



HealthPromotingSchools Scoileanna Cothaithe Sláinte

“A health promoting school can be characterised as a school that is constantly strengthening its capacity as a healthy setting for living, learning, and working”. (WHO, 1997)

Loreto College, Mullingar became the first post-primary school in County Westmeath and the midlands to be presented with the Healthy Ireland -‘Health Promoting Schools’ Flag’ in September 2015.

The Healthy Ireland- *Health Promoting Schools’(HPS) Flag’* is presented by the HSE to schools as an acknowledgement of their work in improving the health of their school communities. The Healthy Ireland-Health Promoting Schools Programme supports schools to focus on health and wellbeing and involves all members of the school community. Students, staff, parents and guardians are consulted to identify priority health areas. Over a period of around two school years, schools develop an action plan to address the health areas identified. Schools are guided to address their priority area under the following evidence based categories: environment (social and physical) curriculum, policies and partnerships. Schools work at their own pace, supported by the Athlone Education Centre and HSE Health Promotion & Improvement Dept. In each school, a Healthy Ireland-Health Promoting Schools Coordinator and Healthy Ireland-Health Promoting Schools Team lead out on the progression of health and wellbeing and this work is supported by the school principal, board of management and wider school community.

European research has shown many benefits of this type of whole school approach to health. Chief among these benefits are increased self-esteem, safer and cleaner school environments, lowered incidences of bullying, a positive approach to health issues, increased parent involvement and better student/teacher relationships to name a few.

Evidence has shown that with the HPS framework:

- Both education and health outcomes are improved
- Multi-faceted approaches are more effective than single interventions
- Involving students, parents and staff in planning and decision-making leads to better success.
- Reduction of health risk behaviours amongst students.
- Improved staff well-being
- A more coordinated approach to social, physical, and environmental needs
- Safer and more secure school environment
- Increased involvement of parents and guardians

- Better use of external agencies
- Schools gain public recognition of success

Many thanks are extended to the wonderful Health Promoting Schools Team who can be identified around the school by their red Health Promoter badges. Some of the many health initiatives they have chosen to take on board in order to continue as a Health Promoting School include:

- **Healthy Canteen Award**
- **Sli na Slainte school maps and walkways**
- **CPR4Schools Award**
- **Breakfast Club**
- **Active Schools Week**
- **One Good Adult Initiative**
- **Tea & Talk run by Student Council.**
- **Safer Internet Day**
- **Teacher Wellbeing Kits**
- **Acts of Random Kindness**
- **Worry not Wednesday**
- **Healthy Student Quizzes with Big and Little sisters**

Thanks is also extended to our Health Promoting Schools mentor, Ms Therese Malone.