



# DOMINICAN COLLEGE MUCKROSS PARK

## HEALTHY EATING POLICY (Ratified by Board of Management 20<sup>th</sup> June 2023)

### **Our Vision**

To create a progressive learning environment of the highest quality where our students grow to become independent, respectful and caring women of integrity who live by Christian values and Dominican principles.

### **Our Mission**

To provide our students with an education that in the spirit of St Dominic:

- recognises and responds to the unique needs and abilities of each individual student
- encourages the development of positive, respectful and inclusive relationships
- challenges each student to speak and act with honesty and integrity.

### **Aims & Objectives of the Healthy Eating Policy**

- To promote the overall wellbeing of the school community by encouraging healthy meal time choices throughout the day
- To support and encourage long term healthy habits of our students.
- To support the key skills of staying well and being healthy, as guided by the new Junior Cycle Curriculum and incoming Leaving Certificate Reform.
- To raise levels of concentration within the classroom by heightening awareness and understanding of the effects of a healthy breakfast, lunch and snack during the school day.

### **Rationale for Healthy Eating Policy:**

In the context of encouraging the whole school community to improve diet and ultimately health and wellbeing across the school as a whole, this policy complements the Nutritional Standards for School Meals as determined by the HSE.

It was observed that the changing eating habits of our students needed to be addressed to improve their overall health, wellbeing and concentration levels.

As part of our research into current food choices amongst students in Muckross, we surveyed the student body, staff members and parents. A google form was sent to each group.

A survey was sent to the student body on the 6th of December 2022. 322 students responded. 26.5% of respondents do not eat breakfast before school. Regularly eating breakfast is positively associated with academic performance in students. According to Bord Bia, eating breakfast lowers the risk of type 2 diabetes, accidents occurring within school, poor concentration levels and obesity.

Parents were also sent a survey on the 15th of March 2023. 224 parents responded to the survey. 100% of all parents surveyed were in support of the development and implementation of a healthy eating policy at Muckross Park College. 95.5% of parents voted in favour of a straight out ban on the consumption of energy drinks on school grounds. According to ncbi.gov, the consumption of energy drinks can lead to insomnia, mood swings, nervousness, upset stomach, and headaches, which all impact on concentration levels and general wellbeing while attending school.

Parents had the opportunity to comment overall on what they would like to include in the school's healthy eating policy. Numerous parents stated in the survey the importance of informing students about lunch as fuel for their body during the school day.

The Department of Education Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023 states that the school environment is conducive to promoting healthy eating choices. Drinking water should be freely available and rewards other than high sugar foods should be used to motivate young people.

The school in partnership with parents can play an important role in developing these healthy eating habits as part of its duty of care to its students.

In developing this Healthy Eating Policy, the school will address two key action areas (a) the whole school context and (b) teaching and learning.

## **Action Plan**

### **a) Whole School Context**

- There will be a school-wide campaign to promote healthy meals to fuel the body and brain. Colourful, eye-catching posters will be displayed in all areas of the school inside and outside of the classroom. These will inform students about the benefits of a healthy diet, rather than focusing on the "don'ts".
- Work with the school canteen to promote healthier snack alternatives for break time.
- "Health and Wellbeing Week" at the beginning of the school year.
- External speakers on the benefits of brainfood and the benefits of general healthy eating for parents and students.
- Food/drink not allowed on school grounds to include fizzy and energy drinks and chewing gum. Any of these products will be confiscated immediately and disposed of. Students will get a tick on their Chronicle.
- The healthy eating policy will be accessible to all on the school website.

**b). Teaching and Learning**

- Classes on “food for fuel” will be delivered to each year group at an age appropriate level during SPHE classes.
- Year group assemblies will be planned on the benefits of eliminating energy drink consumption.
- TY module on “brainfood”.
- Home economics and Science departments will support learning on the link between a healthy body and mind and nutrition delivered and junior and senior cycle.
- The PE department will support the importance of exercise and healthy food for fuel during sports.

**Monitoring**

This policy will be reviewed each academic year, including changes to the school canteen supplier, circulars from the Department of Education and feedback from the school community (staff, students and parents). The review will be carried out by the Healthy Eating Committee, composed of staff, students and representatives from the Parents’ Association. A survey will be conducted in December 2023 in order to determine how successful the policy is in the first school term. Potential modifications can then be made for the following term.

*This policy was ratified and adopted by the Board of Management on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2023.*

Signed: Mary White  
Chairperson of Board of Management

Date Signed: 20/6/23  
Principal

Signed Date: Aine Marie Hee  
Principal

Date: 20/6/23

Date of next review: **June 2024**