



School Lifestyle Policy



Introduction

This document has been developed to provide practical guidance to schools who wish to implement a healthy lifestyle policy for students.

The document is not intended to be a rigid policy but can be adapted to suit the individual needs of each school.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the Grab 5! project team whose Model School Food Policy (2002) influenced and contributed to the development of this document.

Why Lifestyle

Lifestyle has a massive effect on health and quality of life. Simple changes to lifestyle can make a huge difference to health and to everyday performance. It is essential to make young people more aware of lifestyle issues, and to make healthy lifestyle choices easier to make.

Healthy Lifestyle Policies in schools have a range of benefits. They reinforce the educational message delivered in the classroom. By discouraging the consumption of unhealthy products within the school, the daily consumption of junk food decreases. School policy can help to increase the consumption of healthy foods like fruit. Research has shown that by reducing the consumption of junk food at school, children's behaviour and performance will improve. Facilitating physical activity also has a major effect upon health and performance.

School Lifestyle Policy

1. Responsibilities

The Board recognizes the link between healthy lifestyle, student behaviour and the ability to learn effectively. The Board also recognizes the role of the school as a community focal point for the promotion of healthy lifestyle.

The Board recognizes that supporting healthy lifestyle practices (including the promotion of healthy eating and physical activity) helps to celebrate our culture, build friendships, and foster inter-generational bonds.

The Board recognizes the importance of creating a school environment that is sympathetic not only to the mental health and well being of the student but also to their physical health and well being. The board also recognises that mental and physical well-being are inextricably linked.

2. Mission

The educational mission is to improve the health and well being of the student and to support initiatives within the wider community that promote and maintain healthy lifestyle habits.

3. Aims

3.1 To improve the health of pupils, staff and their families by empowering people to improve their lifestyle habits. This will be accomplished by increasing the awareness of lifestyle issues, and by improving access to healthy lifestyle choices.

3.2 To ensure pupils are well nourished at school, and that every pupil has access to safe, tasty, and nutritious food, along with a safe, accessible water supply throughout the school day.

3.3 To ensure that the school canteen or shop sells products which contribute to health. The school shop is part of the school environment and as such has an educational role. Items for sale in the school shop will reflect this.

3.4 To ensure that food provision in the school reflects the ethical and medical requirements of staff and pupils e.g. religious, ethnic, vegetarian, medical, and allergenic needs.

3.5 To make the provision and consumption of food an enjoyable and safe experience.

3.6 To develop, support and implement strategies to increase participation in physical activities both within the school and across the community

3.7 To support the development of a broad range of physical activities that are available for all students. This will include sport as well as the facilitation of non-competitive physical activities.

3.8 To encourage active transport such as cycling and walking to school.

3.9 To introduce and promote practices within the school to reinforce these aims, and to remove or discourage practices that negate them.

4. Objectives

4.1 To work towards ensuring that this policy is both accepted and embraced by

- Teachers and support staff
- Pupils
- Parents
- School management

- Food providers
- The wider community

4.2 To integrate these aims into all aspects of school life, in particular

- Food provision within the school
- School transport issues
- The curriculum
- Social activities
- School sporting activities

5. Methods

The mission shall be accomplished through lifestyle education within the curriculum, support for regular physical activity, the availability of healthy food at school, and a school culture and ethos that supports healthy lifestyles. Where a need is identified external consultancy will be sought to assist the school in achieving its lifestyle objectives.

5.1 Establish an effective structure to oversee the development, implementation, and monitoring of this policy, and to encourage a participatory approach to meeting the objectives. Refer to appendix A for ideas.

5.2 Develop a school healthy lifestyle ethos through both education and example. Refer to appendix B for ideas.

5.3 Create a physical and social environment that supports the consumption of nutritious food. This will include the following measures:

- The school will actively promote fruit consumption by operating a school fruit-break system
- The school will actively promote good hydration by allowing students to drink water during class
- The school will not allow the sale of unhealthy food during school hours
- The consumption of carbonated soft drinks, crisps, sweets and chocolate will be actively discouraged
- The school will not use food-based reward systems
- Where possible, the school will facilitate the availability of healthy nutritious food

Refer to appendices C, D & E for further ideas.

5.4 Create an environment, both physical and social, that is conducive to the promotion of physical activity. This will include the following measures:

- The school will promote active transport by providing secure space for bicycle parking, by encouraging parents to operate walking school buses, and by
- The school will actively promote good hydration by allowing students to drink water during class
- The school will actively promote parental involvement in physical activity

The Refer to appendix F for further ideas.

Signed **Chair of Board of Management**

Date

Appendix A

Establish the organisational structure and arrangements to oversee the policy and encourage a participatory approach

- Identify who will take lead responsibility - who will make it work?
- Carry out a school lifestyle audit on an annual basis. Use this to set lifestyle related goals and to highlight trends (refer to RedBranch).
- Take a whole school approach - include consideration of curriculum, food service, social care, school sporting culture and school transport issues.
- Consider setting up a school lifestyle action network (SLAN)
 - Invite parents, pupils, teachers, school meal provider, health workers, interested members of the local community etc.
 - Consider the frequency of meetings

 - Organise community workshops and events
- Include in the annual reports to governors and parents:
 - Description of the level of service.
 - Availability of physical activity.
 - Rate of uptake of physical activity.
 - School transport issues.
 - Meal uptake.
 - School meal promotion marketing plan.
 - Progress in meeting food policy goals.
 - Quality of food being served (hygiene, nutrition, sustainability).
- Solicit pupil preferences in planning menus and snacks. This could be done with focus groups, surveys, taste tests etc.
- Decide how to involve parents and the wider community.

Appendix B

Integrating an ethos of healthy lifestyle into the curriculum

Lifestyle topics covered within curriculum areas

- Art, e.g. observation drawings of food, healthy eating poster design, promotion of physical activity, media awareness/advertising
- Social Personal and Health Education, e.g. menu planning, nutrition, physical activity
- English, e.g. food diaries, language issues
- Geography, e.g. what food grows where, food miles, transporting food, waste
- History, e.g. past lifestyles
- Information Technology, e.g. recording results of a lifestyle survey, website review
- Maths, e.g. weights and measures
- Physical Education, e.g. links between exercise and health
- Science, e.g. food and health, plant growth, exercise and health
- Home Economics, e.g. current food issues
- Business, e.g. school micro-businesses that involve students in the sale of healthy food
- Transition year projects

Topic cross reference (check to see where and how these issues are covered in the curriculum)

- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Dining
- Cooking (any out of hours activities? external demonstrators?)
- Menu planning skills
- Food hygiene (e.g. common food poisons, bacterial growth, contamination, washing hands, temperatures, storage, cleaning and disinfectant, pests)
- Cultural diversity
- Food production, marketing and labelling
- Advertising awareness (nutritional “disinformation” issues)
- Recycling
- How plants grow

Examples of activities that could support curriculum work

- School fruit break
- School fruit tuck-shop
- Allow students to drink water during class time
- Breakfast clubs
- Relationships with local food businesses, e.g. farms, shops and restaurants (encourage food professionals such as chefs to come into the classroom, and arrange for pupils to visit their premises).
- Links with local sports clubs
- Local Sports Partnership grants for alternative physical activities
- Tasting sessions (integrate a range of eating experiences into classroom work, e.g. tasting fresh, dried, juiced, frozen and canned fruits and vegetables)
- Cooking demonstrations
- Healthy eating drama activities
- Healthy eating projects
- School website with pages on lifestyle issues and links to other related sites
- Debates/guest speakers
- Eating experiences integrated into the curriculum for all subjects.
- School gardens (give pupils the opportunity to plant, harvest, prepare, cook and eat the food they grow)

Appendix C

Creating an environment conducive to the enjoyment of safe, tasty, nutritious and environmentally sustainable food

Key questions

- What is the on-site food provision? (list it). Does it need to change? Source expert advice to audit current food provision with respect to health (RedBranch)
- How do the services provided meet the religious, ethnic, vegetarian, medical and allergenic needs of pupils and staff?
- Do we need a staff training programme for teachers/food service staff on basic nutrition and nutrition education?

Environment

- Dining area - is it safe, pleasant, comfortable, attractive and clean?
- Are there sufficient dining room supervisors? Are they trained to provide advice on food choices / hygiene?
- Dining arrangements?
- How can we ensure pupils have sufficient time to eat?
- How do we foster good manners and respect for fellow students?
- Are facilities for washing hands adequate?
- Are there sufficient litter bins and facilities for waste food? Are they emptied regularly?

Food ideas

- Breakfast food
 - Cereal
 - Fruit (fresh, canned and dried)
 - Yoghurt with fruit and/or cereal
 - Fruit smoothies
 - Bread or toast (white or wholemeal), muffins, crumpets, butter or spread, marmalade
 - Fruit juice, water and milk
- School tuck shop food
 - Fresh fruit
 - Vegetables, e.g. carrot sticks, cucumber, celery
 - Soup
 - Dried fruit and nuts
 - Fruit smoothies
 - Fruit salads
 - Crumpets, pitta bread, toast or bread (avoid sweet fillings, such as jams)
 - Bread sticks
 - Milk
 - Healthy Sandwiches

Appendix D

Promotion of sustainable and socially responsible food marketing practices

Increasing the use of safe, environmentally sustainable local food

- Encourage caterers to use locally grown produce wherever possible
- Require use of organic food wherever possible
- Ensure menu planning is linked to seasonal produce
- Through the catering specification eliminate unnecessary and potentially harmful food additives such as bovine growth hormones, artificial colourings, artificial flavourings, preservatives,

Public policy and school campaigns

- Aim to ensure maximum uptake of meals and that all pupils entitled to a free meal receive one. This may be done through parental information / communication, meals promotions and procedures to protect identity of free meal claimants. Have we developed a method of monitoring uptake?
- Maximise the reduction of waste by recycling, reusing, composting and purchasing recycled products. Include the school caterers in the project.
- Does the school want to advocate or stimulate debate on food issues e.g.
 - label disclosure?
 - Nutritional disinformation in food advertising?
 - advertising regulations for companies targeting children?

Methods include letters to T.D.'s debates, petitions, inviting speakers into school, pupils' question time.

Appendix E

Food Hygiene

Why not find out if your local Environmental Health Office is willing to help prepare this appendix?

Points to consider:

- Lead responsibility
 - Who will be responsible for ensuring compliance with these requirements?
- Requirement on all providers
 - Do the providers of food services meet the following requirements?
 - All the staff employed in food preparation hold a basic food hygiene certificate.
 - Staff are supervised by someone holding an advanced food hygiene certificate or equivalent.
 - A 'Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points' system is in operation and observed at all times. Is a copy of this available for inspection?
 - All Government /European Union regulations appertaining to food hygiene are complied with.
- Additional requirements on school meal providers
 - Arrange for a full independent food hygiene inspection of the food storage, meal preparation and food serving areas? How often? Should a copy of the inspectors' report be provided to the school?
 - Do they have a cleaning and disinfectant schedule that can be inspected?
- Pupils
 - Are pupils reminded to wash their hands every time they go to the toilet?
 - Do we encourage pupils to wash their hands before they eat food?
- Adults
 - Require adults who assist with food preparation activities in the school, including classroom activities, to possess a basic food hygiene certificate or equivalent. This will both encourage food safety and provide them with an additional personal qualification
- Classroom food handling and preparation
 - Do we have a list of “do's” and “don't's”?
- Food Poisoning
 - What is policy /procedure in the event of an outbreak? Who should be aware of this? Are they aware?

Appendix F

Promotion of physical activity

Key questions

- What is the current availability of sports facilities? (list it). Does it need to change? Source expert advice to audit current provision (RedBranch, Local Sports Partnership, etc)
- Are the currently available sports diverse enough to meet the needs of all students? Is there provision for non-competitive activities?
- Do we need to educate teachers/parents on the link between physical activity and health?
- Does the school facilitate and support active transport?

Environment

- Active transport: Is there a secure and dry bike shed?
- Does the playground encourage physical activity (e.g. climbing frames, painted games, basketball hoops)?
- Is physical activity supported and encouraged during breaktimes?
- Could a walking school bus be organised (involving a parents rota for walking younger children to school)?
- Are extra sports facilities needed? How will these be paid for?
- Are there advantages in the local environment (e.g. watersports, hiking, proximity of activity centres/sports clubs)?
- Could links be formed between local sports/activity clubs?

Activity Ideas

- Links to local sports/activity clubs
- After school activities (e.g. karate, dance, aerobics, badminton, basketball etc)
- Walking school bus
- Active teacher groups
- Develop inter-school sport competitions
- Apply for a grant with the Local Sports Partnership to fund extra-curricular sport (grants are available for increasing participation in sport)
- Contact the Health Board regarding active play
- Grants may be available for playground equipment through County Councils