

Deirdre Doyle  
The Cool Food School  
60 Charlesland Wood  
Greystones  
Co. Wicklow  
[info@thecoolfoodschool.ie](mailto:info@thecoolfoodschool.ie)



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To whom it may concern:

I would like to make a submission to the Committee on Children and Youth Affairs on “Tackling Childhood Obesity”.

I teach children about healthy eating through my company, The Cool Food School. Through research and trial and error I have created workshops that are fun, interactive and put real food in front of children away from the stress of the dinner table.

During the course of researching my business, I came across “Flavour School”, a sensory food education programme based on the Sapere method. The Sapere method was developed in France in the 1970’s and is now taught extensively in pre- and primary schools in Finland, Sweden, Holland, Switzerland and France. It is currently being trialled in the UK, under the Flavour School name. More details to follow.

As a mother of 3 primary school children, I am on the frontline in terms of children’s diets and nutrition. I am also a Health and Nutrition Coach. I think food education is a vital step in tackling childhood obesity and this is why I am bringing you “Flavour School Ireland”.

I would be happy to appear in public session at a Committee meeting if necessary.

Kind regards,

Deirdre Doyle  
[www.thecoolfoodschool.ie](http://www.thecoolfoodschool.ie)  
087-2825086



# The Cool Food School introduces



Flavour School Ireland is a sensory food education programme for children taught in a school setting. It is based on the Sapere method, developed in France in the 1970's by a chemist, Jacques Puisais, in response to children turning away from sour and hard foods towards soft and sweet tastes.

The aim of the program is to awaken children's curiosity about foods and eating, and to give them both confidence in their taste sensations and valuable tools for analytical thinking. The program helps children learn about their senses and to recognise and be confident about their own personal tastes.

By strengthening their skills and abilities for exploring foods, we can embed healthy attitudes, curiosity and knowledge about food and eating at an early stage, ultimately creating more aware and empowered future food consumers. A confident and curious attitude to food is critical to the healthy and wellbeing of our children now and into the future.

## Neophobia:

Neophobia is the fear of new foods. It is very common in young children from the age of 2 to 6 approximately. As a consequence, many children have a very restricted diet, which in turn means they are missing out on the nutrition inherent in a healthy, balanced diet.

A further consequence of this restricted diet, which tends to be carbohydrate heavy, is childhood obesity. Sugar is another culprit in the childhood obesity crisis. Those soft and sweet tastes that Jacques Puisais was concerned about in the 1970's in France now form the basis of children's diets in this country.

Flavour School Ireland tackles this lack of diversity in children diets by showing children how to enjoy a variety of foods, how to recognise different foods and to be open to different experiences. A child who has never seen an avocado is unlikely to eat one.

How does Flavour School work?

Flavour School Ireland is learning about healthy eating, not through lectures and theory but through pleasure and exploration. We only fully know food when we encounter it with our senses, sight, touch, smell, hearing and taste.

It is an experience-led method which gives children the ability to get to know their own tastes and be proud of them. Food is a subject that affects all of us and the experiments in the programme lead to fun and stimulating conversations about food.

The programme is broken down into 10 “subjects” as follows :

- ☼ Sight
- ☼ Touch
- ☼ Hearing
- ☼ Smell
- ☼ Taste
- ☼ The five basic tastes :
  - ☼ sweet
  - ☼ sour
  - ☼ bitter
  - ☼ salty
  - ☼ umami



tinned and fresh pear

Each “subject” has a number of small experiments based on that sense or taste. For example :

Hearing : the teacher offers children a selection of foods such as raw carrots, banana, bread and breadsticks. The children don ear defenders and taste each food to ascertain which are loud and which are quiet.

Smell : the teacher prepares boxes with smells of foods or other household smells and covers them - the children have to guess whats in the boxes.

Sight : blind tasting of a small selection of foods

Touch : the teacher prepares dishes of tinned and fresh pear which the children taste and then discuss the different textures of pear.

Sweet : the teacher gives the children a taste of natural yoghurt, then they add a spoon of sugar and taste, then a second spoon of sugar and then a third. The goal is to see how adding sugar affects the sweetness.

## **The benefits of Flavour School Ireland :**

- ☼ the classes are short (20-30 minutes)
- ☼ they are easy to teach
- ☼ they can be incorporated into other classes e.g.. SESE or literacy (creating a word bank around food)
- ☼ they are inexpensive to teach - the teacher needs a small amount of food for each class and no special equipment
- ☼ the classes are sustainable over a long period of time
- ☼ the classes are fun, interactive and the children enjoy them
- ☼ they are adaptable for children of all ages
- ☼ this is not a cooking programme and the teacher needs no special skills to teach the classes
- ☼ studies from other countries has shown the programme to be effective in increasing children's interest in food and giving them a vocabulary for food beyond "yuk" and "yum".

Through The Cool Food School, I am currently trialling the programme in 2 different schools in the Greystones area. Already, we have had success with a little girl who had never eaten a pear before but tried it to see if it was "loud" or "quiet".

We are currently seeking funding for rolling out the programme to more schools. The project has been shortlisted by Social Entrepreneurs Ireland for funding and training (decision to be made by May 14th).

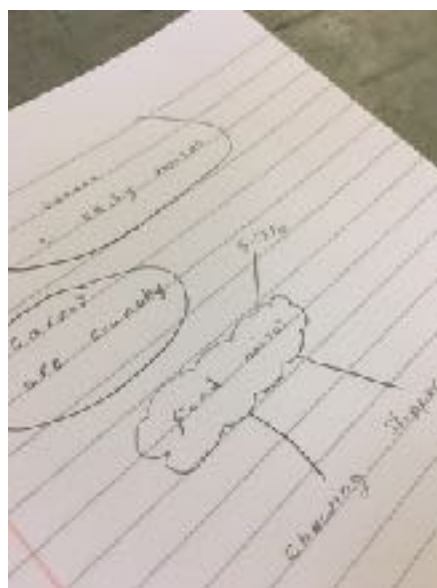
While this programme will not end childhood obesity, I feel that it will be an important part of the larger picture.

There is more information available here :

[www.sapere-asso.fr](http://www.sapere-asso.fr)

[www.flavourschool.org.uk](http://www.flavourschool.org.uk)

[www.thecoolfoodschool.ie](http://www.thecoolfoodschool.ie)



creating word banks

