



To inspire every child to recognise their full potential, believe they can make a difference and respect themselves, others and the world in which they live.

Healthy Lifestyle Policy 2023

Aim of the policy:

We are a learning focused school and in order to learn most effectively we need to have healthy brains, bodies and minds. As well as caring for our learners' education we also care for the health and well-being of our learners. We feel that it is essential to provide children with a learning environment which offers them the experiences, opportunities and information to enable them to make life long, well informed decisions about health.

Healthy Brain

We understand that diet and exercise have a great part to play in enabling the brain to work effectively. We aim to raise awareness of this by teaching our staff, learners and families about brain friendly health.

The brain needs water

The research: Nearly 80% of the brain is water. Every thought in the brain of a child is the result of a chemical or electrical reaction in the brain. These are created when chemicals and proteins mix with water. Without water, reactions cannot take place efficiently.

Action: Everyone has the right to access clean drinking water. We try to encourage learners to drink water during the school day. At iCAN learners are provided with refillable stainless steel water bottles which are named. These are kept in the classroom so that they can have access to drinks freely without needing to leave the classroom. These bottles are also taken to other areas of the school such as the canteen, the gym and classrooms where they take specialist lessons. Water dispensers are located on each corridor and in the canteen area. There are also taps providing filtered water. These are fully accessible to all learners in school. For health and safety reasons, learners are required to take their drink bottles home each day to be washed and refilled.

The brain needs good food

The research: A child's brain uses more energy than any other part of their body. Everything a child learns- inside or outside of school- takes energy. Blood delivers nutrients to the brain, which it gets from the food they eat.

Action:

- Our school lunches have been created to meet the dietary needs of a learner at iCAN
- Those learners with home lunches are encouraged to bring a healthy balanced meal
- Fresh fruit and vegetables are provided at break times for all learners
- Children learn about brain friendly foods during Wellbeing sessions and IPC Science lessons
- Family workshops, newsletters and leaflets are offered to families to emphasise the link between diet and brain activity.
- On occasions where learners are able to bring in food to an event, they are encouraged to bring in healthy options. Any unhealthy (high in fat, sugar) will be sent back home with the learner.

The brain needs blood and oxygen

The research: A learner's brain takes its food –proteins, oxygen and so on- from the blood that passes through it. Because the brain uses up so much energy, it requires lots of oxygen. In fact, a child's brain uses 20% of all of the oxygen they take in. Recent research has also shown how important physical activity is for the brain.

Action:

- Our school curriculum provides 1 hour of PE and 1 hour of swimming a week.
- Our ASA programme provides opportunities to participate in a number of physical activities.
- From Tuesday to Friday the primary learners have an opportunity to participate in Wake Up Shake Up before the start of the school day.

The brain needs sleep

The research: There are two kinds of sleep. The first, REM sleep, takes place four times a night and lasts about 90 minutes each time. During REM sleep a child's brain is very active but her body shuts down. Research has shown that during this time the brain is going over all of its experiences from the previous day. The last of these four periods of sleep is where our brain does the business of remembering. In between these REM sleeps is the second, deeper sleep. This is where the brain shuts down and the body is more active.

Action:

- We offer family workshops so that families can learn and understand the importance of bedtime routines and a good night's sleep.
- We share information about the importance of bedtime routines and a good night's sleep in our morning meetings and through our wellbeing curriculum
- Morning meetings are used to check on the wellbeing of the learners to see if they are ready to learn and what barriers might be in their way.

Healthy body

The research: well-nourished learners are more receptive to teaching and will learn better. Healthy eating habits learnt during childhood are usually continued throughout life and these healthy behaviours can help reduce the risk of diseases such as obesity, diabetes, iron deficiency, heart disease and some cancers.

It is important that at school, our learners have every opportunity to access healthy food and to learn in an environment that supports healthy eating. We feel that we play an integral role in supporting families and our community to promote lifelong healthy eating.

Action:

- Our school lunches have been created to meet the dietary needs of a learner at iCAN
- Those learners with home lunches are encouraged to bring a healthy balanced meal
- Fresh fruit and vegetables are provided at break times for all learners
- Children learn about 'healthy' foods during Wellbeing sessions and IPC .
- Family workshops, newsletters and leaflets are offered to families to emphasise the link between diet and brain activity.
- On occasions where learners are able to bring in food to an event, they are encouraged to bring in healthy options. Any unhealthy (high in fat, sugar) will be sent back home with the learner.
- Provide a welcoming eating environment which encourages positive social and cultural interaction of learners, LSAs and LFs.
- Staff create and promote an environment which supports a healthy lifestyle by acting as role models.

Healthy mind

The research: Mental health problems and stress can affect a learner's energy level, concentration, dependability, mental ability, and optimism, hindering performance.

Action:

- We teach learners how to recognise, understand and label emotions so they are more able to regulate difficult feelings through the ruler approach.
- We provide a calm space (Peace Corner) for learners to take time to regulate and rejoin the class when they are ready.
- We teach learners coping strategies to manage difficult feelings.
- We teach a mindfulness curriculum to Year 3-6 to learn about how stress affects the brain and how we can use mindfulness to regulate our nervous system.

Initiatives and strategies to support the development of healthy brains, bodies and minds.

Wake up and shake up

Wake up Shake up happens every Tuesday to Friday morning before the start of the school day, for between 5 – 10 minutes. We believe that it has the following impact on our learners:

- Enjoyment of school life and a sense of well-being (staff too!)
- Improved self-esteem impacting on other curriculum areas: 'success breeds success'
- Improved coordination
- Improved rhythm and timing
- Improved concentration and application to tasks immediately after the brief exercise session
- Increased stamina
- Improved behaviour
- Improved hydration
- Improve the health of learners, staff and their families by helping to influence their eating habits through increasing their knowledge and awareness of food issues, including what constitutes a healthy diet

Peer massage

Once a week, learners are able to take part in a peer massage session. They are differentiated across the school and last for approximately 15 minutes. All learners are encouraged to participate during this session.

Studies and observations have shown that:

- Learners become calmer and have improved concentration.
- Learners have more confidence and increased self esteem
- It teaches learners to respect others and leads to social inclusion
- There is a reduction in bullying and aggression
- Emotional health improves
- It helps learners recognise 'good' and 'bad' touch
- Learners show improved motor skills
- It encourages visualisation and kinesthetic learning
- Learners are encouraged to make choices
- Cooperation improves as learners work in pairs and in groups
- There is a calmer classroom environment
- The learning facilitator benefits from all these aspects
- Massage is fun!

Teeth cleaning

Dental hygiene is very important and rates of tooth decay are high in Phnom Penh. We encourage all learners to brush their teeth after lunch each day.

Policy to be reviewed in November 2025