



Coachford College

Healthy Eating Policy

1. General

1.1 Scope

This Policy applies to all members of the community of Coachford College, and was drawn up in consultation with all school partners. It refers to all aspects of healthy eating, but specifically the provision and reinforcement of nutritional learning to enhance the physical and mental wellbeing of our students present in school. It applies to the students, staff and parents/guardians of Coachford College.

1.2 Context

This Policy has been developed in line with the ethos and mission of Coachford College, which has at its core, the care of every student. In promoting excellent physical and mental health, students can achieve their full potential. This policy has been devised in keeping with the school's characteristic spirit. The Policy serves to support the school's vision for excellence in promoting excellent physical and mental health as set out in the Department of Education's Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023 and is informed by the Guidelines for Wellbeing in Schools (NCCA, 2016 and 2021), Department of Education Circular 051/2015 Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles in Post Primary Schools and other relevant circulars. The Policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Peanut-free Policy and Wellbeing Policy.

Food and drink are essential to our daily lives. They play a fundamental role in the development of the human being. Making the right choices to support our nutritional requirements appeases our physiological needs as well as contributing to our mental and emotional development. What we eat and drink directly relates to our state of health. Young people need to be aware of the importance of good nutrition for health in order to optimise their growth, health and developmental ability throughout their teenage years and beyond. By developing a Healthy Eating Policy that reflects and represents the whole-school community, Coachford College hopes to contribute to this.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

A healthy eating policy enables schools to develop and maintain a shared philosophy on all aspects of food and drink, including:

- Developing consistent messages about healthy eating across the curriculum;
- Ensuring consistency between the messages within the curriculum and food available in the school;
- Ensuring food provision at school is in line with healthy eating guidelines e.g. breakfast club, school meals, water consumption, and
- Creating a positive eating environment, both social and physical, at mealtimes (HSE Health Promotion & Improvement Schools and Dietetic Team, 2019).

This policy aims to:

- provide for the wellbeing of all students underpinning the school's Mission Statement;
- implement the curriculum and encourage the nutritional and overall well-being of all students in the school;
- heighten awareness of the importance of a balanced diet;
- encourage students to make wise choices about food and nutrition;
- recognise the dietary needs of all students and aim to ensure that all students' individual and cultural needs are met;
- support students to develop life-long healthy eating practices and a positive approach towards food;
- foster positive attitudes towards food with a view to improving concentration, learning and physical energy levels;
- ensure that appropriate structures are in place to support the wellbeing of students, and
- monitor and review the schools practice, and, if necessary, make amendments.

1.4 Rationale

For young people to achieve their full potential, a healthy diet is essential. Adolescence is a time of physical growth and development, for which an adequate intake of nutrients and energy is required. "Good food habits set early in childhood can last a lifetime. Lunch provides around one third of our daily nutritional needs, so it's important to put some thought and planning into them." (HSE, 2019).

Findings from the Health Behavior in School-Aged Children (HSBC, 2017/18) report showed that "most adolescents are failing to meet current nutritional recommendations, undermining their capacity for healthy development...Almost two in three adolescents do not eat enough nutrient-rich foods such as fruits and vegetables and consumption of highly processed foods is high: one in four adolescents eat sweets and one in six consume sugary drinks at least once a day...As adolescents grow older and gain

more autonomy over their eating behaviour, they are more likely to make unhealthy food choices and skip meals.”

Young people spend a large part of the day in school where they eat at least one of their main meals. Although the home plays a major role in determining healthy eating habits, the school, in partnership with parents, can make an important contribution.

2. Healthy Eating Approach/ Implementation

2.1 Whole-school context

Coachford College provides a physical and social environment that encourages healthy eating. We endeavour to ensure that lessons learned in the classroom are transferred into school life through the following means:

1. Enhance and support classroom teaching and learning through the promotion of healthy eating in the school social environment. This will be done through the use of posters, displays and a Healthy Eating Day.
2. Utilise social media sources including the school social media and display monitors to support the healthy eating policy and promote health and wellbeing.
3. Provide cross curricular links with other subjects and encourage healthy eating throughout our school community.
4. Engage and support the student council in the promotion of the healthy eating policy within the school.
5. Develop a Healthy Eating Day in the school so that it may increase knowledge, awareness and interest in healthy eating and nutrition.
6. Invite visitors and guest speakers where possible to increase awareness of healthy eating and nutrition amongst the school population. Further resources from groups such as the HSE, FSAI and Safe Food will be used to enhance teaching and learning in the classroom.
7. Review and change (where appropriate) the food sold on the school premises (school bistro) in line with current healthy eating guidelines to encourage the consumption of healthy meals and snacks during the school day.
8. Create awareness around the links between a healthy body and a healthy mind.

9. Support parents in making informed nutritional choices for their children. Often the healthiest lunch you can eat is the one you bring from home.

10. Students are encouraged to make suggestions to the Student Council on what healthy snacks they would like to be available in the school bistro.

2.2 Curriculum

We endeavour to address healthy eating and nutrition in Coachford College using a variety of methods and approaches to support our students' well-being via the following subjects:

- Home Economics
- SPHE
- Science
- Physical Education

2.3 Social Areas and Lunches

- Students are encouraged to bring healthy and nutritious food in their packed lunches.
- Fizzy drinks, isotonic drinks, energy drinks, high caffeine drinks are not permitted within the school. Students are encouraged to bring water only to school.
- Chewy bars, sweets and lollipops are strongly discouraged.
- Nuts and chewing gum are not permitted.

2.4 School Bistro

- The healthy meals available in the school bistro include hot dinner options (pasta, rice, potatoes), sandwiches, wraps, rolls, bagels, scones.
- Healthy snack options are available in the school bistro.
- The school bistro stocks still water, sparkling water and flavoured water as well as milk and flavoured milk.
- The school bistro will not sell fizzy drinks, isotonic drinks, energy drinks.
- The following foods will not be sold in the school bistro - breakfast rolls, chips, crisps, sweets, chocolate.
- The school bistro will advertise the many healthy options available.

2.5 Support and Advice for Parents

Parents are provided with relevant information on ways they can encourage their children to make good choices through this policy. They may be given guidelines on items that would constitute a healthy lunch that will meet their child's nutritional needs. If parents/guardians are concerned about a child's weight in case of malnutrition, they are strongly advised to go to their GP.

2.5.1 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 each of the bottom four shelves of the food pyramid.
- Some of the healthy snacks we encourage include fresh fruit, vegetables, cheese, standard yoghurts (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.
- Sports/energy drinks, highly caffeinated drinks are not permitted.
- Chewy bars, chewing gum, nuts and crisps are not permitted.
- Convenience foods and drinks are not recommended due to their high fat, sugar and salt content.
- Students are encouraged to bring a packed lunch on school trips. Where this is not possible, every effort is made to bring the students to an establishment which offers a broad range of healthy options.
- Every effort is made to ensure that school-related events will adhere to the school's Healthy Eating Policy.
- Nutrition and healthy eating is included as part of the school curriculum.
- The 'Healthy Eating Guidelines' are reviewed bi-annually.

3. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

On-going review and evaluation of this Policy will take cognisance of changing information, guidance, developments in HSE and school-based programmes and feedback from students, teachers and parents/guardians. The Policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation and within the SSE framework set out in [Looking at our Schools: A Quality Framework 2022](#).

The Policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Coachford College on April 24th 2023, having been signed by the Chairperson of the Board and the Principal.

It will be reviewed by the Board of Management, following consultation with the school stakeholders annually, and/or as deemed necessary.

Chairperson of the Board: *Niamh Behave*

Date: 24/04/2023

Principal: *[Signature]*

Date: 24/04/2023