

## McEgan College Whole School Food Policy

### 1. Introduction

McEgan College is committed to promoting the health, wellbeing, and learning potential of all students. We recognise that healthy eating habits support concentration, energy, growth, and overall wellbeing. Our school plays an important role in helping students develop lifelong positive attitudes towards food.

This policy has been developed in line with:

- **Healthy Ireland: Healthy Eating Guidelines (Department of Health & HSE, 2016)**
- **Department of Education Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2018–2025)**

Our approach is inclusive, supportive, and respectful of the diverse cultural, religious, medical, and dietary needs of our school community. We encourage positive food choices without being overly restrictive or punitive.

### 2. Aims

- To ensure that every pupil has access to safe, tasty, and nutritious food during the school day.
- To promote healthy eating and drinking habits that support learning, growth, and wellbeing.
- To ensure that food provision in the school is consistent with **national healthy eating guidelines**.
- To provide inclusive food choices that respect cultural, religious, medical, and ethical dietary requirements.
- To ensure that eating in school is a positive and social experience.
- To promote awareness of food production, sustainability, and healthy lifestyles within the wider school community.
- To work in partnership with parents/guardians, staff, students, and the wider community to support healthy eating.

### 3. How Our Food Policy is Implemented

#### 3.1 School Ethos

- Healthy eating is encouraged and promoted throughout the school day, during lessons, breaks, and events.
- Staff are encouraged to act as positive role models for students by promoting and modelling healthy eating practices.
- Our school values inclusivity, and we aim to ensure all students feel comfortable and supported in their food choices.

### 3.2 Curriculum

- Food and nutrition education is integrated across a variety of subjects including **SPHE, Home Economics, Science, Physical Education, and Languages**.
- Practical food experiences are provided by appropriately trained staff and are adequately resourced.
- Students are encouraged to explore a variety of foods, including those from different cultures, to celebrate diversity and foster respect.
- Food safety, hygiene, sustainability, and the importance of a balanced diet (as outlined in the **Healthy Eating Food Guidelines**) are highlighted in class activities.
- Students are consulted through the **Student Council** and focus groups to ensure their voices are included in planning.

### 3.3 Water

- A **filtered water fountain** is available throughout the day.
- Students and staff are encouraged to refill reusable bottles regularly.
- Teachers may manage water access in specific classes for safety or practical reasons, but hydration is promoted as a priority.

### 3.4 Breakfast Club

- The **TSFC canteen** provides a free, nutritious breakfast for all students each morning to support learning and wellbeing.

### 3.5 Small Break

- The canteen, operated by **TSFC**, provides a **free, healthy snack for all students** at small break.
- Snacks are consistent with the healthy eating guidelines, with an emphasis on fruit, dairy, and wholegrains.
- Fizzy drinks and high-sugar, high-fat, and high-salt snacks are not available in the school.

### 3.6 Lunchtime

- The canteen provides a **choice of two nutritionally balanced hot meals** each day.
  - **Junior Cycle students** receive lunch **free of charge**.
  - **Senior Cycle students and staff** may purchase meals at a **subsidised rate**.
- Fresh fruit is available every day for all students.
- Students are encouraged to try new foods and make healthy choices.
- Seating and supervision arrangements aim to create a positive, inclusive, and social dining environment.

- Senior students with parental consent may leave the school premises at lunchtime. Students are encouraged to make healthy and responsible food choices while off campus.

### **3.7 Staff and Visitors**

- Staff are encouraged to model healthy eating choices.
- Visitors to the school are offered refreshments, with healthy options always available.

### **3.8 School Visits and Events**

- Food served at school events or on trips will be consistent with this policy.
- Students and parents will be encouraged to provide **healthy, balanced packed lunches** for outings.
- The use of sweets and high-sugar foods as rewards will be limited. The school will encourage alternative positive reinforcements, such as praise, privileges, certificates, and additional activity choices. When food is used as part of celebrations or rewards, efforts will be made to balance these with healthier options.

### **3.9 Community Involvement**

- Parents, students, staff, and the wider community will be consulted on the implementation and review of this policy.
- The school will provide information and guidance on healthy eating to parents/guardians.
- Cultural food traditions and dietary practices will be respected and celebrated within the school community.

### **3.10 Food Allergy & Intolerance**

- A file is maintained in the school office with details of students and staff who have food allergies or intolerances. This includes information on symptoms, dietary restrictions, and emergency procedures.
- Canteen staff and relevant school personnel are made aware of individual needs and provided with training where appropriate.
- The school works with parents/guardians to ensure safe food provision and reduce the risk of allergic reactions.

### **3.11 Eating Environment**

- The school is committed to providing a safe, clean, and welcoming dining environment.
- Recent upgrades to the school kitchen support the preparation of healthy meals and snacks.
- Students are encouraged to eat together, promoting social interaction, inclusivity, and positive mealtime routines.
- Students must consume hot drinks and food only in the designated assembly area

#### 4. Enforcement

- The school promotes healthy eating in a supportive and encouraging way.
- While foods and drinks high in sugar, fat, and salt are not sold in the canteen, students will be supported to make positive choices rather than punished for unhealthy options.
- The Student Council will be consulted on the promotion of healthy snacks and drinks.
- Education, encouragement, and collaboration with families will be the main approaches to supporting this policy.

#### 5. Equal Opportunities

- Provision is made for students and staff with special dietary needs, including those related to **medical, cultural, religious, or ethical reasons**.
- All members of the school community are encouraged to respect each other's food choices and cultural traditions.

#### 6. Monitoring and Review

- The Principal, in consultation with staff, students, and parents, will review this policy annually.
- Training for staff and canteen personnel will be provided as required to ensure the policy is implemented effectively.
- The policy will be made available on the school website.

Ratified 18th Sept 2025

Parental Signature: Gareth Eklaf

Students Signature: Elisha Kelly Student council

School Management: Patricia Lyons

BOM Chairperson: Una O Donnell

Date: 18. 09. 25