

# 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 2018/2019, 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 launch "Wellfest Week" a whole school approach to healthy eating and living and renew the 'Healthy Eating Award'.

## **Rationale:**

*For young people to achieve their potential it is essential they eat healthily and have a healthy lifestyle, it provides the building blocks for life-long health and wellbeing.*

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 healthy 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 for example; eating a nourishing breakfast and lunch allows them to take full advantage of the education provided for them.

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.

A **whole school approach** is recommended as it creates a sense of ownership. This involves providing a physical and social environment that encourages healthy eating. Teaching healthy eating and healthy living skills that extend outside of the classroom- Developing Important Life-skills. Having consistent healthy eating messages throughout the whole school.

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.

- Healthy Ireland Survey (2015) established that 1 in 5 secondary school aged children are overweight, moreover 15% of the population aged 15 and over are considered overweight or obese

- 85,000 of our young people will die prematurely from obesity
- Irish teenagers aged 15 to 19 have the 10<sup>th</sup> highest obesity level in the developed world
- The prevalence of diabetes is increasing rapidly

### **Aims and Objectives**

This policy aims to help all involved in our school - students, parents, and staff – to develop a positive attitude towards eating and an appreciation of the contribution that good food makes to our physical and mental health.

The policy will:

- Contribute to the nutritional knowledge of the students so as to help them develop the skills and confidence needed to make healthy food choices.
- Actively encourage all members of the school community to avail of the healthier alternatives available to them.
- Foster positive attitudes towards food with a view to improving concentration, learning and physical energy levels.
- Include all members of the school community in the development and promotion of this policy

### **Success Criteria**

The success of this policy will be measured in terms of:

- ✓ how the pupils participate and levels of enthusiasm in relation to healthy eating and living
- ✓ That all families are more aware of and improve their food choices.
- ✓ That teachers continue to note the knock-on effects in terms of good learning.
- ✓ That by taking a cross curricular approach to this initiative, there are benefits to promoting healthy food for healthy minds.

### **Promoting Healthy Eating in the 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 wholemeal/grain is included e.g. wholemeal 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, cous cous, 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 wholewheat 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.

### **Promoting Healthy Living & Eating**

**School Meals Programme:** Funding is made available from the Department of Social and Family Affairs for needy students. The parents' and 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 renewed the 'Healthy Eating Award' for all the positive changes that have been made since 2016.

### **P.E. Classes:**

- All class groups in the school have one timetabled 58minute P.E. class each week.
- 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. We are currently implementing the new JCT short course including CBA's. 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.
- Senior Cycle PE is now offered as an exam subject

**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 girls who enjoyed keep fit classes for all levels of fitness as well as designing fitness plans and sports science elements of LC PE. A Sport Leadership Course was also provided for the LCA's for the first time.

**Our Student Support Team** which meet weekly give many supports to students and the whole idea of Health Promotion has grown from the seeds sown by the student support 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 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. This is still a strong message that is continuously echoed throughout the whole school. 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.

**Heart Safe School:** The school is committed to obtaining Heart Safe School status from the Irish Heart Foundation. Transition Year students obtained 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.

**Ty Future Leaders Programme:** is a joint initiative from the GAA and the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). It is a cross-curricular programme comprising of a series of modules designed to encourage maturity, initiative, responsibility and leadership skills in pupils. The Programme gives pupils the knowledge and skills to support all roles required in the effective staging of Gaelic Games. As part of the programme pupils are challenged to organise and run a GAA Super Games Blitz or set up a Super Games Centre for younger students and/or support coaching of younger players in their school or community.

**Sli na Slainte:** The school has registered with the Sli na Slainte, a health promotion initiative of the Irish Heart Foundation aimed at encouraging people to walk on a regular basis. It also aims to collaborate school and the local communities through physical activities. It maps distance in both Km's and steps for the 3 routes. It gives an estimated time of how long each route should take to give students a indication of fitness levels and to set improvement targets.

**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. A ball-wall and new changing room facilities are currently under construction.

**Extra-Curricular Activities:** There is a broad range of activities available to all students including - soccer, hurling/camogie, football, basketball, tennis, athletics, badminton, pool, table tennis, golf, horse riding, aquatics, cycling, 1st year homework club, a supervised library and Junior maths clinic.

***Many other activities take place in the school to promote positive health each year including:***

- The Friendship Café which opens on Wednesday's and Thursdays, supervised voluntarily by teachers from the Student Support Team
- Mentoring Sessions
- Friendship week
- Anti-bullying awareness week
- Well-fest weekly newsletters emailed to all staff and students
- Retreats
- Fancy Dress for Temple Street feel good fundraiser day

- Speakers for students’ staff and parents on various topics which this year involved an invaluable Soar workshop for some 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> year Students and a “Let’s talk about drugs together programme” delivered over the course of two nights.
- Student council random acts of kindness
- Billy Goulding Fundraiser- 3<sup>rd</sup> Year sleepover
- Ty Healthy Relationships Programme
- Gender swap non uniform day
- Walk for Living Links
- First year sports day
- Weekly staff after school sports activities

### **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 and all extra-curricular activities.

#### ***The missing ingredients in school food policy***

While health and nutrition education has improved, nutritionists say that Critical Thinking and Cooking Experience are lacking. Students know what they should be eating but they don’t read food labels, understand food labels, know portion sizes, understand the function of foods, have no cooking skills and have a conflicting array of claims and beliefs about certain foods. To help address we should maximise the time spent doing Home Economics in 1st year and Transition Year and include elements of Critical Thinking and Cooking Experience in a whole school context during mentoring and well-fest week.

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

**Mentoring:** A questionnaire was carried out with a sample population of the students to explore current healthy eating and living habits. The results from this gave us a focus for our mentoring session content. A mentoring session was delivered to all students focusing on “Healthy Eating and Living”. A power-point was used to generate discussion. Students were shown a you tube clip to show the effects of energy drinks on the body and they were given handouts on healthy eating, food labelling and portion sizes.

**Well-fest Week:** has now replaced Active Schools Week, Positive Mental Health Week and Healthy Eating week which this year was launched with a Sean and Conor Price fundraiser concert and Noel McGrath as a guest speaker. It comprised of the following: Health and well-being homework activities, Healthy pancakes for sale on pancake Tuesday, Basketball, Soccer Volleyball, Zumba, Rounder’s, 6th Years V Staff Volleyball match, Pilates, Fitness Tests, Pedometer challenge for staff, Fair trade events, Breast Cancer Awareness Talk, Mini Sports Day, Cookery demonstration from head chef in Ballyfin House, CPR training, well-being coffee morning for 6th Years and mindfulness activities. A sugar board made by Transition Year students was displayed in the reception area of the school highlighting visually how much sugar is in popular drinks and foods eaten by teens.

Power points circulated from the committee to all SPHE teachers to encourage a continuation from the mentoring power point. Topics included

- ✓ A guide to the food pyramid

- ✓ Healthy lunchboxes
- ✓ Food labelling – Traffic Light Labels
- ✓ Sugar
- ✓ Hydration
- ✓ Importance of daily physical activity

Well-fest highlighted all aspects of Healthy Eating and living, positive mental health and mindfulness.

**Guest Speaker:** Visitors and guest speakers will be invited where possible to offer their expertise on physical and mental health. Highlighting the connection between Food and Mood.

**Parents:** Parents are aware of relevant healthy eating information in the school and in general via the school website and the Parents Association. A presentation was given to the parents' association and feedback welcomed.

**Promoting the policy:** The policy is promoted through the flat screen in the canteen, noticeboards around the school, poster displays, in many subject areas, mentoring sessions and year head assemblies.

**Areas for improvement/Targets:** The following are the areas we wish to focus on in the near future:

- ✓ Provide information on healthy eating and living through the Student Journal, School Website and school social media pages
- ✓ Strive towards getting the Active School Flag
- ✓ Provide whole-school CPR training
- ✓ Maintain the Healthy Eating Award
- ✓ Get feedback from Canteen Caterer and promote any new initiatives in the canteen
- ✓ Not all fundraisers to be cake sales, set a maximum number to be spread out over the year
- ✓ Healthier eating habits in after school study- no energy drinks or fizzy drinks
- ✓ School trips stop at food outlets that have a variety of choices available to students

**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 2018/2019 and adopted by the Board of Management on June 10<sup>th</sup> 2019.