

Healthy Eating Policy

1. Introduction

The Board of Management accepts that parents/guardians are first and foremost the primary educators of their children in relation to food choices. The *Healthy Eating Policy* is designed to ensure that the school supports the work of parents/guardians in relation to encouraging students to eat healthily.

The policy is guided by the expert advice given by *Safefood Ireland*. According to *Safefood Ireland*, 'Healthy food is food that gives you all the nutrients you need to stay healthy, feel well and have plenty of energy'. The best way to ensure to eat healthily is to eat a wide variety of different kinds of food and to follow the food pyramid.

The policy was written in consultation with students, teachers, and parents/guardians.

2. Ethos

This *Healthy Eating Policy* is supported and guided by the ethos and mission statement of the school.

By working to promote the health of students, the school is seeking to promote a healthy and positive learning environment. All students are encouraged to reach their own potential, to demonstrate respect and sensitivity to the needs of others and to develop into responsible, active, participative citizens and lifelong learners.

This policy will serve to further promote the development of students and is mindful of all parties. It is created in a respectful community which embraces inclusion in terms of social, cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity.

3. Rational

- 3.1 For young people to achieve their full potential, it is essential that they eat healthily. Adolescence is a time of physical growth and mental development. It requires an adequate intake of energy and nutrients.
- 3.2 The *Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children, 2010* report (Health Promotion Research Centre, NUI Galway and the Department of Health) states that up to 16% of teenagers skip breakfast. This lessens their concentration levels and makes learning more difficult.
- 3.3 Research has also shown that the food eaten at lunchtime can affect behaviour in the classroom during the afternoon.
- 3.4 Poor food choices in teenage years can develop into unhealthy food habits in adult life and may lead to diseases such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease.
- 3.5 Young people spend a large part of their 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/guardians, can make an important contribution.
- 3.6 Newpark takes a whole school approach to developing this *Healthy Eating Policy*, in order to create a strong sense of ownership among all in the school community, with a commitment to sustainable improvements.

4. Aims and Objectives

This policy aims to help all parties in Newpark develop a positive attitude towards healthy eating. The policy will:

- Promote healthy eating habits with a view to improving concentration and learning in the school community.
- Actively encourage all members of the school community to avail of the healthy alternatives available to them.
- Help all involved to understand the link between a healthy diet and a healthy, active lifestyle.
- Encourage all in the Newpark community to experience a wide variety of foods.

5. Action Plan

- 5.1 Form Period and Pastoral Care will be used where possible to reinforce the message of positive food choices on students' physical and mental wellbeing. Promotion of healthy eating will be achieved through the use of visual displays throughout the school.
- 5.2 Information on healthy eating practices will be available on the school website and in the school journal.
- 5.3 Students will be actively encouraged to take part in extracurricular activities to ensure a balanced lifestyle is achieved. There is a wide range of activities on offer in sport, music, and the arts.
- 5.4 Visitors and guest speakers will be invited where possible to offer their expertise in physical and mental health.
- 5.5 Consultation with the Student Council will take place on an ongoing basis to further develop and promote healthy eating.
- 5.6 The food sold on the school premises, a service currently contracted to a third-party provider, will be monitored and reviewed to ensure that it is in alignment with the *Healthy Eating Policy*. No food that features on top of the food pyramid (i.e., high in sugar, salt & fat) will be on sale in the school Monday to Thursday. Only on Fridays will 'top pyramid' items will be available for sale.
- 5.7 Cake sales will be restricted to Fridays.
- 5.8 Fizzy drinks (including isotonic and energy drinks such as Monster, Red Bull, Lucozade Sport etc.) are not permitted on the school campus. Water fountains at which students can refill bottles with clean drinking water are available on each floor of the main school building and in the front and back school yards.
- 5.9 Chewing gum is not permitted on campus.
- 5.10 Parents will be made aware of relevant healthy eating information via the school website and through the PTA.

This policy was reviewed in the 2024/2025 academic year. It will be reviewed as required going forward, in line with changing information, guidelines, legislation, school facilities and/or feedback from school stakeholders.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management, Newpark Comprehensive School at its meeting on 18 June 2025.