



Saint Louis Secondary School Monaghan

Healthy Eating Policy



Mission Statement

Our school recognises that each pupil who enrolls is unique and has different gifts, as well as different needs. It is our wish that our pupils leave us with enhanced self-confidence, and with life skills and attitudes, which enable them to lead lives which may contribute to the betterment of society. We recognise that a pupil's development is closely linked to a good self-image, and so we strive to present the school's total curriculum in such a manner as to allow all to realise their full potential. We see ourselves as working in partnership with parents, to develop the gifts and to meet the needs of all. We regard our school as an educational establishment characterised by care and justice.

Policy Statement:

This policy was drafted in May 2023. It applies to all students in St. Louis Secondary School, Monaghan Town..

Mission Statement and Ethos:

This healthy eating policy is influenced and guided by the mission statement and ethos of St. Louis Secondary School.

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This policy was formulated after consultation with students and staff of St. Louis Secondary School. This policy will serve to further promote the holistic development of our students and is mindful of all stakeholders. It is created in a climate where cooperation, respect and understanding is encouraged between staff, students, parents and all those associated with the school.

Rationale:

- 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 also contributes to our mental and emotional development. What we eat and drink is directly related to our state of health.
- Adolescence is a time of rapid physical growth and mental development. It requires adequate intake of energy and nutrients necessary for daily activities.
- 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 confectionery 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 and obesity.
- In addition The Health Behaviour in School Aged Children (HBSC 2010) report highlighted the fact that 16% of teenagers never eat a breakfast. Skipping breakfast and making poor food choices at lunch can have a serious effect on concentration levels and makes learning more difficult.
- Poor food choices 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.
- Nutrition is central to health and diet can be an important influence on the life of young people now and in the future.
- For young people to achieve their full potential, a healthy diet is essential. It is within this context i.e. the desire for 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.
- About 18% of calories were provided by ‘top shelf’ foods (i.e. ‘biscuits, cakes and pastries’, ‘sugars, confectionery, preserves and savoury snacks’ and ‘sugar-sweetened soft drinks’) that are low in essential nutrients. (IUNA 2021)
- Students on average eat 2 of their main meals per day before leaving school at 4pm. therefore it is imperative that these meals are balanced, in line with the food pyramid and low in salt, sugar and fat.
- 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.
- In this Healthy Ireland Survey (2015) found 75% of 15 to 24 year olds eat snacks daily
- Healthy Ireland Survey (2015) 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.
- These statistics demonstrate the need for St. Louis Secondary School to counteract and prevent these negative health statistics manifesting themselves within the school community.
- 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.
- 12% of the population were consumers of the recommended 3 servings of dairy per day classed as an intake of 3.0 – 3.99 servings (IUNA 2012)
- 94% of Irish teenagers had intakes of calcium and vitamin D below the respective Estimated Average Requirements values (European Journal of Nutrition 2022)
- Alarming Healthy Ireland Survey (2015) identified that females aged 15- 24 spend longer sitting than any other age group 6.7 hours giving even more importance to a healthy diet.

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.

Foster an awareness of how nutrition can positively or negatively affect their life depending on food choices.

Concerns:

St Louis Secondary School is concerned about the following:

- Breakfast
- Breaktime
- Diet high in fat, sugar and salt
- Student lunch choices while out town
- Reputation of School meals
- Student Self Image
- Healthy Choices for life
- Overweight
- Weight and Bullying
- Dieting

Action Plan:

- The promotion of healthy eating in St. Louis Secondary School will be addressed through the following subjects: Home Economics, Social Personal Health Education (SPHE), Science, and Physical Education (PE), as well as through social and cultural activities.
- Cross-curricular links with subjects such as Business, Art and English as well as the Transition Year and LCVP programmes will be used promote healthy eating.
- To facilitate the provision of healthier options for all members of the school community in the school.
- Tutor time and pastoral care will be used where possible to reinforce the message of positive food choices on students' physical and mental well-being.
- 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.
- Increased awareness of healthy eating will be achieved through the use of posters and displays throughout the school.
- To foster positive attitudes towards healthy eating and healthy food choices with a view to improving overall health, concentration and participation in school.
- A Get Healthy Week will be held each year to increase knowledge, promote awareness and generate interest in healthy eating.

- Visitors and guest speakers such as the community dietician and health-promotion personnel will be invited where possible to offer their expertise on physical and mental health.
- Engagement with the “Coiste” will take place on an ongoing basis to further develop and promote healthy eating.
- 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.
 - The food sold in the school canteen will be monitored and reviewed to ensure it is conducive to healthy lunch decisions. Foods such as crisps, fizzy drinks (including isotonic and energy drinks), sweets, chips, pizza and chocolate bars will not be sold in the school canteen.
- Parents will be made aware of relevant healthy eating information in the school and in general via the school website, leaflets and through the Parents’ Association.

Healthy Eating Guidelines:

- All students should ensure to have a balanced breakfast to help them learn and concentrate better in school.
- A healthy lunchbox includes a serving of food from the bottom 4 shelves of the food pyramid. (namely; Vegetables, salad and fruit, Wholemeal cereals and bread, potatoes and rice, Milk, yoghurt and cheese and the Meat, Poultry, fish, eggs, beans and **nuts*** shelves)
- Students are encouraged to bring a healthy , balanced packed lunch with them to school. Not only is this more budget friendly but will enable students to make healthier dietary choices.
- Some of the healthy snacks that we encourage include fresh fruit, vegetables, cheese, standard yoghurts (non dessert), rice cakes, crackers and small scones.
- Snacks for small break include fruit, vegetables, flapjacks, fruit yoghurts, hummus, crackers and raisins.
- Sugar sweetened beverages, energy drinks and those with artificial sweeteners are not permitted on the school grounds.
- Students are encouraged to bring water to school in a reuseable, BPA free, bottle and drink water. intermittently throughout the day. Water bottles can be refilled at the water fountain. If students do not drink enough water, they may become dehydrated, thirsty, tired and weak.
- Fruit Juices that are pure and unsweetened may be included, but only as part of a student’s main lunch meal.
- Fizzy drinks except for unflavoured / sweetened sparkling water are not permitted on the school grounds.
- *The school dining area will be clean and comfortable, with adequate seating.*
- *Every effort will be made to ensure that school-related events will adhere to the school’s healthy eating policy.*
- 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.
- Chocolate spread, cheese dips, chewy bars, sweets, chewing gum, **nuts***, crisps, cereal bars and sports/energy drinks are strongly discouraged.
- 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.

***There is a total ban on nuts and nut products due to serious allergies of some of our pupils.**

This Policy will be monitored and reviewed by 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 any legislative changes, new policy and strategy documents either in the school or from the Department of Education and Skills, changes in school facilities and feedback from parents, students and staff.