

OUR LADYS SECONDARY SCHOOL



Healthy Eating Policy

Our Lady's Mission Statement

Our Lady's Secondary School is a holistic centre of development and learning where each person is special and treated as such. We, the staff and students, enjoy working together to realize our full potential in a healthy, safe, stimulating and friendly environment where the atmosphere is one of mutual respect, cooperation and challenge. Christian community is our heritage and goal, the Good News of the Gospel is our story.

School Context

Our Lady's Secondary School is a Voluntary Catholic School under the trusteeship of CEIST. The school is Co-Educational and currently has approximately 730 students and over 60 teachers as well as a range of ancillary and support staff. The school has a Board of Management comprised of Trustee Nominees, Teacher Nominees and Parent Nominees. The Board of Management delegates the day-to-day running of the school to the Principal. The school supports the principles of inclusiveness, equality of access and parental choice in relation to enrolment. In supporting these principles it also recognizes the rights of the Trustees CEIST, the Religious and Educational Philosophy of the Sisters of Mercy and the funding and resources available.

Mercy Philosophy of Education

Inspired by the vision of Catherine McAuley, Mercy Education is committed to holistic development and to the achievement of the full potential of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalised. It is a process informed and influenced by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ and is conducted in an atmosphere of care, respect and joy. Mercy Education is committed to ongoing whole school development in collaboration and partnership with the Board of Management, Staff, Students, Parents/Guardians and the wider community.

CEIST Core Values

The Core Values of CEIST are:

- Promoting Spiritual & Human Development
- Achieving Quality in Teaching and Learning
- Showing Respect for Every Person
- Creating Community
- Being Just and Responsible

Formulation of Policy:

This policy was formulated after consultation with students, staff and parents of Our Lady's Secondary School.

A survey was completed by all students in the school to ascertain their views on healthy eating within the school. It also gathered suggestions on how healthy eating could be promoted in the school and possible changes to food provision in the school.

A survey was also disseminated to parents, with 105 parents completing the survey. They gave their views on food provision in the school at present, and provided suggestions on changes they would like to see to promote healthy eating in the school.

A Healthy Eating Committee was established to formulate and review this policy. The committee consists of the Principal, Deputy Principal, 3 teacher representatives, 4 student representatives (2 Junior Students and 2 Senior Students) and 4 parent representatives.

School Ethos:

The Healthy Eating Policy is reflective of the school ethos and mission statement. Our Lady's Secondary School strives to provide a holistic education for all students, in a healthy environment.

Our Lady's School recognises the benefits of healthy eating:

- A healthy diet is essential for maintaining and protecting young people's health, for ensuring they perform to their full potential during the school day (both academically and physically) and for their growth and development.
- Eating a wide variety of foods is one of the best ways to help the body get the nutritional contributions it needs each day.
- Nutrition is central to health and diet can be an important influence on the life of young people now and in the future.
- A healthy diet helps young people develop, grow and do well in school.
- Eating well at a young age is influential to continuing to do so throughout life.
- Eating is one of the most powerful ways of enhancing or repairing health.

- Establishing healthy eating habits at a young age is critical because changing poor eating habits in adulthood can be difficult.
- Over time the food young people eat will affect their cholesterol levels, weight, blood pressure, insulin regulation, brain function, emotional health and self-esteem.
- Prevents childhood and adolescent health problems such as overweight and obesity, eating disorders, tooth decay and anaemia. These factors on the rise in today's society so it's important to maintain and reinforce healthy eating throughout the school.
- May help prevent health problems in later life, including stroke, cardiovascular disease, and type2 diabetes and prevent certain cancers.
- Sitting down to eat with other young people is an important part of a young person's social education.
- 90%-95% of the body's serotonin (the happy hormone) is made in the intestines which regulates young people's mood.
- 70% of a young person's immune system cells are based in the gut. Therefore, if we want to ensure our young people are healthy then we must highlight the strong connection between good gut health and healthy eating.
- A good school meals service can enhance a school's reputation.

Our Lady's Secondary School is concerned about the consequences of unhealthy eating:

- Avoiding breakfast can affect a young person's performance in school (intellectually and physically).
- Hungry young people are most likely to have behavioural, emotional and academic problems throughout school.
- Overweight and obesity is a result of poor eating habits.
- Overweight children are more likely to get bullied more than other groups within the school environment.
- Eating disorders are on a rapid increase among young people in today's society.
- Young girls, especially, are constantly dieting and concerned about their weight. This has a knock on effect on their body due to loss of essential minerals and vitamins, brain functioning and general health.
- A high percentage of children eat too much fat.
- Many teenagers can be overfed and undernourished.
- Healthy Ireland Survey (2015) established that 1 in 5 secondary school aged children is overweight, moreover 15% of the population aged 15 and over are considered overweight or obese.
- Healthy Ireland Survey (2016) also found that 60% of people in Ireland consume snack foods (other than fruit and vegetables daily), with only 27% eating 5 portions of fruit and vegetables daily.

The statistics demonstrate the need for Our Lady's Secondary School to counteract and prevent these negative health statistics manifesting themselves within the school community.

Aims:

The Healthy Eating Policy aims to achieve the following:

- To promote healthier informed choices regarding food and nutrition among the whole school community.
- To encourage healthier breaks and lunches by liaising with canteen staff on a suitable menu for healthy options at a reasonable cost.
- To facilitate the provision of healthier options for all members of the school community in the school.
- To actively encourage all members of the school community to avail of the healthier alternatives available to them.
- To foster positive attitudes towards healthy eating and healthy food choices with a view to improving overall health, concentration and participation in school.
- To discuss at school student council and, by summarising student thoughts, harness new ideas for health promotion, such as learning through fun or attractive signage.
- To include all members of the school community in the promotion of this policy.
- To promote healthy eating initiatives such as Healthy Eating Week.

Implementation:

In implementing this policy, many different areas of school life will be addressed:

Curriculum:

Healthy eating will be addressed in Wellbeing, SPHE, Home Economics, Physical Education and Science. Where possible, guest speakers and demonstrations will take place for students to reinforce the key messages being delivered through various different aspects of the curriculum.

School Environment:

Awareness of healthy eating will be increased using posters and displays created by the students themselves.

A 'Healthy Eating Week' will take place to promote awareness, generate interest and further develop students' knowledge in the area.

Parents:

Parents will be provided with relevant information on ways that they can encourage their children to make good choices. They will be given guidelines on items that would constitute a healthy lunchbox that will meet their child's nutritional needs.

School Canteen and Shop:

Efforts will be made to provide healthy options for the students at break time and lunchtime. The Home Economics Department has offered to meet with the relevant personnel in the shop and canteen to offer assistance in this area.

Lunchboxes:

Students will be encouraged to bring healthy and nutritious foods in their packed lunches. They will be educated on what constitutes a healthy lunch through various areas of the curriculum (see above).

School Environment:

A 'Healthy Eating Week' will take place to promote awareness, generate interest and further develop students' knowledge in the area. Activities from Healthy Eating Week 2019 included an omelette making challenge between staff and students, fruit/vegetable snack display competition, healthy eating poster competition, intercom announcements with an interactive Question of the Day as well as various other activities. This week fosters positivity and active engagement with healthy eating for both staff and students.

Healthy Eating Guidelines:

1. Parents should ensure that their child has a balanced breakfast to help them learn and concentrate better in school.
2. A healthy lunchbox includes a helping of food from the bottom 4 shelves of the food pyramid.
3. Some of the healthy snacks that we encourage include fresh fruit, vegetables, cheese, standard yoghurts (non dessert), rice cakes, crackers and small scones.
4. Students are encouraged to bring water to school and drink water at break time and lunchtime. If students do not drink enough water, they may become dehydrated, thirsty, tired and weak.
5. Pure unsweetened juices and sugar free squash may be included, but only as part of a student's main lunch meal. Fizzy drinks are not permitted.

6. Chocolate spread, cheese dips, chewy bars, sweets, chewing gum, nuts, crisps, cereal bars and sports/energy drinks are strongly discouraged.
7. Hot food purchased from outlets such as delicatessens, garages etc. are not recommended due to their high salt and fat content. If purchased, they should be consumed within 90 minutes from a food safety perspective.
8. The dining area in school will be clean and comfortable, with adequate seating.
9. Students are encouraged to bring a packed lunch on school trips. Where this is not possible, every effort will be made to bring the students to an establishment which offers a broad range of healthy options.
10. Every effort will be made to ensure that school-related events will adhere to the school's healthy eating policy.
11. Nutrition and healthy eating will be included as part of the school curriculum.
12. 'Healthy Eating Awareness' events will be held as an incentive to encourage healthy eating in school and at home.
13. The 'Healthy Eating Guidelines' will be reviewed every two years, and the policy will be available for all in the school.

Monitoring of Policy:

This policy will be monitored by Management and the Healthy Eating Committee.

The committee will review its' effectiveness by consulting and listening to students, parents and staff on their views.

The policy will be amended where necessary in line with consultation from all stakeholders.

Policy Ratified by the Board of Management on December 15th 2020

Chairperson of the Board of Management: *Gary Carville*

Review Date: June 202

