanked Rutland Street School for hosting the launch. **“Rutland Street School has been a long time participant in the school meals scheme and is successfully operating both the breakfast and homework/after school clubs for children from the area for many years.”**

**ENDS**

**Note for Editors:**

HfFA was set-up by Combat Poverty Agency, Crosscare and the Society of St Vincent de Paul as a follow up to the publication *Food Poverty and Policy* (2004).

The main funders of HfFA are Combat Poverty, Safefood, Food Safety Authority of Ireland and the Health Services Executive. Crosscare provides administrative support for HfFA. Combat Poverty was one of the founders of HfFA, as a follow-up to the research report.



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HFfA's *Good Practice Guide for School Food Initiatives* will be distributed free of charge to all schools in the DEIS programme and is also available to download free from the website of the HFfA. Local events/workshops with schools and local providers of school food will be held to promote the guide. The HFfA will work with national stakeholders, such as community dietitians, private providers of school food and Government Departments to promote the guide. A cross border event is also planned with health promotion agencies in Northern Ireland which have recently developed a similar guide for schools.

**ENDS**