

Healthy Living and Healthy Eating Policy.

Mission Statement:

We seek to promote a caring and committed school community which will facilitate the education of our students and where each individual is valued as a unique human being.

"Is ar scáth a chéile a mhairimid"

Introduction:

In Borrisokane Community College all students will be given the opportunity to choose a lifestyle that is active, healthy and meaningful. This will contribute to the preparation of the student for a life of autonomous wellbeing.

During the school year 2015/2016, a committee was formed to update this policy. The policy adopts a whole school approach that involves students, teachers, canteen caterer, parents and a dietician from the Irish Heart Foundation. High on the agenda was to try and achieve the 'Healthy Eating Award' and also looking at Senior Cycle PE. The Department of Education & Skills recommends two hours PE per week for all classes. The minimum requirement is a double class per week.

Rationale:

We establish eating habits at a young age, what we eat affects our own immediate health and the choices we make during our youth will determine how healthy we will be in later life. We know from recent Irish and European studies that our young people eat too much sugar, salt and fats and not enough fruit and vegetables. There is a clear link between what we eat and our risk of becoming overweight/obese and of getting heart disease and diabetes. What we eat when we are young has an impact on our quality of life in adulthood. If we encourage young people to choose and enjoy different foods, we give them lifetime encouragement to make healthful choices. Young people spend a large part of the day in school where they eat at least one of their main meals. The home plays the major role in determining healthy eating habits. However, the school, in partnership with parents, can make an important contribution.

Regular exercise is important to teenagers because it helps maintain their physical and mental health. Teens should strive for at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily, aiming to spend less time being sedentary and more time being active, according to Teens Health. If teenagers can discover physical activities they enjoy, they are more likely to exercise on a regular basis and continue exercising into adulthood. So again we can make an important contribution here.

Our policy is both timely and critical for the health and development of children especially due to the recent research highlighting increase in teenage obesity and diabetes.

Promoting Healthy Eating

Canteen

Healthy Eating is encouraged by the products available in the canteen and by the pricing structure where the cost of the main course dinner at lunchtime is kept to a minimum.

The following are school food standards that we implement in our canteen as recommended by the Irish Heart Foundation.

These guidelines apply to food the whole school day, including breakfasts, morning breaks and lunch. Ideally they form part of the overall health promoting school activities, to help support everyone's efforts in improving our, health and wellbeing

Bread. Cereals and Grains of One or more portions of food from this group are offered at each meal. A choice of whole meal/grain is included e.g. whole meal bread, cereal, rice, pasta, potato with skin.

Starchy food cooked in fat or oil is available no more than three days each week e.g. Chips, wedges.

Fruit and Vegetables

- One or more portions of vegetables or salads is offered as part of a hot meal, or sandwich or as an accompaniment every day.
- A new wider variety of whole or chopped fruit is available all day, every day.

If desert is offered at meal times, it is fruit based at least twice per week.

Dairy Foods

- At least one portion of food from this group is provided in the canteen every day and low fat options are available e.g. Low fat spread, yoghurt, milk, and cheese.

Meat, Fish, Egg or Beans

- At least one meat or poultry and one other choice of food from this group is offered daily.
- Fish is offered as part of a main dish at least once a week. Oil rich fish is included on the menu at least once a week such as salmon as a main dish or as a sandwich choice.

Healthier drinks

- There is access to fresh drinking water in water fonts throughout the school. There are no sugar sweetened drinks. No added sugar juice drinks and milk (<5% sugar content) are available.

Foods high in Fat sugar and salt

Foods from the top shelf of the food pyramid e.g. high in fat, sugar and salt are minimised in the school e.g. Standard size chocolate bars, high fat crisps, sweets or sugar sweetened drinks are not available. Alternatives such as unsalted nuts*, cereal bars (<150kcal), rice & oatcakes, flapjacks etc. are available.

Food that is deep-fried, or batter-coated, or processed is offered no more than twice a week. Wednesday is the only day chips are sold.

Tuesday, Thursday and Friday are designated healthy days where snacks with less sugar, fat and salt are available like homemade flapjacks and healthier chocolate brownies.

A healthy lunch box includes:

- At least 2 portions from the bread/cereals group e.g. pasta, rice, couscous, potato etc.
- One portion from the meat and the meat alternatives group e.g. ham, chicken, beans etc. 2-3 portions from fruits and vegetables.
- One portion from the dairy products. E.g. yoghurt, milk, cheese etc.
- The following foods do not support a healthy lunch policy and should be excluded from your lunch box; crisps, sweets, bars (including chocolate based cereal bars), lollypops, chocolate, winders, chocolate buns and sugar sweetened drinks.

Healthy snack options (Lower in sugar and fat)

Foods from the top tier of the food pyramid should not be included in your child's lunchbox. Sometimes it can be difficult to think of alternatives to these. Here are some tasty alternatives.

- Fruit (for example, an apple or banana, handful of grapes)

- Vegetables
- Plain pop corn
- Plain breadsticks, unsalted plain or whole-wheat crackers, crispbreads or water biscuits served with fruit or cheese.
- Plain rice cakes.
- Natural or low fat yogurt with fresh fruit (fresh, frozen or tinned in its own juice)
- Wholemeal or plain scones.
- Fruit bun or mini fruit loaf. *
- A slice of banana bread or home tray bake. *
- Sugar-free jelly pots or fruit jelly.
- Pot of custard or rice pudding.

*These are best taken with meals (when they are less damaging to the teeth) and should not be taken too frequently between meals. These snacks are nutritious, but still contain some sugar, fat and salt.

School Meals Programme: Funding is made available from the Department of Social and Family Affairs for needy students. The parent's student's will be informed of the scheme and how to apply for it. The Principal will decide the eligibility of students based on applications received. Parents must apply every year to avail of this.

Healthy Eating Award: Due to the hard work of the whole school community with special mention to the canteen caterer and his staff, we have been awarded the 'Healthy Eating Award' for all the positive changes that have been made in 2016, these changes are highlighted throughout this policy.

Promoting Healthy Living

P.E. Classes: All class groups in the school have timetabled P.E. classes each week. First year classes have one forty-minute period per week up to Christmas and two forty minute periods for the remainder of the school year. Second, third, transition year and Leaving Certificate Applied classes have two forty minute periods per week. Fifth and sixth years have a single PE. From the school year 2016/2017, fifth years will have a double PE. In 2017/2018 school year, all seniors will have a double PE which means the school can officially start the process of achieving the Active Schools Flag.

P.E. Curriculum: Junior students follow the PE syllabus laid down by the Department of Education & Science which includes a number of areas of study representative of a range of practical activities, each of which has particular characteristics and contributes to the attainment of the overall aim of physical education. These areas of study are – Adventure, Athletics, Dance, Invasion Game, Net and fielding games, Gymnastics, Health related activity. It is our aim to provide the PE short course to students in the near future. Transition year and Leaving Certificate Applied students get the opportunity to sample adventure activities in Outdoor Education centres. Transition year students also get to take part in Wheel chair basketball during the year.

Extra-Curricular Activities: There is a broad range of activities available to all students including - soccer, hurling/camogie, football, rugby, basketball, tennis, athletics, badminton, pool, table tennis, golf, horse riding,

North Tipperary Sports Partnership: This is an organization operating in conjunction with the local ETB and the Irish Sports Council. They recently provided funding towards classes in the school where we targeted senior girls who enjoyed keep fit classes for all level physical ability students.

Facilities: The school has state of the art facilities: sports hall, fully equipped gym, 4 outdoor courts, soccer pitch, GAA pitch, 1km walkway, athletics track which is available to us by the community when needed.

Health Promoting School: Three years ago the Students Council made it one of their goals for the year to achieve the Amber Flag in recognition of promoting Positive Mental Health. They achieved this target and achieved the HPS flag this school year 15/16. This was well deserved as there is trojan work being done in this area. Our Pastoral Care Team which meet weekly give many supports to students and the whole idea of Health Promotion has grown from the seeds sown by the Pastoral Care Team over the years. The Health Promoting School Committee at Borrisokane Community College organised many events over the past few years including a day that will never be forgotten by those present in December 2014 when Bressie, the band Heathers, Jim Breen from Cycle Against Suicide and local GAA Player Seamus Hennessy addressed the whole school in the Sports Hall. The message from Cycle Against Suicide "It OK NOT TO FEEL OK AND ITS ABSOLUTELY OK TO ASK FOR HELP" lifted the roof of the sports hall when it was sung by all present.

Many other activities take place in the school to promote positive health each year including: anti bullying awareness week, the SPHE Programme, Speakers for student's staff and parents on various health topics, HITT training as part of Operation Transformation in the school and positive mental health week which this year involved the Elverys Roadshow for some Juniors and a Soar talk for some Seniors.

The 'Jim Breen Cycle against suicide' was such a success last year that it has been made an annual event in the school now. This is organised by a combination HPS committee, healthy eating and living committee and the PE department.

Active Schools Week: This is run every year during the third term and consists of bleep test challenge for Junior Cycle and outside guest classes for senior cycle. There are also various competitions run every year during this week at lunch where prizes are awarded. Teachers also get on board and take part in a 'pedometer challenge' as well as playing Leaving certs in volleyball.

Heart Safe School: The school is committed to obtaining Heart Safe School status from the Irish Heart Foundation during the school year 2008/2009. Transition Year students will obtain training in CPR and this will allow them to train their family members in these lifesaving skills. The school promotes Healthy Eating and Exercise which will help reduce heart disease. There are two AED located in the school, one in the staffroom and one in the office. A large number of staff are now currently trained users. The school was awarded Heart School Status in May 2016.

Teaching and Learning

The promotion of healthy eating is addressed through the following subjects- Home Economics, Social Personal and Health Education, Science and Physical Education as well as through social and cultural activities.

Co-Curricular Activities: The following subject areas will endeavor to support and promote the Healthy Living and Healthy Eating policy – Drama, Religion, Business, Art and English as well as the Transition year and LCVP programmes

Extended roll call: On occasion we have extended roll call to highlight different areas of our healthy eating and living policy

Promoting the policy: The policy is promoted through the flat screen in the canteen, noticeboards around the school and poster displays

Guest Speaker: Visitors and guest speakers will be invited where possible to offer their expertise on physical and mental health

Parents: Parents are aware of relevant healthy eating information in the school and in general via the school website and the Parents Association. Work is also being done in involving the parents in implementing the policy like a free cookery demonstration was organised with chefs sharing healthy culinary delights this year.

Areas for improvement in the short term: The following are the areas we wish to focus on in the near future –

- Strive towards getting the Active School Flag
- Home Ec for all TY'S all year
- Provide parents with 1 healthy recipe and samples of it at Parent Teacher meetings
- Get parents on board in promoting healthy eating and living
- Maintain Healthy Eating Award
- Get feedback from Canteen Caterer and promote any new initiatives in the canteen
- Hold a healthy eating awareness day annually as an incentive to encourage healthy eating at school and at home
- Not all fundraisers to be cake sales, set a maximum number to be spread out over the year

Evaluation:

An evaluation will be carried out regularly by a group of staff, students, canteen management and parent's representatives.

This policy was reviewed during the school year 2015/2016 and adopted by the Board of Management on June 16th 2016.

