

**A healthy eating initiative which reaps handsome rewards for primary school pupils is a massive hit with at Scoil Ide in Curranes. The Castleisland school, which has 62 pupils, is top of the class this month in Food Dudes, in which the kids have opened their classrooms and their lunch boxes to the idea of new foods.**

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BY CON DENNEHY

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The programme was designed by the Department of Agriculture and Food to encourage children to eat more fruit and vegetables.

It motivates the children to think about what they eat as well as the nutritional value of the food.

"The amazing aspect of the programme is that kids are rewarded for their efforts," said Cait Daly, deputy principal at Scoil Ide.

The prizes include drinks beakers, frisbees, pencil cases and other functional items

For the first sixteen days

the students are given fruit and vegetables to taste and eat, while they are read a letter and watch a specially designed video of the Food Dudes.

"Each day the children are rewarded with small prizes for successfully eating the fruit and veg.

"This phase is primarily school based, although children keep a diary of the fruit and veg they have eaten at home," said Elizabeth Sweeney, a teacher and co-ordinator of the Food Dudes programme at Scoil

Ide.

The second phase encourages the children to bring their own fruit and veg to school every day in special Food Dudes containers.

## PROGRESS

Classroom wall charts are used to record progress, and children receive Food Dudes certificates and further

rewards upon reaching goals. This phase maintains fruit and veg consumption in the longer term.

"The programme, which commenced last week, will see each pupil given a different piece of fruit and vegetable over a few days.

"Many children wouldn't have even tasted some of the fruit or vegetables so it was

a great opportunity to open their taste buds to new foods," Cait Daly said.

One student taking part in the programme is Shannon McHugh (12).

"It's a great opportunity to try new foods. I have never eaten sweet peppers or turnips.

"Now I like them, thanks to Food Dudes."

