

# St Anthony's Special School

## Health Promotion Policy 2024

### Introduction

As part of our SSE in Wellbeing our ISM team set about reviewing the school's Health Promotion Policy. The HSE booklet Healthy Eating Policy Toolkit for Primary Schools and Department of Education circular regarding Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles in Primary Schools was used to assist in the review process. Our Health Promotion Policy outlines how we as a school support healthy eating practices through the promotion of healthy snacks and healthy lunches and how we help our pupils to gain a greater understanding of the importance of balanced nutrition and physical activity.

St Anthony's Special school is committed to promoting healthy eating options, daily physical activity and education in relation to healthy choices.

As a school, we believe that key adults in our pupils lives, namely parents/guardians and school staff, should be good role models and support them in understanding how balanced nutrition and an active lifestyle contributes to a person's health, happiness and general wellbeing.

### Aim

- To promote a whole school approach to healthy eating, nutrition and an active lifestyle
- To provide pupils with a well-balanced and nutritious diet
- For pupils to understand the benefits of a healthy well-balanced diet
- For pupils to understand the benefits of physical activity
- To develop an awareness that good eating habits formed in early childhood influence health and wellbeing throughout our lives
- To provide members of staff, parents/guardians and those involved in school activities with clear information.
- To make the provision and consumption of food an enjoyable and safe experience.
- We encourage the nutritional and overall wellbeing of all pupils in our care.
- To support pupils to develop life-long healthy eating practices and a positive approach towards **food, nutrition, physical activity, health and safety, sun safety and oral health.**

## **Benefits of a Good Diet**

A good diet:

- ensures the development of healthy hair, skin, teeth, muscles and strong bones
- provides energy and aids concentration
- strengthens the immune system
- helps achieve and maintain a healthy weight
- supports brain development
- supports healthy growth
- boosts immunity
- helps the digestive system function
- improved mental health: to think clearly and be more alert

## **Benefits of an active lifestyle**

Some of the benefits of physical activity for children include:

- improved cardiovascular fitness (heart and lungs)
- maintenance of a healthy weight
- improved posture
- better sleep patterns
- increased self-esteem and confidence
- improved concentration
- help with relaxation
- building stronger bones and muscles
- improved balance
- skills development
- increased flexibility
- opportunities to make friends and enhance social skills.

## **Nutrition**

We provide healthy, nutritious, freshly prepared meals each day, meals are well balanced and we provide a wide variety of food. Each meal will contain food from the four main food groups, Carbohydrates, Fruit and Vegetables, Dairy Products and Meat/Fish/Vegetarian Alternatives. We take into consideration the various nutritional needs of the pupils, religious and allergy needs and our menu is developed accordingly. Nutrition and the positive effects of physical exercise is

taught as specific learning objectives in the SPHE and Junior Cycle Curriculum and woven into activities throughout the year.

### **Snacks**

Snacks are provided by home but are to contain foods from two of the four bottom shelves of the Food Pyramid

i.e. crackers and cheese, fruit and yoghurt, fruit and milk etc.

Fizzy drinks and sugary snacks are not allowed

Parents are partners in the task of fostering healthy eating and physical activity habits for their children.

### **Drinks**

Drinks provided include, full fat milk and water. We offer all families the opportunity to take part in the school milk scheme.

Water stations are located in each room and water is prompted the children regularly throughout the day.

### **Development of confidence/positive relationships with food and health.**

Pupils are encouraged to make their own choices, drink and feed themselves to develop each pupil's independence.

Pupils are encouraged to practice self-service style eating, drink from lidless cups and use knives and forks at mealtimes.

Staff interact with the pupils during mealtimes and stimulate conversations and stories about healthy food. Pupils are encouraged to try and eat new foods.

With us being a special school, some of our pupils have special diets and food preferences and even strong preferences for carbohydrates and processed foods, while rejecting fruits and vegetables. Our priority for those students is to provide them with a meal that they accept and as far as possible provide them with a healthy alternative.

Opportunities will be given to pupils to explore and experience a wide variety and range of healthy food products through involving them in food related activities such as play, stories, music, Home-economics (for pupils from age 12-18) and The Food Dudes programme etc.

### **Special Occasions**

Birthdays are celebrated in St Anthony's and other special occasions such as Halloween, Christmas and Easter does always focus in the sense of occasion rather than the provisions of sweet treats. Fridays are a treat day and students are allowed a small treat in their snack such as a small biscuit or cereal bar.

### **Physical Activity**

St Anthony's is an Active flag school and the pupils practice daily physical activity, this takes many forms including P.E, dance and playing outside in our outdoor play areas where the children enjoy activities such as walking, running, climbing, sliding and making up simple games. We also have organised activities such as Swimming, Rugby, Tennis, Golf, Bowling or GAA Football. The benefits of outdoor play are, it improves the pupil's ability to adapt to changes in temperature, and it improves appetite and energy, regulates emotions, provides opportunity for sensory motor learning and gives pupils direct contact with nature and living things. Children need to do at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day.

### **Health and safety**

Sanitation, hygiene and food handling are monitored by the chef, kitchen assistant and staff to assure a healthy eating environment. Kitchen staff are fully trained in food handling and hygiene. All food handling is done with gloves, aprons and hats. All equipment is fully cleaned, sanitised daily and maintenance is carried out regularly. Pupils are encouraged to hand wash before meals, after being outdoors and after going to the toilet.

### **Oral Health**

We organise dental educational visits in the yearly curriculum. Teachers educate pupils about foods that are good and bad for teeth: the importance of brushing your teeth, how often to brush and how to do this properly.

### **Sun Safety**

Pupils love to play outdoors and this is very important for their health and wellbeing. Outdoor play is an important way for children to make Vitamin D, essential for the development of healthy bones. All outdoor activities are supervised by staff. Pupils must wear sun cream if the weather is sunny in the summer months.

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September 2024.