



HealthPromotingSchools

Scoileanna Cothaithe Sláinte

INFORMATION FOR SCHOOLS



What is a Health Promoting School?

A Health Promoting School (HPS) is defined by the World Health Organization as “a school that constantly strengthens its capacity as a healthy setting for living, learning and working” (WHO, 1998).

The HPS concept is recognised internationally and has been developing in Ireland since the early nineties. Ireland is a member of the ‘Schools for Health in Europe’ (SHE) Network.

In a HPS, health is viewed in its broadest sense and includes the physical, social, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of health. It recognises that health is influenced by many factors beyond the individual, and aims to create a setting that supports health and healthy choices. It is a long-term initiative aimed at involving the school community - students, staff and parents/guardians - in a whole-school approach to health and wellbeing.



Why is it important to consider health in the school setting?

Research has shown that health and education are inextricably linked:

- Healthy young people are more likely to learn more effectively
- Health promotion can help schools to meet their social aims
- Involvement in HPS contributes to improving educational attainment
- Young people that attend school have a better chance of good health
- Young people that feel good about their school, and who are connected to school and significant adults, are less likely to engage in high risk behaviours and are likely to have better learning outcomes



Recognising this connection between health and education, a HPS works to embed health into the culture and life of a school. It does so by bringing members of the school community together to work in a planned way to promote health and wellbeing. The HPS process adopts a 'whole school approach' that goes beyond the classroom and includes:

- Creating a healthy physical and social school environment
- Building health skills and life competencies through the school curriculum and other learning opportunities
- Developing and implementing school policies that promote health and wellbeing
- Strengthening partnerships for health, including linkages to families and the wider school community



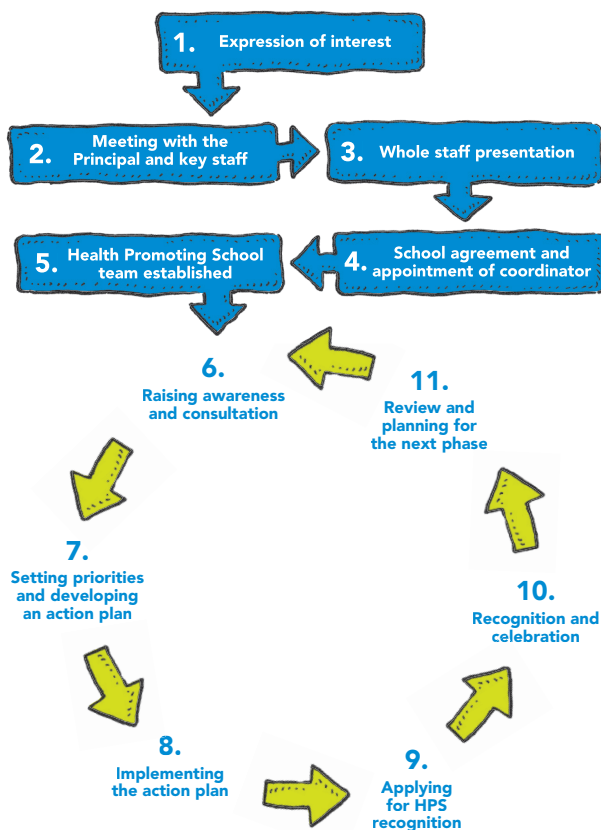
How to develop as a Health Promoting School

Undoubtedly, your school already takes positive action to support health – no school is ever starting from scratch! The HPS process, which is informed by evidence of effective health promotion in the school setting, can support efforts to promote the health and wellbeing of the school community.

The HPS process involves 11 stages led by a HPS Coordinator and a HPS Team from within your school community. As part of the process, the school community will reflect on what is already happening to support health and, through consultation, identify further priority areas to develop through an action plan. Regardless of the priorities your school identifies, they are implemented using a whole school approach, which has been demonstrated to be most effective when planning for health.



On successful implementation of the action plan, your school can apply to be formally recognised as a Health Promoting School. The purpose of formal recognition is to reflect your school's commitment to health rather than an end goal in itself. The school's journey, therefore, does not end at formal recognition! HPS is an ongoing process. By signing up to the process, the school is reflecting its ongoing commitment to health and wellbeing.



Ongoing evaluations of HPS at European level report the following:

- Better learning outcomes for students
- Improved staff wellbeing
- A more co-ordinated approach to social, physical and environmental needs
- Increased student self-esteem
- Lowered incidence of bullying
- Safer and more secure school environment
- Better understanding of school's health aims
- Improved relationships within the school
- Increased involvement of parents and guardians
- Better use of outside agencies

For more information, please contact the schools' team in your local HSE Health Promotion and Improvement Office.



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