

CARRIGTWOHILL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

HEALTHY EATING POLICY

RATIFIED 31ST MARCH 2022

REVIEWED AND RATIFIED 14TH MARCH 2024

REVIEWED AND RATIFIED 19TH MARCH 2026



Introduction

Food and drink are an essential part of our daily lives. They play 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 mental and emotional development. What we eat and drink is directly related to our 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 through their teenage years and beyond. By developing a Healthy Eating Policy that reflects and represents the whole-school community, Carrigtwohill Community College aspires to contribute to this.

School Ethos

By working to promote the health of students, we are contributing toward the provision of a healthy learning environment. The various issues of health forms part of an expansive curriculum which caters for the diverse needs of the school community.

Code of Behaviour

In keeping with the Code of Behaviour at Carrigtwohill Community College “*Respect for Self, Others and Property*”, the healthy eating policy serves to further promote this point.

Rationale

For young people to achieve their full potential, it is essential that they eat healthily. Furthermore, healthy eating provides the building blocks for lifelong health and well-being. Adolescence is a time of physical growth and development – the most rapid since infancy. It requires adequate intake of energy and nutrients. Eating a nourishing breakfast and a healthy school lunch allows children 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 also shown that the foods eaten at lunchtime can affect behaviour in the classroom during the afternoon: consuming food and drink that are high in fats and sugars, especially fizzy drinks, may cause over-activity, resulting in difficult classroom management.

Childhood obesity has become a significant public health concern in Ireland and across Europe. Earlier research, including the 2005 National Task Force on Obesity report, highlighted a rapid increase in the number of children who were overweight or obese. More recent data indicates that approximately one in five primary school children in Ireland are overweight or obese. Although rates have stabilised in recent years, the prevalence remains a concern and highlights the importance of promoting healthy eating habits and regular physical activity from an early age. Schools play an important role in supporting children to make healthy food choices and develop lifelong healthy habits. Foods associated with the increase in obesity include energy-dense, micronutrient-poor foods such as packaged sweet and savoury snacks and sugar-sweetened soft drinks. The report makes recommendations for the education sector. Two key recommendations provide a strong basis for:

- *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. The home plays the major role in determining healthy eating habits. However, the school, in partnership with parents, can make an important contribution. 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.

Aims

- 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 recognise the dietary needs of all pupils and aim to ensure that all pupils' individual and cultural needs are met
- To support pupils to develop life-long healthy eating practises and a positive approach towards 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

Implementation

In implementing this policy, a variety of areas of school life will be addressed:

Whole-school context

Carrigtwohill Community College will provide a physical and social environment that encourages healthy eating. It will ensure that lessons learnt in the classroom are transferred into school life and that healthy-eating messages are consistent throughout the school.

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. Home Economics, Physical Education (PE), Social Personal & Health Education (SPHE) and Science are examples of subjects that address aspects of diet, nutrition, physical activity and health in Carrigtwohill Community College.

Home Economics

Within the Home Economics curriculum, there are many opportunities to promote awareness for food health. The Junior Cycle curriculum contains an entire strand dedicated to Food, Health and Culinary Skills. Under this strand, the students will learn about healthy living, healthy eating, nutrition, digestion, balanced eating and special diets. This cumulative core area will be covered from first year through second year and third year.

In Transition Year, students will get the opportunity to take part in the "Healthy Food Made Easy" programme from the Health Service Executive (HSE). Healthy Food Made Easy is a 6-week course; 2- 2 ½ hour sessions per week. It aims to:

- Encourage healthy eating,
- Improve our knowledge of nutrition when preparing our meals at home,
- Learn healthy meals on a budget

The course outline will include building a food pyramid, the fibre providers, focus on fats, food for life, shop smart, the road ahead. There will be an opportunity for all participants to prepare, cook and eat healthy food in Sessions 2-6.

The Leaving Certificate curriculum will continue to build an in-depth knowledge of nutrition and the application of this to meal and dietary planning. This allows the student to have the opportunity to investigate food labels and look out for hidden salt, sugar and fat in food. The practical focus is to develop the application of knowledge to culinary skills (50% of Junior Cycle mark).

Physical Education (PE), Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) & Wellbeing

While the promotion of healthy living is ever present in the PE class, the curricular area of Health-Related Activity specifically, provides opportunities for discussion on healthy eating and how food and exercise choices can affect the composition of the body. Body composition is an important component of health-related fitness. As part of this module in PE, a guest speaker (personal trainer) will be invited to the school to discuss lifestyle choices including healthy eating. All students will bring a bottle of water to all PE classes to hydrate during the activities.

In the SPHE Short Course strand, Minding Myself and Others, students will evaluate how diet, physical activity, sleep/rest and hygiene contribute to self-confidence, self-esteem and wellbeing. The new Health Eating resource pack (PEAI) will be used according to the guidelines within SPHE classes to educate students further on healthy eating. In the daily 14-minute wellbeing assemblies, a full week will be dedicated to discussions on healthy eating – this will occur at the same time for all year groups, highlighting its importance.

Science

Within the new Junior Cycle Science learning outcomes, students will evaluate how human health is affected by nutrition and lifestyle choices – much work will be done in relation to the nutrients, the food pyramid and food labelling.

Promote and Market Healthy Eating

The Cookery Club

Hosting a healthy eating event is an ideal opportunity to provide a variety of healthy eating activities for students. The Cookery Club after school is the opportune time for students to avail of healthy eating knowledge and skills. This weekly club will take place after school for 1 hour and 20 minutes. All students, including those who do not choose home economics as a subject will be welcome to join, based on capacity.

The students who participate in the cookery club will gain a knowledge of healthy eating and the skills to implement it with the view of promoting healthy decisions. There is specific emphasis on healthy lunches and after school snacks, e.g. mini homemade pizzas.

The Cookery Club will be designed to work in line with the Healthy Eating Policy to allow students the opportunity to learn healthy eating and culinary skills in a relaxed environment, therefore promoting healthy eating decisions.

Other

- Awareness of healthy eating will be increased using posters and displays created by the students themselves.
- A 'Health Eating Corner' will form part of the school newsletter and website.
- The use of sweets, chocolate or other treats as a reward system for students will be discouraged.

Social Areas and Lunches

- Students will be encouraged to bring healthy and nutritious food in their packed lunches.
- Fizzy drinks, energy drinks and high caffeine drinks will not be permitted within the school and all other drinks, other than water, will be strongly discouraged.
- Chocolate spread, cheese dips, chewy bars, sweets, chewing gum, nuts and crisps will not be permitted.
- Instant noodles and other high salt processed foods will be strongly discouraged.
- Guidelines relating to safe and hygienic use of appliances will be displayed in the social areas.

Support and Advice for Parents

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

Healthy Eating Guidelines

- Parents should ensure that their child has a balanced breakfast to help them learn and concentrate better in school.
- A healthy lunch includes a helping of food from the bottom 4 shelves of the food pyramid.

- Some of the healthy snacks that we encourage include fresh fruit, vegetables, cheese, standard yogurts (non-dessert), rice cakes, crackers and small scones.
- 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.
- Juices/squash must not be brought to school and fizzy drinks, sports/energy drinks are not permitted.
- Chocolate spread, cheese dips, chewy bars, sweets, chewing gum, nuts, crisps, popcorn are not permitted.
- Hot food purchased from outlets such as delicatessens, garages etc. are not recommended due to their high salt and fat content
- Instant noodles and other high salt processed foods are strongly discouraged.
- 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.
- Every effort will be made to ensure that school-related events will adhere to the school's healthy eating policy.
- Nutrition and healthy eating will be included as part of the school curriculum.
- 'Healthy Eating Awareness' events will be held as an incentive to encourage healthy eating in school and at home.
- The 'Healthy Eating Guidelines' will be reviewed every two years.

Communication of this Policy

A copy of this policy will be provided upon request from the secretary's office.

Signed: Robert Conneely
(Chairperson of Board of Management).

Signed: Lorna Dundon
(Principal)

Date: 19/03/26

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This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 19th March 2026

Date of next review: March 2028