

Temple Carrig School

Healthy Eating Policy 2019

In Temple Carrig School we recognise the importance of a healthy lifestyle and diet and understand that establishing a balanced diet in childhood helps establish healthy eating habits for life. Good nutrition is an important part of leading a healthy lifestyle. Making the right choices to support our nutritional requirements satisfies our physiological needs, but, importantly, it also contributes to our mental and emotional development.

As a result, the School tries to find ways to increase students' knowledge, understanding and attitudes towards healthy eating and the importance of a healthy diet in their everyday lives. The school community works together to help each other take responsibility for our own health and to adopt health-enhancing attitudes and behaviours.

Adolescence is a time for developing the skills to make informed choices and decisions. Young people need to be made aware of the importance of good nutrition and Temple Carrig School hopes to contribute to this. By promoting healthy eating choices and habits among our students in a climate where cooperation, respect and understanding is encouraged, it is hoped that the School can further promote standards of health and personal responsibility among the student body.

This policy was developed in consultation with parents, staff, students and Board of Management and in conjunction with the *Guidelines for developing a Healthy Eating Policy in post-primary schools* (Department of Health and Children, 2008).

Scientific Basis for this Policy

According to the Irish Universities Nutrition Alliance (IUNA, 2008), Irish teenagers are consuming foods high in fat, sugar and salt. These foods include carbonated drinks and confectionary and are often very low in iron, calcium and essential vitamins. Consequently, the consumption of such "junk food" is leading to an increase in health problems such as anaemia, osteoporosis, obesity, anxiety and depression.

In addition, the *Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children* (HBSC, 2010) report highlighted the fact that 16% of teenagers never eat a breakfast. Skipping meals can have a serious effect on concentration levels and makes learning more difficult. Poor food choices at lunchtime in particular leads to a drastic fall-off in a student's demeanour, abilities and school performance in the afternoon.

Poor food choices and portion control in teenage years can develop into unhealthy food habits which may continue into adulthood and may lead to diseases such as diabetes and coronary heart disease in later life.

For young people to achieve their potential, it is essential that healthy eating is promoted. It is within this context – the desire for our students to achieve all they are capable of – and a care for their overall welfare, that the School is concerned with the eating habits of its students. This is considered good practice. (*Obesity – The Policy Challenges: The Report of the National task Force on Obesity, 2005*)

Promotion of Healthy Eating

Promotion of Healthy Eating in Temple Carrig School is explicitly and directly addressed within the following subjects: Science, Home Economics, Life Skills (including SPHE), Sports Science and Physical Education, as well as through other social and cultural activities.

Cross-curricular links with subjects such as Business, Art and English, as well as the Transition Year Programme, may be used to promote healthy eating.

Healthy Eating receives particular promotion in Transition Year. The majority of students take a ten-week Healthy Cooking course and every year, the Transition Year students receive a presentation on how to establish a healthy diet from the *Bodywhys* organisation.

Healthy eating is also promoted on an ongoing basis throughout the School (using posters, announcements in Assembly, sports advice, etc). Incorporating a “Health Week” into the School Calendar allows the whole school community to focus on how students can develop a healthy lifestyle, including healthy dietary habits. Tutor Time and pastoral care is used from time to time to reinforce the message of positive food choices on students’ physical and mental well-being.

From time to time, communication issues to parents encouraging them to ensure that packed lunches are healthy and nutritious. It is particularly important that students receive enough nourishment to allow them perform to their best, both in their academic studies and their extra-curricular activities, right to the end of the school day.

Engagement with the Student Council will take place on an ongoing basis to further develop and promote healthy eating. Meanwhile, parents will be made aware of relevant healthy eating information in the School and in general via the website, leaflets and through the PTA Committee.

Provision of Food and Drink in the School

In order to reflect the importance of healthy eating this policy specifies the types of food and drink that we will provide in school.

It is recognised that most of us need to eat more:

- Fruit and vegetables
- Iron-rich foods
- Calcium-rich foods

We also need to eat less:

- Fat, sugar and salt

Everyone has a right to access clean drinking water. We try to encourage students to drink water at school by provision of water fountains, bottled water and by allowing them to drink water in class.

The food in Temple Carrig School is provided by a Canteen, which is contracted to a private catering company, currently *The School Food Company*. Our aim is that the School and the catering facilities are dedicated to providing a balanced choice of snacks with a minimal amount of additives.

The food sold in the Canteen will be monitored and reviewed to ensure it is conducive to healthy lunch decisions. Canteen portions follow the recommended daily allowance. Foods such as crisps, fizzy drinks (including energy drinks), sweets, chips, pizza, popcorn and chocolate bars may not be sold in the Canteen. Students pay using a cashless fob, encouraging parents to use the Canteen rather than giving their children money which is often spent on junk food in Lidl.

No vending machines are permitted in the School.

Nuts

As some students have severe nut allergies, nuts – although healthy and nutritious – are not allowed in the School.

Approved by the Board of Management following a consultation process with the Student Council, PTA Committee and Teaching Staff:

28th June 2019