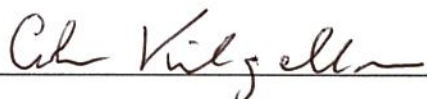


HEALTHY EATING POLICY 2024

Ardgillan College

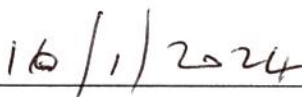
Date for review: January 2026



Colm Kilgallon

Chairperson

Board of Management



Date ratified by the Board of Management

MISSION STATEMENT

Ardgillan College delivers a six-year cycle from first year to sixth year. The central mission is to promote a happy and caring school climate where pupils are encouraged and supported to reach their full potential. The College is committed to providing a person-centred holistic education in which it fosters the personal, social and spiritual development of its pupils in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

The emphasis is placed on quality teaching and learning, positive behaviour and the recognition and honouring of achievement.

The school recognises that food and drink play a fundamental role in the development of the human being. Making informative choices regarding our nutritional requirements will help to satisfy our physiological needs, as well as contributing to our mental and emotional development. The school, as a community, recognises that adolescence is a time for developing skills to make informed choices and decisions throughout life, including what we eat and drink.

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. Ardgillan College aims to improve the eating choices and habits of young people by adopting a whole school approach to healthy eating.

This Healthy Eating Policy outlines a step-by-step approach to achieve this.

RATIONALE

Healthy Ireland Survey (2021) presented the following findings in relation to the diet and health of men and women aged between 15-24 (See Appendix 1):

- Only 38% of the cohort ate the recommended guideline of 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables per day.
- 14% males and 9 % females consumed sugar-sweetened drinks at least once a day.
- 51% of the cohort consumed 'unhealthy foods' including sweets, cakes, biscuits, salty snacks, takeaways 2+ times a day. The highest out of all of the age brackets.

Healthy Ireland Survey (2015) established that 1 in 5 secondary school aged children are overweight, moreover 15% of the population aged 15 and over are considered overweight or obese.

Ardgillan College recognises the benefits of healthy eating:

- A healthy diet is essential for maintaining and protecting young people's health, for ensuring they perform to their full potential during the school day (both academically and physically) and for their growth and development.
- Eating a wide variety of foods is one of the best ways to help the body get the nutritional contributions it needs each day.
- Nutrition is central to health and diet can be an important influence on the life of young people now and in the future.
- A healthy diet helps young people develop, grow and do well in school.
- Eating well at a young age is influential to continuing to do so throughout life.
- Establishing healthy eating habits at a young age is critical because changing poor eating habits in adulthood can be difficult.
- Eating is one of the most powerful ways of enhancing or repairing health.
- Over time the food young people eat will affect their cholesterol levels, weight, blood pressure, insulin regulation, brain function, emotional health and self-esteem.
- Prevents childhood and adolescent health problems such as overweight and obesity, eating disorders, tooth decay and anaemia. These factors on the rise in today's society so it's important to maintain and reinforce healthy eating throughout the school.
- May help prevent health problems in later life, including stroke, cardiovascular disease, and type 2 diabetes and prevent certain cancers.
- Sitting down to eat with other young people is an important part of a young person's social education.
- A good school meals service can enhance a school's reputation.

Ardgillan College is concerned about the consequences of unhealthy eating:

- Avoiding breakfast can affect a young person's performance in school (intellectually and physically). Hungry young people are most likely to have behavioural, emotional and academic problems throughout school.
- Overweight and obesity is a result of poor eating habits.
- Overweight children are more likely to get bullied more than other groups within the school environment.
- A high percentage of children eat too much fat.
- Many teenagers can be overfed and undernourished.
- Young girls, especially, are constantly dieting and concerned about their weight. This has a knock-on effect on their body due to loss of essential minerals and vitamins, brain functioning and general health.
- Eating disorders are becoming more prevalent in males.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To promote healthier informed choices regarding food and nutrition among the whole school community.
- To promote and encourage students to follow current healthy eating advice in order to develop life-long healthy eating habits.
- To foster positive attitudes towards healthy eating and healthy food choices with a view to improving overall health, concentration and participation in school.
- To include all members of the school community in the promotion of this policy.
- To promote healthy eating initiatives such as Healthy Eating Week.

ACTION PLAN

Curriculum:

- Students are educated about healthy living and healthy eating options in the induction programme, SPHE lessons, Science, Home Economics, Health Education and Physical Education.
- Extra-curricular sports coaches in school inform students of nutritional needs before and after matches.

Whole School approach:

- Only healthy food sold within the school facility.
- Only healthy lunches allowed to be consumed on the school grounds, this includes drinks.
- Unhealthy lunches and food will be confiscated from students.
- Healthy eating information is displayed in the canteen and on the canteen trolleys to remind students to make healthy choices.
- A healthy living week takes place once a year, with the aim of promoting a healthy lifestyle. This includes:
 - Breakfast club each morning.
 - Physical activities every lunch break.
 - Special lessons about healthy living take place during that week.
 - A cookery demonstration takes place at the end of the week.
 - Healthy eating poster competition- 'Design an informative poster to encourage healthy eating amongst your peers'
 - Healthy Lunchbox competition.
 - Staff Cook Off - Staff make appetising dishes following the Healthy Eating Guidelines, students watch and vote on their favourite healthy dish.
 - The top 10 participants get a prize.

Support and advice to parents/guardians:

- Parents/guardians are given guidelines about the healthy eating policy before their child begins in Ardgillan College.
- Advice on healthy eating is accessible in the student journal and also on the school website.
- If a student has been identified as having an eating disorder or possible aversion to food, the school provides parents/guardians with advice on supports outside of the school to help their child.
- Children of parents/guardians with financial difficulties that struggle providing a nutritious lunch for their child are given vouchers to obtain a healthy nutritious lunch in the canteen.

Involvement of the wider community:

- Relationship formed with Moriarty's SuperValu Balbriggan with the school receiving sponsored Cook-Off ingredients and also supplied the school with free yoghurts, fruit pots, wholemeal bread and spreads for Breakfast club.
- Frequently engage with bodies such as The National Dairy Council, Health Service Executive and Bord Bia to promote healthy eating within in school and receive publications to use for teaching and learning.
- The schools Home Economics Instagram page regularly updates the student body and wider community on healthy eating and nutrition while also promoting student work on healthy dishes/recipes.
- The school's website provides up to date information on healthy eating.

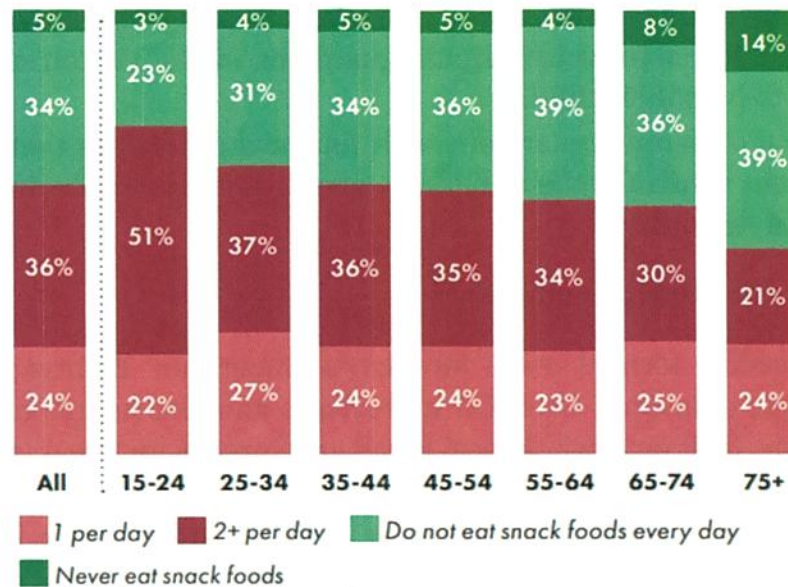
PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

- Review of canteen menu every two years to align with National Healthy Eating Guidelines.
- Establish a Healthy Eating committee to include representatives from the student body from both the senior and junior body, staff, parent's and management.
- Create a healthy eating information pin board in the canteen.

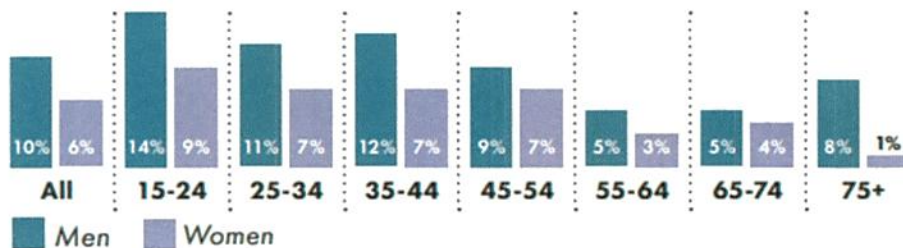
Appendix 1

Healthy Ireland Survey (2021) Infographic

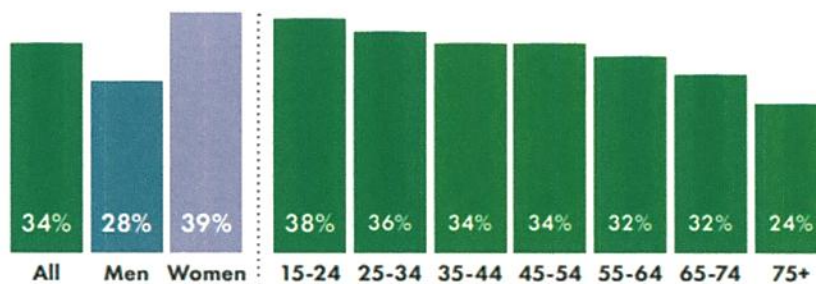
Daily consumption of unhealthy snack foods (by age)



Daily consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks (by age and gender)



% Report eating 5 or more fruits and vegetables per day (by gender and by age)



Appendix 2

Current Healthy Eating Guidelines

- All information below is summarised from the 'Healthy eating, food safety and food legislation: A guide supporting the Healthy Ireland Food Pyramid' and 'Health food for Life'
- These guides were developed to support Healthy Ireland's Healthy Food for Life – the Healthy Eating Guidelines and Food Pyramid, which was launched in December 2016 by the Department of Health
- The Healthy Food for Life resources are for the entire population over the age of five and they define the Irish Government recommendations on healthy eating and a balanced diet.
- The guides provide a consistent and evidence-based approach for healthy eating advice.

Summary of current Healthy Eating Guidelines:

1. **Eat a Variety of Foods:** Eat a wide variety of food, choosing the right amounts from each food group. Consume foods from the four main food groups on the food pyramid (Fruit and Vegetables Group, Wholemeal Breads and Cereals Group, Dairy Group (Milk, Cheese, Yoghurt Group) and Protein Group (Meat, Fish, Poultry, Beans and Alternatives Group)
2. **Avoid foods high in sugar, salt, and saturated fat:** Limit amounts of food and drink from the top shelf of the food pyramid e.g. biscuits, cakes, crisps, sugary drinks. These should not be eaten everyday- maximum once or twice a week.
3. **Increase Fruit and Vegetables:** Eat 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables daily. Eat plenty of different coloured vegetables, salad and fruit. Base all meals on this group and consume at least five servings a day
4. **Use Fresh Ingredients:** Use fresh ingredients and avoid highly processed foods like bacon, sausages, ham and refined cereals.
5. **Smaller Serving Sizes:** Follow recommended portion sizes.
6. **Avoid saturated fats and choose healthy fats:** Try choose low-fat or reduced- fat alternatives. Opt for unsaturated spreads and oils.
7. **Choose healthy cooking methods:** Grill, bake, steam or boil food instead of frying.
8. **Drink water:** Drink 2-3L of water daily. Replace sugary drinks with water or sugar free alternatives.

<https://www.healthpromotion.ie/hp-files/docs/HPM00796.pdf>

Do you want to feel good and have more energy?

Eating a wide variety of nourishing foods provides the energy and nutrients you need every day to stay healthy. Plan what you eat using these tips.



Plan and prepare

Take time to plan your meals in advance. This will help you to introduce variety, eat more nutritious foods, save money and rely less on convenience and processed foods.



Prepare your meals using mostly fresh ingredients and choose foods like fruits, salads and vegetables for snacks.



Use healthier cooking methods like grilling and steaming instead of frying or roasting with oil or fat.



Size matters. Use the Food Pyramid as a guide for serving sizes.



Take time to enjoy your meals sitting at a table. Try to avoid eating in front of TV or computer screens.

Make healthy choices

From Food Pyramid to Plate.

Base your meals on plenty of vegetables, salads and fruits – up to half your plate or bowl at every meal. Choose a variety of colours.



Choose wholemeal and wholegrain breads, cereals, pasta and brown rice.

Choose wholemeal for most of the bread you eat. Be aware of the calorie difference – some types contain more calories than others.

Swop



for



Choose low-fat milk, yogurt or cheese.

Choose milk and yogurt more often than cheese.

Swop



for



Include a small amount of poultry, fish, eggs, nuts, beans or meat at 2 meals.

Choose fish up to twice a week – oily fish is best.

Swop



for



Limit chips and takeaway food as much as possible.

Most are very high in fat, salt and calories.



Don't eat the following foods and drinks every day:

- Sugary drinks

- Biscuits, cakes, desserts, chocolate, sweets

- Processed salty meats like sausages, bacon and ham

- Salty snacks like crisps

Limit foods and drinks high in fat, sugar and salt to sometimes and only in small amounts. Not every day, maximum once or twice a week.

'Healthy eating, food safety and food legislation: A guide supporting the Healthy Ireland Food Pyramid' p. 3 https://www.fsai.ie/publications/healthy_eating_guidelines/

Top tips for healthy eating

Variety:

enjoy a wide variety of food, choosing the right amounts from each food group.

Physical activity:

find enjoyable ways to be physically active every day. Balancing food intake with active living will protect against disease and prevent weight gain.

Serving sizes:

be aware of 'supersize' portions which can distort the perception of what's needed. Learn about healthy portion sizes in each of the food groups.

Vegetables, salad and fruit:

eat plenty of different coloured vegetables, salad and fruit. Base all meals on this group and consume at least five servings a day.

Healthy weight:

wholemeal breads, cereals, potatoes, pasta and boiled rice are important for providing calories to maintain a healthy weight. Follow recommended portion sizes.



Low-fat dairy:

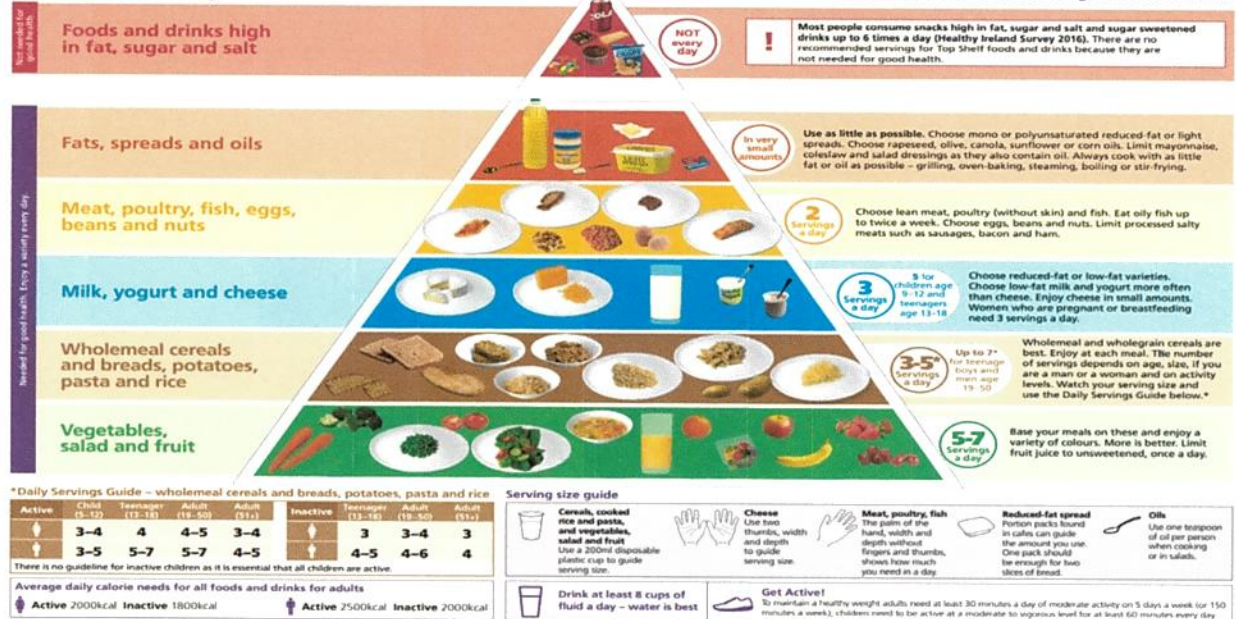
low-fat milk, yogurt and cheese are best. Choose low-fat milk and yogurt more often than cheese.

Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans and nuts:

choose lean meat and poultry and include fish (oily is best). Remember that eggs, peas, beans and lentils are good alternatives.

The Food Pyramid

For adults, teenagers and children aged five and over



Source: Department of Health, December 2016.

