

**Coláiste Éamonn Rís**

**Healthy Eating Policy**

**Policy Statement:** It is the policy of Coláiste Eamon Rís to encourage, promote and support healthy eating in the school environment as part of the schools overall Wellbeing Programme for the physical and psychological benefit of all students.

**Rationale for a Healthy Eating policy:** A healthy diet plays a fundamental role in the development of the human being. Making the right choices to support our nutrition requirements satisfies our physiological needs, and contributes to our psychological and emotional development. What we eat and drink is related directly to our general state of health.

Adolescence is a time for developing the skills to make informed choices and decisions throughout life. What we eat and drink is one such choice. Young people need to be aware of the importance of good nutrition for health in order to optimise their growth, health and developmental potential in all its dimensions, through their teenage years and beyond. In implementing a Healthy Eating Policy, Coláiste Éamonn Rís aims to increase the level of such awareness amongst students. This policy has been formulated by the Healthy Eating Policy Committee in consultation with management, teaching staff, parents and pupils. The policy is applicable to all students when on the school grounds.

For young people to achieve their full potential, it is essential that they eat healthily to provide the building blocks for lifelong health and well-being. Adolescence is a time of rapid physical growth and development and requires an adequate intake of energy and nutrients. A healthy diet also supports the student’s ability to concentrate better thereby contributing to their academic learning. Eating a nourishing breakfast and a healthy school lunch allows students to take full advantage of the education provided for them.

The Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (HBSC, 2006) report has shown that many adolescents have poor eating habits. Skipping breakfast and/or lunch is a habit reported by up to 17% of students, while many do not eat good food or drink enough fluid. All this can lessen their concentration levels and make learning more difficult. Research has shown also that the foods eaten at lunchtime can affect behaviour in the classroom during the afternoon. In that regard, consuming food and/or drinks that are high in fats and sugars, especially fizzy/energy drinks, may contribute to over–activity levels resulting in difficult classroom management which can have adverse impacts on the learning environment.

Obesity – The Policy Challenges: The Report of the National Task Force on Obesity (2005) highlighted the worrying increase in childhood obesity across Europe. Figures suggest that the number of overweight children in Ireland has trebled over the past decade and may be rising at a rate of 10,000 per year. A further study “Growing up in Ireland” showed that almost 20% of nine year-olds were overweight in 2011 and a further 7% obese. Foods associated with this increase in obesity include energy-dense, micronutrient-poor foods such as packaged sweet and savoury snacks and sugar-sweetened soft drinks. The NTFO report makes recommendations for the education sector. Two key recommendations provide a strong basis for action by schools:

- Nutrition and physical activity levels of school children should be seen as part of the duty of care of each school, for example in relation to catering for school meals, policy on vending machines, and provision of fresh drinking water.

- All post-primary schools should be encouraged to engage with their student councils and parents’ associations in promoting the concept of ‘healthy eating and active living’.

Young people spend a large part of the day in school where they eat at least one of their main meals. While the home plays the primary role in determining eating habits, the school, in partnership with parents, can make an important contribution to healthy eating. It is recommended that a whole-school approach be taken in developing a Healthy Eating Policy. This creates a strong sense of ownership among students, staff and parents and a commitment to sustain the improvements.

In developing this Healthy Eating Policy, the school will address two key action areas:

a) the whole-school context, and

(b) teaching and learning.

This ensures that an action plan to develop a supportive whole-school environment is created and that consistent messages are provided through the curriculum.

In developing this policy, a survey of the student body was carried out by the Students’ Council to ascertain students’ preferences regarding food choices. Consultation with parents took place through a meeting facilitated by the Well-being Co-ordinator with the Parents’ Council and consultation is ongoing through a parent representative on the Well-being Committee.

**Aims of Policy**

• To encourage the nutritional and overall well-being of all pupils in the school

• To heighten an awareness of the importance of a balanced diet

• To encourage pupils to make wise choices about food and nutrition

• To support pupils to develop life-long healthy eating practises and a positive attitude to food

• To raise levels of concentration within class due to consumption of healthy food

• To monitor and review the schools practise and policy and, if necessary, make amendments

**Action Plan**

**a) Whole-school context**

Coláiste Éamonn Rís provides a physical and social environment that encourages healthy eating. It ensures that lessons learnt in the classroom are transferred into school life and that healthy-eating messages are consistent throughout the school.

In order to implement a Healthy Eating Policy, the following Actions Plan will be implemented

▪Promote and Market Healthy Eating:

Opportunities for unhealthy eating choices within the school environment need to be removed and replaced where possible with healthier options e.g. water, fruit juices, milk. Fizzy drinks, energy drinks and high-caffeine drinks are not permitted within the school or school grounds.

Food bought off-site must be consumed outside the school environment.

Make provision for healthy lunches which can be prepared/served within the constraints of the existing canteen facility.

All nuts/nut products are prohibited in the school environment due to the serious risk posed by nut allergies to students and staff.

Involve a group of students and offer them specific roles in promoting and marketing healthy eating which can have a positive influence on the wider student body.

▪Healthy Eating Events:

Hosting a Healthy Eating Day/Week offers an ideal opportunity to provide a variety of healthy eating activities for students, staff and parents. Healthy Eating Week activities may include:

• offering healthy options in the canteen at reduced prices

• hosting a healthy-eating cookery demonstrations/menu competition etc

• holding healthy eating art/slogan competitions with a prize for the winner

Follow up Healthy Eating Day/Week with an online quiz

The activities deemed to be the most beneficial may be repeated at appropriate times throughout the school year and integrated into school life.

▪ Support and Advice for Parents:

 To encourage parents to play a proactive role, it is important to offer them support. In that regard, information will be sent to all parents before the beginning of the school year advising them of our Healthy Eating Policy and its implications for the students eating during the school day. Information may be sent by way of school newsletter or flyer with information on healthy eating and the nutritional needs of teenage boys.

**b) Teaching and learning**

The classroom should be used to inform the whole-school practice and help instigate change. Health education is not only about delivering information but also about developing the skills and confidence required to make healthy choices.

• Subject areas
The subject of healthy eating is addressed to varying degrees in many subject areas that offer a unique opportunity for teachers to influence young people in this regard. Biology, Agricultural Science, Science, Physical Education (PE), Social, Personal & Health Education (SPHE), are subjects on the curriculum that address aspects of diet, nutrition, physical activity and health.

• Cross-curricular projects

These provide valuable learning opportunities. Examples of cross-curricular links include: English (Media Studies) and Art. Pastoral Care/ Year Head Assemblies/ Tutor Time may also offer teaching and learning opportunities.

**Success Criteria**

The success of this healthy eating initiative will be measured in terms of how well the pupils participate and their general enthusiasm for the project. In particular, success will be where:

• Students and their families are more aware of healthy eating and improve their food choices.

• teachers continue to monitor and note the beneficial knock-on effects of healthy eating in terms of good learning.

• cross curricular approach to this healthy eating initiative produces real benefits to promoting healthy food for healthy minds.

**Roles and Responsibility**

• The policy is promoted by the teaching staff in the school in their classroom work.

• Specific guidelines are presented to pupils at general assemblies and in their tutor groups, and to parents at the beginning of the school year to encourage a healthy lunch-box/healthy eating and to draw attention to the rule that food bought off site is not allowed to be consumed in school. Feedback will be presented to the principal at staff meetings and at parent association meetings in terms of the implementation and success.

• All special dietary requirements will be respected inclusive of dietary needs and cultural dietary habits. Any such special dietary requirements must be communicated to the Principal/Deputy Principal as soon as possible by the students’ parents/guardians.

• Canteen personnel will ensure that healthy food items are available to students each break time and lunchtime.

• Hot drinks and bottles of water may be purchased on school premises.

• Staff should discourage the consumption of fizzy drinks, high-caffeine drinks or any other foods deemed inappropriate and should store such items for collection by Student’s parent/guardian.

• The Principal and Year Heads will inform pupils regularly in school assemblies of the importance of healthy eating and healthy lunches. Class Tutors will remind students regularly of the school’s Healthy Eating Policy.

• The initiative will be monitored by the Principal, Deputy Principal and the Wellbeing Co-ordinator having considered feedback from staff and parents on its continuation and on how the initiative can be further enhanced and improved.

**Communication**

The policy will be included in the Incoming First Year Information Pack for the information of incoming students and their parents.

It will be posted on the school website for all other students and their parents.

It will be disseminated to new staff members in August/September staff meetings

**Timeframe for Review**

The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis in consultation with the whole school community. The review will consider any legislative changes, new policy and strategy documents, changes in school facilities and feedback from parents, students and staff.

Responsibility for Review

• Staff; feedback on their classroom success or otherwise. This will be discussed at a staff meeting in August/September. Pupils will be asked to contribute to the review by offering suggestions on other healthy snacks/meals that could be included in the school menu.

• Parents; The Parent Council will be asked to comment on the policy and its implementation.

• The review will be co-ordinated by the Wellbeing Co-ordinator and Wellbeing Committee.

• The Board of Management will discuss the policy in and any recommendations will be included in the review.

Ratification and Communication

This policy will be ratified by The Board of Management of Coláiste Eamonn Rís in time to be implemented for the coming school year.

Ratified by BOM on: 3rd December 2019

Gerry Forde Chairperson BOM