



Scoil Chonglais Post-Primary School

Healthy Eating Policy



BORD OIDEACHAIS AGUS OILIÚNA
CHILL DARA AGUS CHILL MHANTÁIN
KILDARE AND WICKLOW
EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

Mission Statement

Scoil Chonglais is a warm, caring, and welcoming school in which all students are valued and respected. We provide a positive, supportive, and inclusive learning environment, where each student and their unique contribution is celebrated. We are committed to excellence in education and to empowering each student to reach their full potential.

School Motto

“Empowering Minds, Shaping Futures and Celebrating Success”

KWETB Core Values

Scoil Chonglais is a coeducational, multid denominational post primary school, under the patronage of KWETB. Our school community is committed to our ETB core values of Excellence in Education, Care, Respect, Equality and Community.



Introduction

Rationale

Scoil Chonglais recognises that healthy eating is a key contributor to students' wellbeing, learning, energy, concentration and long-term health.

According to the HSE publication *Guidelines for Developing a Healthy Eating Policy in Post-Primary Schools*, healthy eating is essential for young people to reach their full potential. Good nutrition supports lifelong health and well-being and is especially important during adolescence—a period of rapid physical growth that requires sufficient energy and nutrients. Eating a nutritious breakfast and a balanced school lunch helps students concentrate and make the most of their learning.

The *Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children* (HBSC, 2006) report indicates that many adolescents have poor dietary habits. Up to 17% of students regularly skip breakfast or lunch, and many do not consume nutritious foods or enough fluids. These habits can reduce concentration and make learning more difficult. Research also shows that high-fat, high-sugar foods, particularly fizzy drinks, can lead to over-activity and challenging classroom behaviour in the afternoon.

Eating Habits

HBSC (2006) findings show that unhealthy eating patterns are common among young people:

- Up to 17% of students skip breakfast and/or dinner.
- 14% never eat breakfast on weekdays.
- Many have poor fluid intake, which reduces concentration.
- 19% eat fruit more than once a day.
- 18% eat vegetables more than once a day.

Although fruit and vegetable intake has slightly improved since 2002, unhealthy lunchtime choices—particularly those high in sugar and fat—continue to affect behaviour and classroom performance.

Key nutrition messages include:

- Avoid faddy diets.
- Eat three main meals a day, guided by the Food Pyramid. (**Appendix 1**)
- Have breakfast every day.
- Choose healthy snacks during school and before study or homework.

Overweight and Obesity

The rates of overweight and obesity among adolescents remain a major public health issue, affecting more than one in five young people. This proportion has increased since the previous 2018 survey, rising from 21% to 23% in 2022. Boys continue to show higher rates (27%) compared with girls (17%).

Notably, adolescents from less affluent households are at greater risk, with 27% classified as overweight or obese compared with 18% of those from more affluent families. This gap underscores an urgent need to tackle the socio-economic factors driving these disparities. The National Task Force on Obesity (2005) reports that childhood obesity is rising rapidly, with Irish rates increasing by up to 10,000 children annually. HBSC surveys also show that many teenage girls diet regularly. It is important that anyone dieting chooses foods mainly from the lower four shelves of the Food Pyramid and limits foods from the top shelf.

Key nutrition messages include:

- Maintain an active lifestyle with at least 60 minutes of moderate activity daily.
- Eat more fruit and vegetables.
- Reduce sweet and savoury snack intake.
- Limit sugar-sweetened drinks.
- Watch portion sizes.

To help young people thrive, healthy eating must be encouraged from an early age. Schools play a vital role in teaching students to make informed food choices that support their long-term health and quality of life.

Schools are considered a protected environment where students learn healthy diet and lifestyle habits. Considering students consume over one-third of their daily energy intake during the school day. Post Primary schools have a vital role to play in promoting a positive food environment. A whole-school approach to food and nutrition helps support our motto of empowering students to device healthy eating, supporting academic success and instilling positive lifelong habits.

In line with national *Guidelines for Developing a Healthy Eating Policy in Post-Primary Schools (Appendix 2)*, Scoil Chonglais aims to ensure that food and drink consumed on the premises, the messages provided via the curriculum, the school environment, are all consistent with good nutrition.

Aims

This policy aims to:

1. Encourage all students to consume a balanced, nutritious diet and make healthy food choices at school.
2. Encourage the consumption of a healthy breakfast to improve concentration and active learning in the classroom.
3. Foster an environment where healthy eating is valued, supported and promoted across the whole school community (students, staff, parents/guardians).
4. Provide consistent nutritional messages across the curriculum (for example via SPHE, Home Economics, Science, Physical Education).
5. Provide inclusive and supportive opportunities for all students to access nutritional food during the school day.
6. Provide clear guidance for canteen services and families.
7. Restrict foods and drinks that undermine wellbeing (including energy drinks).

Areas of the Healthy Eating Policy

The School Environment: The School Canteen

- Through a positive and collaborative relationship between the school and the canteen provider, encourage the increase of fruits and vegetables, high fibre, low fat and sugar food options on the canteen menu.
- Demonstrate the application of nutritional requirements and suitable portion size for young adults.
- Menu choices will reflect the Healthy Ireland Nutrition Standards for School Meals and be affordable to students. (Appendix 3)

Food outside the school community

- Through the wide application of food and nutrition in the school curriculum, students are educated about healthy food and drink choices.
- Emphasis on reducing saturated fat and sugar including the consumption of sugar sweetened beverages and caffeinated energy drinks.
- Discourage the consumption of processed and convenience food whilst encouraging the consumption of more fruit, vegetables and low-fat dairy. Students are encouraged to be more organised in the preparation for school mealtimes.

Implementation & Procedures: School Food & Drink Environment

Food Provision & Access

- A positive and collaborative relationship between the school and the canteen provider will be maintained.
- The menu choices should reflect the Healthy Ireland Nutrition Standards for School Meals and be affordable to students.
- Drinking water will always be freely available to all students; students are encouraged to bring a refillable water bottle.
- The canteen will provide food and drink that meets healthy eating guidelines (balanced meals, wholegrain options, fruit/vegetables, lean meats/alternatives, low-fat dairy, minimal processed foods).
- The school will restrict the sale and provision of foods and drinks high in salt, sugar and saturated fat (e.g. sugary soft drinks, confectionery, fried snacks).
- At school events, meetings and functions, healthy food and drink will be the default choice (and unhealthy options minimised).
- Packaging and food waste will be managed in a way consistent with our school's environmental and sustainability ethos (e.g. encourage reusable containers, minimise single-use plastic).
- The school will not sell energy drinks.
- Orange bins will be provided and accessible for recycling plastic bottles.

Lunchbox / Packed-Food Guidelines

(Appendix 4: HSE Guidelines)

- Students bringing lunches from home are encouraged to include:
 - A base of wholegrain bread/pitta/wrap or other carbohydrate choice.
 - A portion of lean protein or good alternative (cheese, egg, beans, chicken, fish).
 - A serving of vegetables and/or salad.
 - A piece of fruit or raw vegetables.
 - A drink of water or milk (or 100% fruit juice in moderation).
- Foods discouraged include: sugary drinks, crisps, sweets, chocolate bars, pastries with high fat/sugar, popcorn with added salt.
- Energy drinks are prohibited.
- Students are encouraged to bring a refillable water bottle rather than single-use plastic bottles.

Rewards, Celebrations and Special Occasions

- The school will adopt non-food rewards wherever possible (certificates, praise, extra time, privileges) rather than relying on confectionery or sweets.
- On special occasions (e.g. end of term, class celebration), a small treat may be permitted but this should not undermine the overall healthy-eating ethos.
- Any food treat should be portion-controlled and accompanied by healthy options.

Curriculum & Whole-School Integration

- Healthy eating and nutrition will be incorporated into the curriculum across relevant subjects (SPHE, CSPE, Social Education, Physical Education, Home Economics, Science, Hotel Catering and Tourism, Social Education) so that students understand how food affects health, wellbeing, growth and learning. (**Appendix 5:** Curriculum Outline linking Statements of Learning)
- The school will run periodic awareness-raising activities (healthy-eating weeks, information campaigns, guest speakers, workshops) to engage students, staff and parents.
- Staff will model healthy eating behaviours (bringing healthy lunches, using water bottles, avoiding sugary snacks during school hours) to reinforce the message across the whole school community.
- The school's wellbeing policy and ethos will reflect the value of healthy eating as part of student wellbeing.

Roles & Responsibilities

Board of Management / Senior Management

- Ensure the policy is developed, approved, implemented, monitored and reviewed.
- Provide necessary resources (canteen facilities, water stations, storage for packed lunches, cleaning/waste disposal).
- Ensure any contracts for food provision meet the policy standards.
- Communicate the policy to parents/guardians, staff and students.

Staff

- Promote the policy consistently in classrooms, canteen and all school spaces.
- Incorporate healthy-eating messages into lessons and daily interactions.
- Monitor compliance (e.g. encourage students to bring healthy options, gently discourage unhealthy food choices).
- Attend relevant training/professional development on nutrition and healthy eating if available.
- Provide feedback to senior management re: obstacles or suggestions for improvement.

Parents/Guardians

- Support the policy by providing balanced lunches and encouraging healthy eating at home.
- Be aware of the school policy and the expectations around lunches, snacks and drinks.
- Inform the school of any dietary, medical or allergy-related requirements of their child.
- Encourage their child to make healthy choices and bring water bottles, portion-appropriate lunches, etc.

Students

- Take responsibility for bringing a well-balanced lunch or choosing healthy options when purchasing in school.
- Use the drinking-water stations, refill their bottles and avoid sugary drinks/snacks.
- Participate positively in healthy-eating initiatives, campaigns and education.
- Respect the policy and environment.

Procedures: Policy Planning

Teacher, students, school canteen and parents were consulted during the Healthy Eating Policy planning process. This included:

- The discussion of the current canteen menu with ideas for improvement.
- Meeting between the canteen provider and the student council to allow students to voice their ideas and encourage positive changes.
- Student survey to detail their current food practices, whilst giving suggestions for future improvement.
- Parents were surveyed for their feedback on current food practice and suggestions for improvement.
- Teaching community surveyed for observations and suggested improvements.

Survey Finding & Suggestions

- Appendix 6: Student Survey Findings & Suggestions.
- Appendix 7: Parent Survey Findings & Suggestions.
- Appendix 8: Teaching Staff Survey Findings & Suggestions.

Implementations based on Survey Results

Improve the Canteen Menu and Food Environment

Strategies:

- Introduce a wider range of healthy options, including fruit pots, salads, wraps, wholegrain sandwiches, yoghurt, and affordable hot meals.
- Replace or reduce high-sugar, high-fat foods and introduce healthier alternatives.
- Add a weekly “Healthy Snack Feature” (e.g. yogurt pots, smoothies, wholegrain items).
- Work with the canteen provider to align menus fully with the Healthy Eating Policy within the academic year.

Targets:

- Introduce at least three new healthy menu items within the next academic year.
- Ensure at least 50% of daily canteen options are healthy options by the end of the school year.
- Reduce the availability of high-sugar snacks to designated days only.

Improve Queue Management and Canteen Space

Strategies:

- Mark clear queue lines with signage to create smoother flow.
- Add preordering (if possible) to speed up service at peak times.
- Cashless payment- Canteen card only.
- Increase supervision or assign student leaders to assist with queuing and crowd management.

Targets:

- Reduce average waiting time in the canteen by half.
- Create at least 20% more seating by purchasing additional benches for senior cycle students.
- Ensure 90% of students use Go Fresh Canteen card by the end of this academic year.

Promote Healthy Eating Across the School Environment

Strategies

- Place engaging posters and displays promoting fruits, vegetables, hydration, and balanced eating.
- Launch themed weeks such as “Healthy Heart Week” or “Hydration Week.”
- Integrate healthy eating discussions in SPHE, PE, Science, and Home Economics.
- Use school social media to share weekly healthy eating tips or student-created content.
- Display comparisons showing how healthy vs. unhealthy eating impacts energy, mood, and concentration.

Targets

- At least one whole-school healthy eating campaign each term.
- Healthy eating content posted weekly on school communication channels.
- A student-led healthy eating committee established by the end of the year. Incorporate this with the Wellbeing Team.

Increase Student Engagement and Ownership

Strategies

- Run poster competitions and allow students to create the visuals used around the building.
- Conduct student focus groups twice per year to review progress of this policy and seek feedback/suggestions from students.

Targets

- Two student-led initiatives launched each year.
- Annual student satisfaction survey to track improvements.

Expand Education Around Nutrition

Strategies

- Provide short in-class mini-lessons on reading food labels, portion sizes, hydration, and balanced meals.
- Invite guest speakers (nutritionists, athletes, chefs)
- Encourage cross-curricular projects, such as designing balanced meals in Home Economics or learning about food sustainability in Geography.

Targets

- Healthy eating content delivered in all year groups at least once per year.
- Guest speaker or workshop twice yearly for TY/LCAs.
- Healthy eating incorporated into at least three subject areas.

Build a Supportive School Culture

Strategies

- Encourage staff and parents to model healthy eating.
- Make water easily accessible with additional water refill stations.
- Organise school-wide fitness events such as step challenges or fun runs.
- Recognise students who consistently make healthy choices or show improvement.

Targets

- Maintain water station.
- One whole-school physical activity event held per year.
- Publish simple, consistent guidelines for snacks and lunches at the start of each school year.
- Positive recognition system in place for healthy choices.
- Run an annual parent & student food satisfaction survey.
- Publish a yearly Healthy Eating Policy progress report for the school community.
- Gather staff, student, and parent feedback annually to measure progress and identify new needs.

Conclusion

These strategies and targets directly address the key issues highlighted by students: limited healthy options, canteen overcrowding, insufficient promotion, and a desire for more engaging and supportive initiatives. With a combination of food-environment improvements, targeted education, and student involvement, Scoil Chonglais can create a culture that makes healthy eating easier, more enjoyable, and more accessible for all students.

Monitoring and Reviewing

Termly Canteen Review

- Conduct an annual audit of the canteen menu to ensure it reflects policy expectations.
- Review the balance between healthy and unhealthy items, and the placement of options.
- Meet with the canteen provider each academic year to discuss changes, challenges, and feedback.
- Record any adjustments made and evaluate their impact in the following term.

Student Food Choice Observations

- Teachers or year heads conduct informal, periodic spot-checks of snacks and lunches (not individually monitored, but general trends noted).
- Observe trends during break and lunch times; for example, whether healthy items are being consumed or avoided.
- Gather insights from student focus groups once a year.

Parent and Staff Feedback Collection

- Conduct a short parent and staff survey annually to measure satisfaction with:
 - Canteen changes
 - Healthy eating messaging
- Include specific questions to track whether past concerns have improved.

- Review and compare year-on-year responses to monitor changes.

Student Voice and Leadership

- Establish a Student Healthy Eating Committee to collect student-led feedback each term.
- Include tasks such as menu reviews, peer surveys, and suggestions for promotions or campaigns.
- Record committee recommendations and actions taken.
- Collaborate with the Student Council.

Review of Educational Initiatives

- End of Year Subject Department Review meetings: Discuss with Senior Management how they covered healthy eating topics.
- Track participation in healthy eating campaigns (e.g., Fruit Week, Hydration Month).
- Review whether educational goals were met, and plan themes for the following year.

Policy Compliance Checks

- Ensure staff, students and parents receive clear guidelines annually.
- Conduct a mid-year compliance check to confirm:
 - Limited food rewards are used
 - Staff are modelling healthy behaviours where appropriate
 - Canteen and school routines align with the policy
 - Address any inconsistencies in staff meetings or through training
- Feedback from staff, students, parents and canteen providers will be sought to identify barriers or required adjustments.
- Results of monitoring and review will be communicated to the school community.

Communication

- The policy will be published on the school website, provided to all parents/guardians (e.g. via email or school app), and discussed at an information evening (e.g. at the start of the school year).
- Posters, displays and water-stations will be used throughout the school to promote the key healthy-eating messages (fruit & veg, water, wholegrains).
- The policy will be embedded into the school's induction process for new students and new staff.
- promote best practices.

Ratification by Board of Management

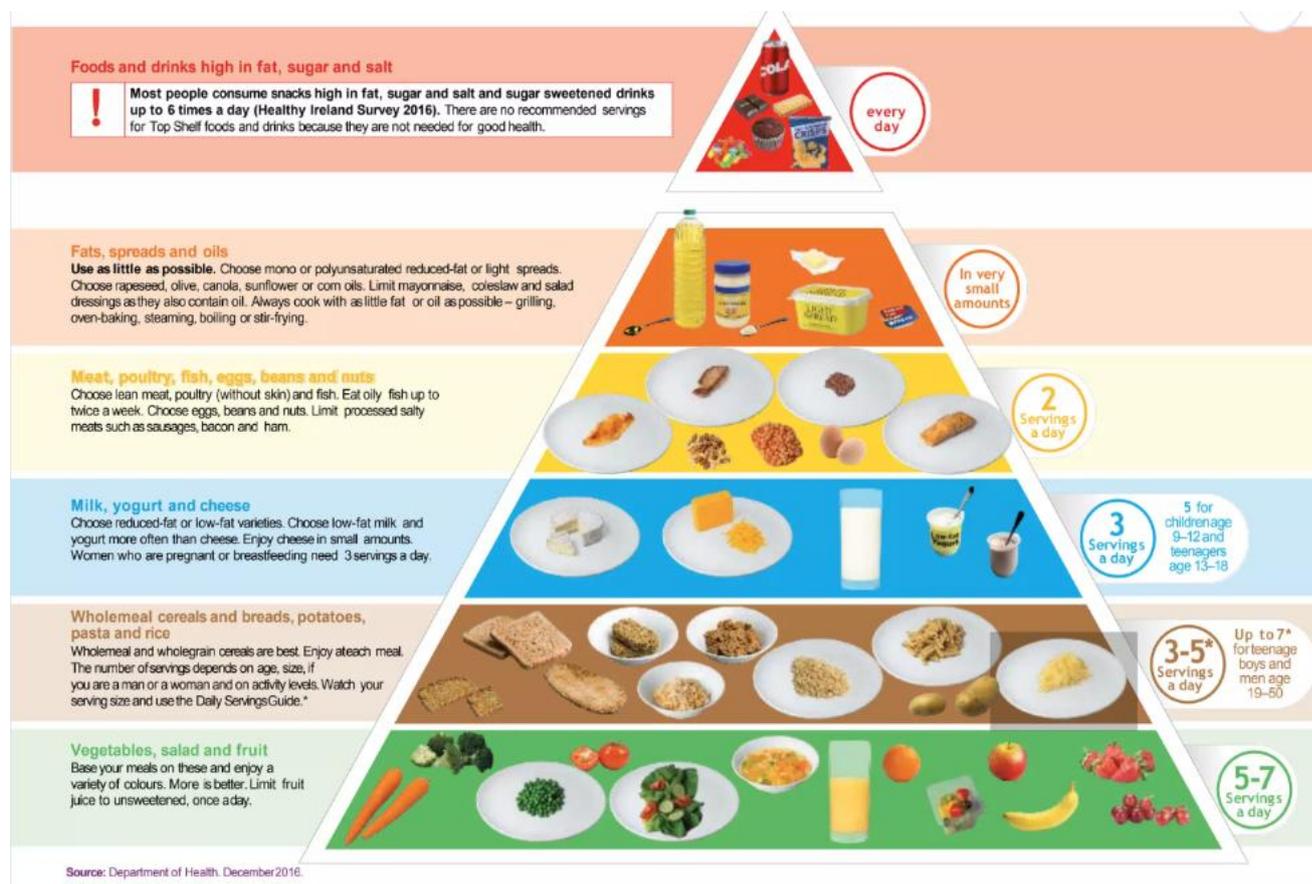
This policy was adopted and ratified by the Board of Management on **26/01/2026**

Board of Management Next Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management in **January 2027**

Appendix

Appendix 1



Appendix 2: <http://www.healthpromotion.ie/hp-files/docs/GDHEPPPS.pdf>

Appendix 3: <nutrition-standards-for-school-meals.pdf>

Appendix 4: <healthy-lunchboxes.pdf>

Appendix 5: Link to curriculum content in Scoil Chonglais

Senior Cycle PE

Health Related Activity

- Evaluate personal diet and nutrition habits
- Commit to a healthy, balanced eating plan which they have designed to meet the energy and nutritional demands of their physical activity levels

Leaving Cert PE

2.8 Diet and nutrition

- examine the nutritional considerations for before, during and after performance in physical activity
- discuss the importance of hydration in different physical activities and settings
- discuss the role and challenges of using sports supplements, including sports drinks, in physical activity
- analyse the role and relative contribution of the energy systems in relation to duration, intensity and type of activity
- explain how an understanding of the different energy systems can inform preparation for practice, performance and recovery
- design a dietary plan, including a rationale, for one selected physical activity

LCA – Leisure and Recreation

Physical Activity for Leisure and Health

Unit 3 – Recreation and Health

4. explain the effects of exercise and healthy eating on weight maintenance
- Students should keep a diary of the junk food they eat on a regular basis and then calculate the amount of exercise needed to burn off these snacks

SPHE – Senior Cycle

1. explore the determinants of good health
2. investigate ways a person can influence their holistic health, including physical activity, food, sleep, social connections, positive self-image and connecting with nature, and discuss how these are related

3.1 consider strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health

3.2 demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life

Home Economics- Junior Cycle

Strand 1: Food Health and culinary skills

1.1 identify the factors that affect personal food choices

1.8 discuss the elements of a healthy lifestyle

1.9 recognise the importance of nutrition and diet in contributing to health and wellbeing

1.12 investigate the nutritional requirements at each stage of the lifecycle

1.15 investigate the impact of their food choices from an ecological and ethical perspective

Home Economics leaving Certificate

Aim:

Home Economics aims to allow students, to acquire and develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, competence and attitudes necessary to contribute to a personal and family environment conducive to human development, health, leisure, security and happiness.

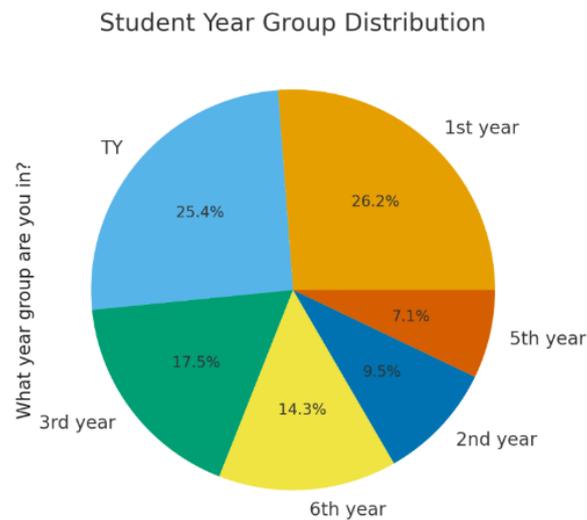
Objective:

Students should have the knowledge of the relationship of nutritional needs to the health of the individual and the community.

Appendix 6: Student Survey Findings & Suggestions:

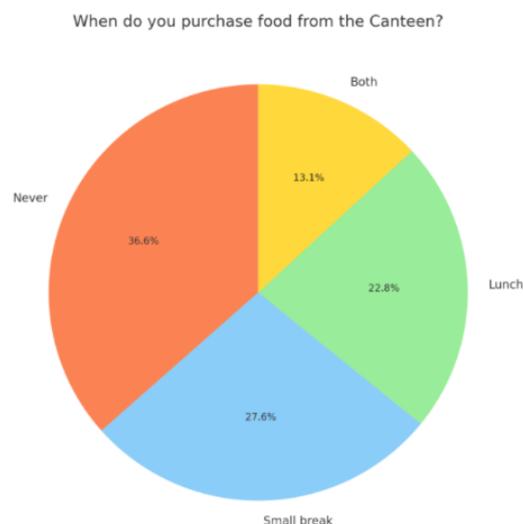
1. Student Year Groups

The survey gathered responses from students across all year groups in the school. Junior Cycle students, particularly first years and third years, were well represented, while a substantial group of TY students also took part. Senior Cycle participation was smaller in comparison, but their views still provided valuable insight. Overall, the responses reflect a broad range of student experiences and perspectives regarding healthy eating and canteen use.



2. Findings regarding food consumption throughout the school day:

Most students reported that they typically bring their own food from home, with many others doing so at least 'occasionally.' Only a very small number rely solely on food purchased in school. This indicates that home-prepared lunches are the primary source of food for most students during the school day. A large portion of students stated that they do not purchase food from the canteen at all. Among those who do use it, some buy food specifically at lunchtime, others at small break, and a smaller group use it during both breaks. This shows that engagement with the canteen varies widely, and a significant number of students choose not to use it for their daily meals.



3. Healthy Eating Awareness among students:

Student perceptions of their own healthy eating habits were mixed. Many felt that they do eat healthily while in school, while others believed they only do so sometimes. Very few felt that they eat unhealthily. These responses indicate that students generally have at least some levels of awareness about making healthy choices, though they may not do so consistently. An overwhelming majority of students felt that the school should take an active role in promoting healthy eating. There is clear support from the student body for initiatives that encourage healthier habits and awareness.

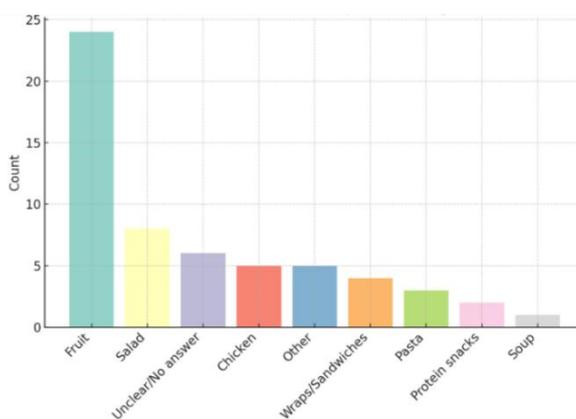
Students expressed a wide range of opinions on the quality of the healthy options available in the canteen. Many felt that the supposed healthy choices were not genuinely healthy or were too limited to be useful. Others were unsure of the nutritional quality of what was offered. Very few students described the options as clearly healthy. This reflects a general lack of confidence in the current menu's ability to support healthy eating.

4. Student Improvement Suggestions:

Students shared numerous ideas about how the canteen environment and service could be improved.

- The need for a larger dining space to reduce overcrowding and long queues,
- A more efficient queuing system.
- Better organisation during busy times.
- More seating.
- Expand the range of food available and make it more appealing.

What students would like to see more off from the Canteen



Students offered a wide variety of suggestions to help promote healthy eating in the school.

- Broader range of healthy foods in the canteen and making these items more affordable.
- Displaying posters, signs, or educational materials around the school to encourage healthy habits.
- Healthy eating should be taught more widely across subjects, not only in Home Economics.
- Run fitness-related activities or challenges, rewarding healthy choices, and reducing the availability of unhealthy foods.

Conclusion

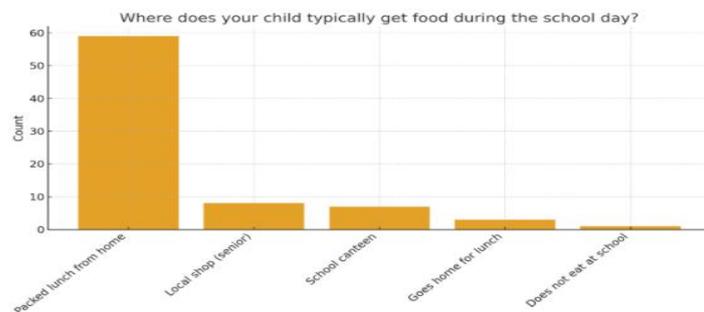
This survey reveals strong support among students for improving both the food environment and the promotion of healthy eating within the school. Students value healthy options but feel that the current canteen offerings and facilities do not fully meet their needs. Their suggestions reflect a desire for both practical improvements — such as a better dining space and more nutritious food choices — and educational initiatives that reinforce healthy habits. The findings provide a clear direction for policy development and future action in Scoil Chonglais.

Appendix 7: Parent Survey Findings & Suggestions

Overview: The parent survey for Scoil Chonglais gathered qualitative feedback regarding students' eating habits, access to food during the school day, perceptions of the existing food environment, and expectations for a new Healthy Eating Policy. Responses reflect a mixture of supportive attitudes toward healthy eating and concerns about convenience, food options, and student preferences. Several themes emerge around breakfast habits, sources of food, satisfaction with school offerings, and the challenges families face in encouraging nutritious choices.

Breakfast and Eating Habits: Most parents indicate that their children regularly eat breakfast before coming to school. Breakfast is generally seen as a routine part of students' mornings, though some children occasionally skip due to time constraints or preference. When breakfast is missed, it is often because students are in a rush or do not feel hungry early in the day.

Where Students Access Food: Students obtain food from a variety of sources. Many bring meals from home, while others rely on the school canteen or a combination of both. Convenience appears to play a significant role in determining where food comes from, with some students choose canteen options for ease or preference.



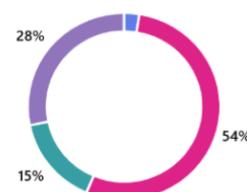
Use of the School Canteen: Canteen use varies widely. Some students rarely purchase food at school, relying primarily on packed lunches, while others visit the canteen occasionally or regularly. Parents whose children do use the canteen often describe it as a supplement to food brought from home rather than the primary source of meals.

Nutritional Quality of Daily Eating: Parents express mixed views on the nutritional quality of their children's daily intake. Those who prepare meals at home generally feel confident in the healthfulness of what their children eat. Concerns arise primarily around convenience foods, snacks, and treats that children may purchase or bring. Some parents also note that while they try to encourage healthy eating, children often favour less nutritious options, especially when available among peers.

Importance of Healthy Eating Promotion: Parents consistently emphasize the importance of schools promoting healthy eating. They see the school environment as a significant influence on students' food choices and habits. Many express supports for a clearly defined Healthy Eating Policy that reinforces health-conscious behaviour and aligns with what families are trying to encourage at home.

To what extent do you feel the school's food environment currently supports healthy choices?

Fully supports	2
Somewhat supports	42
Does not support	12
Not sure	22



Priorities for a New Healthy Eating Policy

When asked to rank policy priorities, parents highlight several recurring themes:

- **Access to healthier food options** (e.g., fruit, whole foods, nutritious snacks)
- **Education about nutrition**, both in the curriculum and through visible messaging
- **Limiting availability of unhealthy items**, particularly sugary drinks and treats
- **Promoting balanced meals** rather than focusing solely on restrictions
- **Clear communication** so parents understand school expectations

Desired Improvements for the Policy

Parents suggest a range of improvements for the upcoming Healthy Eating Policy, such as:

- Providing **more nutritious options** in the canteen, including fruit, smoothies, and healthy snacks
- **Reducing or removing unhealthy offerings**
- Increasing **education and awareness campaigns** around nutrition
- Ensuring **affordable prices** for healthier foods
- Offering **variety and balanced choices** that appeal to students

Many parents' express openness to new initiatives and emphasise practicality and student engagement.

Conclusion

The survey reveals strong parental support for a comprehensive Healthy Eating Policy at Scoil Chonglais. Parents believe healthy eating is important and view the school as a valuable partner in promoting nutritious habits. While experiences vary, common themes include the desire for more nutritious food options, stronger guidance for healthy choices, and improved communication. Addressing these areas can help build a policy that reflects family needs, supports student wellbeing, and fosters a healthier school environment.

Appendix 8: Teaching Staff Survey Findings & Suggestions

Overview

This staff survey gathers perspectives from teachers and staff on the eating habits of students at school, the role of the school environment, barriers to healthy eating, and what should be prioritised in a revised Healthy Eating Policy.

Perceptions of Students' Food Choices

Staff largely observe that students' eating habits are mixed, with many choosing foods that are not particularly nutritious. While some students occasionally bring or select healthy foods, a significant portion of the school population appears to gravitate toward snacks and drinks that are high in sugar or low in nutritional value. Staff have noted that convenience and preference strongly influence students' decisions, often leading them to choose less healthy items.

Priorities for a Healthy Eating Policy

Staff identified several key priorities they believe should guide the development of a new Healthy Eating Policy:

- **Increasing the availability of healthy food choices** and limiting the presence of unhealthy items
- **Providing education** to students on nutrition and balanced eating
- **Creating a supportive food environment** that makes healthy choices easier and more appealing
- **Ensuring consistency across the school**, including expectations for lunchboxes, canteen offerings, and classroom practices
- **Encouraging student engagement**, so young people feel motivated rather than restricted

These priorities reflect a desire for a policy that improves student wellbeing while remaining realistic and sustainable.

Suggested Improvements

Staff offered a range of ideas to strengthen healthy eating during the school day. Key suggestions include:

- Updating the canteen menu to include **more fresh, affordable, and nutritious options**
- Improving the **promotion** of healthy foods through signage, placement, or daily specials
- Strengthening **education initiatives**, possibly involving SPHE, Wellbeing classes, or school-wide campaigns
- Providing **clearer communication** around expectations for students' lunches and snacks
- Collaborating more closely with the canteen provider to align offerings with student demands

Role of Staff in Promoting Healthy Choices

Most staff feel they have an important role in supporting healthy eating among students. They see opportunities to model good habits, reinforce positive messages, and integrate nutrition discussions into everyday school life. However, many staff express the need for **clear guidelines, whole-school consistency, and supportive structures** so that this role can be carried out effectively.

Key Change That Would Make the Biggest Difference

When asked for the single most impactful change, staff responses centred on:

- **Reforming the canteen**, ensuring healthier foods are available, affordable, and appealing
- **Reducing or restructuring the availability of unhealthy items**
- **Setting clear expectations** for students regarding snacks, drinks, and lunchtime behaviour
- **Promoting nutrition education** more visibly and regularly

These responses indicate that staff see both environmental and educational levers as crucial.

Conclusion:

The staff survey indicates strong interest in developing a more effective Healthy Eating Policy. Staff recognise the challenges students face but also see clear opportunities for creating a healthier school environment. Their feedback emphasises the need for improved food options, consistent messaging, education, and actionable supports that make healthy choices easier for all students. The insights provided will be valuable in drafting a policy that meets the needs of students while reflecting the professional judgement and experience of staff.