



Naas  
Community  
College

## Naas Community College Healthy Eating Policy

### Policy Statement

This policy is being implemented during the school year 2017/2018.

This policy will apply to the whole school community.

### School Ethos

Naas Community Colleges aims to promote health and wellbeing in all areas of school life through the promotion of physical activity, positive mental health and a high standard of healthy eating. The College strives to develop a caring community in the school, exercising concern for the health and well-being of both students and staff.

#### Code of Behaviour:

*'Naas Community College is committed to providing an atmosphere of tolerance and openness which respects the dignity of every member of the school community and in which each one can feel valued. Every member of the school community has a right to work and learn in a safe and just environment'.*

Keeping in line with this key statement from the Code of Behaviour, the healthy eating policy aims to further promote a safe, caring and respectful environment. We are equipping our students with lifelong skills to lead informed, happy and healthy lives as active citizens in their communities. A healthy lifestyle is a core factor in this and thus every effort will be

made to encourage healthy eating and exercise habits across the school. We strive to educate the whole person by fostering wellbeing and positive mental health; the healthy eating policy will serve to further promote this point.

## Rationale

*As advised by HSE Publication: 'Guidelines for developing a healthy eating policy in post-primary schools' <http://www.healthpromotion.ie/hp-files/docs/GDHEPPPS.pdf>*

For young people to achieve their full potential, it is essential that they eat healthily. As well, 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.

### **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. 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 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. The home plays the major role in determining healthy eating habits.

### ***Eating Habits***

The Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (HBSC, 2006) survey has shown that poor eating habits are a feature of many children's lifestyles.

The survey highlighted:

- up to 17% of students were skipping breakfast and/or dinner
- 14% of children reported never having breakfast during weekdays
- poor fluid intake (which lessens concentration levels and makes learning more difficult)
- 19% ate fruit more than once a day
- 18% reported eating vegetables more than once a day

Eating of both fruit and vegetables was slightly up on the figures in the HBSC 2002 report. Research has shown that the foods eaten at lunchtime can affect behaviour in the classroom during the afternoon (foods high in fats and sugars and especially fizzy drinks may cause over-activity and lead to difficult classroom management).

Key nutrition messages are:

- Restrict faddy eating and dieting
- Eat three main meals daily using the Food Pyramid as a guide
- Eat breakfast daily
- Get into the habit of eating healthy snacks in school and before homework/study

### ***Overweight and obesity***

The report of the National Task Force on Obesity (2005) highlighted the increase in childhood obesity across Europe. Figures suggest that the number of overweight children in Ireland may be rising at a rate of 10,000 per year. Research suggests that over-eating foods in small quantities regularly, without really noticing, can lead to obesity. For example, 100 extra calories a day can add an extra 10 pounds of weight per year. HBSC surveys have

shown that teenage girls regularly diet. It is very important that people who diet should choose food from the bottom four shelves of the Food Pyramid. Foods from the top shelf should be restricted.

Some of the key nutrition messages are:

- Lead an active lifestyle: with a minimum of 60 minutes per day of moderate activity
- Increase intake of fruit and vegetables
- Reduce intake of sweet and savoury snacks
- Restrict intake of sugar-sweetened soft drinks
- Reduce portion size

For young people to achieve their full potential, it is essential that they eat healthily. The encouragement of healthy eating practices from a young age will help provide the building blocks for lifelong health and wellbeing. The school has a major role in educating students about the importance of healthy eating practices in order to ensure the youth of today are well equipped to make healthy food choices to improve their overall quality of living.

*As advised by HSE Publication: 'Guidelines for developing a healthy eating policy in post-primary schools' <http://www.healthpromotion.ie/hp-files/docs/GDHEPPPS.pdf>*

## **Aims**

The healthy eating policy aims to achieve the following:

- Promote healthier and informed choices regarding food and nutrition among the whole school community
- Actively encourage all members of the school community to avail of the healthier alternatives available to them
- Foster positive attitudes towards healthy food choices with a view to improving concentration, learning and energy levels.
- Include all members of the school community in the development and promotion of this policy including the principal, teachers, students, student council and the board of management
- Pave a pathway towards creating an extremely healthy environment within school that is accessible to all and thus becoming a step closer to reaching the overall aim and become a health promoting school

## Implementation of Policy:

In implementing and promoting this policy we aim to avail of the following resources:

- Advertising, different curriculum and staff resources, HSE and Health promotion resources
- The promotion of healthy eating in Naas Community College will be addressed in Home Economics, Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Science, Physical Education (PE) and through art and cultural activities, though is not limited to these subjects.  
A healthy living week is organised wherein students will learn about nutrition in different ways in relation to a particular subject.
- Increased awareness of healthy eating will be achieved through the use of posters and displays throughout the school building
- Healthy eating week to promote awareness, generate interest and to further students knowledge of issues related to healthy eating as well as its links with regular physical activity, each school year
- Target parents/guardians with relevant information in relation to healthy eating and food choices. Specifically to provide a leaflet to parents/guardians highlighting to them what food is available to their child in the school canteen and the cost of such options when we relocate to the new build
- Visitors, guest speakers and experts will become involved through the specialised departments like Home Economics, SPHE, Science and PE
- Ensure the future school canteen promotes eating healthy lunches, through the use of art work, posters and music.
- Improve and extend the food and drink options available in the school canteen/shop with a view to looking at healthier options
- Vending machines will not be made available in the school
- Liaising with students will continue during the school year through the student council
- Liaise with the Parents Council and Board of Management throughout the year to establish good links between the broader school community and ensure that members skills are utilised- i.e. Nutritional knowledge

## Guidelines:

The school encourages students to consume healthy foods and drinks and the following items are **prohibited** during the school day:

- Fizzy drinks including isotonic and energy drinks e.g. Red Bull, Powerade, BPM, Lucozade and Lucozade sport
- Chewing Gum
- Chips and fast food

The following items are not recommended:

- Crisps
- Chocolate
- Sweets

## Monitoring procedures

The policy will be monitored by the Management / Board of Management and the Healthy Eating Committee. The Home- Economics, SPHE and Physical Education department will liaise regularly to ensure that health and health promotion are to the forefront in the school.

## Review Procedure

This policy will be reviewed in 2016 by the Management/Board of Management and Healthy Eating Committee.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Chairperson of Board of Management**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Principal**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of next review:** \_\_\_\_\_

