

Healthy Eating Policy

Blackwater Community School



Review Dates

Stakeholder	Date	Ratify / Review / Amend
Staff	20 th January 2026	Review
Parents	January 2026	Review
Student Body	12 th January 2026	Review
BOM	January 2026	Ratify

Due for next Review: January 2028

Food and drink are an essential part of our daily lives. They play a fundamental role in the development of us as human beings. 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 for developing the skills to make informed decisions and choices 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.

Blackwater Community School can contribute by developing a Healthy Eating Policy that reflects and represents the whole school community.

The aim of this policy is to improve the eating choices and habits of young people.

Policy Statement

Blackwater Community School is committed to Quality Education. We strive to help all students achieve their potential. Therefore, we endeavour to develop a positive attitude towards healthy eating.

Blackwater Community School recognises the benefits of healthy eating

- Nutrition is central to health. Diet can be an important influence on the life of young people now and in the future.
- A healthy diet is essential for maintaining and protecting young people's health, for ensuring they perform to their full potential (both academically and physically) and for their growth and development.
- Eating a wide variety of foods is one of the best ways to ensure the body gets its RI (Reference Intake) of each nutrient.
- Eating well at a young age is influential to eating well throughout life.
- Establishing healthy eating habits at a young age is crucial as changing eating habits in adulthood can be difficult.
- Poor food choices can affect cholesterol levels, weight, blood pressure, insulin regulation, brain function, emotional health and self esteem.

- Adolescent health problems such as being overweight, obesity, anorexia, Type 2 Diabetes, bulimia, anaemia and tooth decay are becoming more prevalent in Irish society.
- Long term, eating patterns can directly affect health, including stroke, osteoporosis, type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease and certain cancers.
- A good, working healthy eating policy affects our reputation.

Consequences of unhealthy eating

- Skipping breakfast and /or lunch or not eating good food or not drinking enough fluids can lessen students' concentration levels and make learning more difficult.
- Research has shown that foods eaten at lunchtime can affect behaviour in the classroom particularly in the afternoon: consuming food and drinks that are high in fats and sugar, especially fizzy drinks may cause over activity, resulting in difficult classroom management.
- Hungry young people are more likely to have behavioural, emotional and academic problems throughout school.
- Being overweight and obesity is the result of poor eating habits.
- Overweight children are more likely to get bullied than other school groups in the school environment.
- Eating disorders are increasing in Irish society.
- One in four Irish children are currently overweight and obesity levels are rising rapidly.
- Young girls particularly, are concerned about their weight and are constantly dieting, this can affect their vitamin and mineral consumption, their brain functioning and their general health.
- A high percentage of children eat too much fat and sugar.
- Many teenagers are overfed and undernourished.

Concerns

- ❖ Childhood obesity has reached epidemic proportions in Europe and Ireland is one of the country's worst affected. The Growing Up in Ireland (GUI Survey 2020) which is funded by my Department found that 1 in 4 children as young as 3 years of age are overweight or obese, compared to 13% in 1990.
- ❖ The level of tooth decay is higher among Irish children than those in the UK according to a leading researcher on oral health. With tooth decay the most common chronic disease of childhood, it was revealed that more than 20 per cent of eight-year-olds, 50 per cent of 12-year-olds and 75 per cent of 15-year-olds have experienced high levels of decay in their permanent teeth.
- ❖ A study of teenage eating habits has revealed that one in three Irish young people do not eat any fruit.
It revealed a number of worrying trends in relation to the types of food being consumed. Overall, the participants were found to be eating too much fat, too much salt and not enough fruit, vegetables and fibre. A further four out of five were not consuming enough fibre. However over 50% were eating too much fat, while daily salt intake was also higher than recommended levels.

Blackwater Community School Aims to:

- ✓ Help students establish a healthy lifestyle that we hope will continue into adulthood.
- ✓ Ensure that all aspects of food and nutrition are promoted through the school and the promotion of health and wellbeing.
- ✓ Ensure that students are well informed regarding healthy eating patterns and the benefits of healthy eating patterns, in Home Ec., LCPE and PE.
- ✓ Enable students to identify healthy and unhealthy elements of their diet and, where appropriate, to plan for change.
- ✓ Encourage healthier breakfasts, small break food choices and lunches by working alongside canteen provider and management on suitable menu choices at a reasonable cost.

- ✓ Publicise in school newsletter, website and school app to raise awareness to parents and students of healthy lunch options available to students.
- ✓ Improve students mental and physical performance through healthy eating.

Objectives

- All students learn about healthy food choices through S.P.H.E, Junior and Senior cycle Home Economics, Health Promotion in P.E, first year Science, “Cooking for Life” programme offered to all TY students and as Nutrition module in Transition Year
- Due to the large number of students purchasing food from the school canteen, emphasis must be put on health promotion here, through the use of healthy food options, signage and posters.

Whole School Context

Pupils encouraged to bring healthy snacks to school.

Food allergy/ intolerances: all staff and students are made aware at the beginning of the year of students who have food allergies. Health plans in place for students who may need medical intervention in the event of an emergency.

Drinking Water: available throughout the day from canteen, and from the water fountains.

No vending machines.

Continue to update the school app / website with information regarding the food pyramid, healthy eating guidelines, ideas and tips for healthy lunches , breakfast foods and snacks.

Students PR book to contain healthy eating tips and detail on nutrition.

School Canteen

Food served at the school canteen should be:

- As fresh and unprocessed as possible.
- No high sugar carbonated drinks.
- No caffeinated energy drinks.
- Juices and water sold only.
- A selection of sandwiches, wraps and rolls made daily with emphasis on wholemeal options.
- Fresh fruit available daily.
- Include vegetables as much as possible.
- Include foods that are low in saturated fat, sugar and salt.
- Include foods that are high in fibre, vitamins and minerals.
- Include foods that look attractive.
- Offering a wide variety of food and drink choices at affordable prices will contribute to the success of these recommendations.

Teaching and Learning

Home Economics – 6 key nutrients covered – functions , sources and RDAs, balanced eating, healthy diets, special diets, healthy eating guidelines, deficiency diseases, menu planning, and diet recommendations

SPHE – Food Pyramid, balanced eating, Good food choices, what to eat and why, junk food , food facts – sugar and fat, nutrition and sport, fad diets.

LCPE & PE- In Leaving Cert Physical Education & Physical Education in BCS, diet and nutrition would be covered when students do a block of Health-Related Activity. Topics like the Importance of Breakfast, Food Pyramid, Hydration and Sports Drinks, Eating to Compete are all covered. Health Related Activity would be done with all year groups, with a particular focus on First Years to Transition Years.

Science-The following items are taught in Junior Certificate Science and Leaving Certificate Biology regarding healthy eating:

- The Food Pyramid is taught which puts emphasis on eating a balanced diet and recommended daily portions.
- We look at the calorie content of various foods and identify the recommended calorie intake for males and females.

•Students learn the functions and problems associated with deficiencies of the main biomolecules in food; proteins, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins (C and D) and minerals (iron and calcium).

TY “Cooking for Life” Programme – All Transition Year students cook once a week, evaluation sheets completed each week reflect nutrition and healthy eating.

Adoption by the Board of Management:

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every 2 school years. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school and provided to the Parents’ Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: **Colette Power** (Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: **Denis Ring** (Principal)

Date: _____

(Signed Copy on File.)