



# **Assumption Secondary School**

## **Healthy Eating Policy**

# Healthy Eating Policy



## Our Mission Statement

*We endeavour to educate young women in an inclusive, caring, Christian atmosphere of respect for self, others and the environment. We value freedom, equality and security and strive to promote the growth of positive thinking, self-worth and justice.*

## Introduction

Food and drink are an essential part of our daily lives. They play a fundamental role in the development of the human being. 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 choices and decisions 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. By developing a Healthy Eating Policy that reflects and represents the whole-school community, Assumption Secondary School hopes to contribute to this. The policy is applicable to all pupils when on the school grounds.

## Rationale behind our policy

For young people to achieve their full potential, it is essential that they eat healthily as 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 students to take full advantage of the education provided for them.

- The ***Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children*** (HBSC, 2006 & 2010) report has shown that many adolescents have poor eating habits. Skipping breakfast and/or lunch is a habit reported by up to 16% 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.
- A further study “***Growing up in Ireland***” showed that almost 20% of nine-year-olds were overweight in 2011 and a further 7% obese. 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 NTFO 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. However, the school, in partnership with parents, can make an important contribution. It is recommended that a whole-school approach be taken in developing a Healthy Eating Policy. This creates a strong sense of ownership among students, staff and parents and a commitment to sustain the improvements.

In developing this Healthy Eating Policy, the school will address two key action areas:

1. The whole-school context and
2. Teaching and learning.

This ensures that an action plan to develop a supportive whole-school environment is created and that consistent messages are provided through the curriculum.

### **Objectives**

- To encourage the nutritional and overall well-being of all pupils in the school
- To heighten an awareness of the importance of a balanced diet
- To encourage pupils to make wise choices about food and nutrition
- To recognise the dietary needs of all pupils and aim to ensure that all pupils' individual and cultural needs are met
- To support pupils to develop life-long healthy eating practises and a positive approach towards food
- To raise levels of concentration within class due to consumption of healthy food

### **Action Plan**

#### **Whole-school context**

Assumption Secondary School provides a physical and social environment that encourages healthy eating. We endeavour to ensure that lessons learnt in the classroom are transferred into school life and that healthy-eating messages are consistent throughout the school.

#### **Healthy breakfast and lunch:**

A healthy breakfast and Lunch option is available free of charge for every student.

#### **The role of parents:**

- Parents should discuss healthy eating with their daughters
- Discuss the food options available to students in the school
- Check on-line orders and breakfast and lunch club information available on the school website.
- Ensure that students do not bring canned, fizzy or energy drinks to school (see Code of Behaviour).

#### **Teaching and Learning**

The classroom should be used to inform the whole-school practice and help instigate change. Educating our students about their health and wellbeing is not only about

delivering information but also about developing the skills and confidence required to make healthy choices.

Many subject areas offer a unique opportunity for teachers to influence healthy eating choices, Home Economics, SPHE, Health Education, Science and PE are subjects on the curriculum that address aspects of diet, nutrition, physical activity and health.

### **Roles and Responsibility**

- The policy is promoted by the teaching staff in the school in their classroom work.
- Guidelines are presented to pupils at general assemblies and to parents via the school website.
- School breakfast and lunch will consist of healthy options.

**The Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on the 29<sup>th</sup> March 2023 and is subject to review.**