

Fittest school steps it out

13,000 pupils take the challenge and learn the value of exercise, says **Helen O'Callaghan**



Up and running: Jordi Murphy and Sarah Lavin, with Tommy O'Donovan, Odhran Cully and Laren Keenan from Oaklands college, Co Offaly. Picture: Dan Sheridan

FOR the second consecutive year, Oaklands Community College in Edenderry, Offaly, has been declared Ireland's fittest school. The school that most improved its fitness — by 68% — is St Macartan's College, Monaghan.

122 schools, comprising 13,067 junior-cycle secondary students, participated in the Aviva Healthy Schools' Fitness Challenge, to see which school could increase student fitness most in six weeks. Fitness was assessed through a bleep test — on average, students improved 19%.

Prof Niall Moyna, from DCU's Centre of Preventive Medicine, set the challenge. He says cardiovascular fitness is "probably one of the best predictors for health" and says we have a duty to help get teenagers fit. "Otherwise, they're going to have a very dim future".

Prof Moyna says aerobically fit people have reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure and some cancers.

TIPS

- Reduce screen time — 86% of school-going children spend over two hours daily in front of TV, video, computer.
- Teens should get 60 minutes daily of moderate-vigorous intensity activity (e.g. walking).
- Aim to build activity into teen life.

A study carried out by one of Professor Moyna's PhD students, Sinéad Sheridan, involving 90 transition-year students, found sedentary, inactive individuals with low fitness and poor diet had less healthy blood vessels than fit, active students. "Using ultrasound, we measured how well the blood vessels could dilate. We found that in 15-year-old boys with poor fitness levels, the blood vessels could dilate only 50% as much as high fitness teens, clearly indicating these children had early onset of cardiovascular disease."

Third-years at St Macartan's College were the fittest boys in Ireland, while second-years at Ursuline Secondary School, Thurles, were the fittest girls. Boys are 45% fitter than girls, compared to 60% fitter last year, so girls are closing the gap. Boys completed an average of 67 shuttles, compared to 62 last year, an increase of 8%, with girls completing, on average, four more shuttles than last year, to reach 42, or a 10.86% improvement.

"At this age, there shouldn't be a large difference between the genders. We have to acknowledge the huge issue of very low fitness levels among young girls. Much of this is social and cultural. When girls get to 12 or 13, other things take precedence."

Student fitness improved courtesy of aerobic circuit training and three-kilometre runs. ■■

The frugal foodie

Caitriona Redmond knows what it's like to manage a kitchen on a tight budget and now she's sharing her secrets, writes **Clodagh Finn**



IT'S easy to eat well when you can toss the makings of healthy family meals into your supermarket trolley without counting the cost.

But how would you cope if, like Dubliner Caitriona Redmond, you had to feed a family of five wholesome food on a budget of €70 a week?

When Caitriona lost her job as a PA in 2009, she was forced to do just that. Now, five years on, she has come up with a manual to help the thousands of other families who are in the same situation.

You can eat well for less, Caitriona assures readers in her

new book *Wholesome, Feed Your Family Well for Less* but, she adds, it is not always easy.

The mother-of-three and high-profile blogger tells it like it is. She talks openly about the toll living on a tight budget has exacted on her and the stress of facing bills and unexpected costs.

"There's a sinking feeling when I know a utility bill is due, or when the bin tag has to be bought," she says.

"There's no such thing as a night out really, which makes you feel even more socially isolated. I have often stood at the school gate and heard parents talking about

holidays, new shoes, haircuts and felt like a total outsider because I can't identify with any of that," she continues.

And yet her book is upbeat, practical and very inspiring. It is full of recipes, tips and tricks for making food — and money — go further.

Here are some of her golden rules:

Run your kitchen like a business
The first thing Caitriona did was to start running her kitchen like the offices she had worked in. She stock-takes, keeps a tally of all she needs on a whiteboard, calculates

DAD'S WORLD

Larry Ryan

INEVITABLY, the day arrives when you abandon any ambitions of your own and pin your hopes on them. Maybe the day arrived earlier than expected. They are aged two-and-a-half. But the system is well-established. Youtube — Twitter — talentedkids # — appearance on Ellen — retire to be their agent.

The education system can't provide anything like that kind of certainty. And there is no time to lose. I try to shield them from the harsh reality as best I can, but in a matter of months they are over the hill. Washed up.

Two Year Old Sings Wrecking Ball. Two Year Old Has Perfect Golf Swing. Amazing Two Year Old Skateboarder. Trick Shot Two Year Old Beats Kobe Bryant. Two Year Old Youngest Member of Mensa.

They cannot say they haven't been given choices. Sure, there are opportunities for three-year-olds too. The seniors tour. But standards are high in that market. You need serious game. Or at least accomplished camera trickery.

The two-year-old, on the other hand, can hit a couple of lucky shots or hold a few reasonable notes and slide by on charisma. Like cats.

So we've had to step things up. If there is genuine talent it is hard to know where it might have come from, but you can't be too careful. So I've set up tests in a range of



disciplines. The Girl throws and kicks a decent ball, in fairness to her, but there is precious little appreciation of the need for accuracy while the camera is rolling.

They do freestyle work too. I thought I'd cracked it when The Boy, in a game effort to free himself from a full nappy, performed a set of gyrations that looked, if you studied the footage from some distance, a touch Gangnam Style. YouTube disagreed. 23 views. All my own.

In truth, they have both had it too handy. Twins. "Aren't they cute?" All either of them has ever had to do to milk the plaudits is hang around in proximity to the other one.

No wonder they have gone soft. Centre-stage without an act. They haven't even mastered the

"It's a road I am a little reluctant to go down, lest it trigger a compulsion that might lead to an appearance on Jeremy Kyle"

wherewithal to capitalise on that whole other genre open to them. Little Twins Laugh At Each Other's Jokes. Totes Cute Twins Cuddle In Bath. So Adorable Twins Have Own Language. Another massive missed opportunity.

So we near last-chance saloon. A road I am a little reluctant to go down, lest it trigger a compulsion that might lead, one day, to an appearance on Jeremy Kyle. But it might be a chance worth taking.

Cute Twins Freak Out In Massive Bust-Up. There have been many opportunities in this popular area of show business.

Just this morning, a scuffle over a detachable ear that might have belonged to his Mr Potato Head or her Mrs Potato Head sparked a dispute that was only settled when The Girl roared, like Woody to Buzz. "You want a piece of me?"

There will be time enough later to discuss that kind of talk, and to reassess whether Toy Story really is suitable viewing after all. ■■



Tight squeeze: Mother of three and blogger Caitriona Redmond, offers advice on how to feed a family wholesome food on a budget.

her budget, plans all meals and has banned credit cards. You'll need lots of discipline but good food doesn't have to be complicated or expensive, she insists.

Superman in your cupboard
"Think of the store cupboard as the 'Superman' of the frugal household," writes Caitriona. Spices, herbs and store cupboard tricks can totally transform a standard meal into something

memorable. Her own cupboard is stocked with lots of dried herbs, spices and dried carbohydrates like bulgur wheat, lentils, noodles, oats, chickpeas, pasta and cannellini beans.

Be a savvy shopper
You don't have to spend time, energy and shoe leather/fuel traipsing from shop to shop, just get price aware and check the price per gram weight on the shelves. For instance, the Redmond family's favourite blend of tea works out cheaper if you buy the smallest box possible, rather than the seemingly cheaper jumbo pack.

Develop ESP
This doesn't stand for extra sensory perception but eggs, spuds and pulses. These three magic ingredients provide great nutrition and could save a fortune as an alternative protein source to meat.

Be realistic
"That was the hardest thing," writes Caitriona. While there were many organisations to help with claiming entitlements after redundancy, or legal issues, there wasn't anybody to help her provide nutritional food on a budget. Thankfully, the lady herself has stepped in to fill that gap. ■■

■ Wholesome, Feed Your Family Well for Less by Caitriona Redmond is published by Mercier Press, €19.99.

LUNCH FOR LESS

CREAMED CORN NOODLE SOUP

Serves 4
Made completely from store cupboard ingredients.

You will need:
400ml vegetable stock
1 teaspoon ginger and garlic paste
150g frozen sweetcorn
100g fine egg noodles
50g frozen peas
Dried chilli flakes/whole chillis
Soy sauce to taste

Method:
Bring the stock to a slow simmer. Stir in the ginger and garlic paste and the sweetcorn until they are defrosted. Remove from heat and pulse with a stick blender. Return to the heat and break in the egg noodles. Simmer for 5 minutes, then stir in the peas. Serve once the peas are hot — about 2 minutes — and sprinkle with dried chilli if you're a heat fiend. Drizzle soy sauce on top to season.



Clinical Nutrition Consultancy

Clinical Nutrition Consultancy (CNC) is run by Ruth Reidy, a clinical nutritionist and dietitian who provides a dietetic service for both individuals requiring one-to-one consultations or companies seeking dietetic input for their staff, canteens or residents.

Clinical Nutrition Consultancy has been open since 2005 in Midleton and Mitchelstown and has recently established a new office at 42 Eastgate Drive, Little Island.

Ruth is a member of the Irish Nutrition and Dietetics Institute (I.N.D.I.) and is an honours graduate of the BSc of Human Nutrition and Dietetics at Trinity College Dublin and Kevin Street D.I.T. She provides an individual clinical nutrition and dietetic service to both adults and children. As a qualified parent mentor, Ruth has much experience supporting parents achieve healthier

lifestyles, for themselves and for their families. She has a special interest in weight management and runs a three month individual weight management programme. The programme can also be attended by couples or a parent and child and Ruth has found this provides very worthwhile and beneficial support for both people attending.

Conditions like diabetes and heart disease / stroke also play a major part of Ruth's clinic work and she has worked with individuals and groups, helping clients manage these conditions and improve their health.

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is another area of Ruth's interest and she has become a qualified FODMAP tutor in order to further help her clients manage the symptoms of IBS. The low FODMAP diet is a revolutionary new nutritional approach for



Ruth Reidy Clinical Nutritionist/Dietitian, M.I.N.D.I. B.Sc. (HumNut), Dip.(Diet), Cert HP(Open)

the treatment of IBS and is approximately 75% effective in improving IBS symptoms.

Ruth also works with athletes to help improve their performance and truly benefit from all the hard work they put into their training. Athletes need to make sure their eating plans are healthy and well balanced and able to meet the increased demand of their training. Ruth has a qualification in sports nutrition and is a member of the Sports Nutrition Interest Group of the INDI.

She has worked in both the hospital and community areas, including Limerick Regional Hospital, the Bon Secours Hospital Cork and the North Cork HSE Community Nutrition and Dietetic service. She has gained experience in many different specialities including intensive care, surgery, eating disorders, paediatrics, weight

management, diabetes, heart disease and Coeliac disease. Ruth has also frequently provided a dietetic service to nursing homes in the Munster area.

As a qualified clinical nutritionist / dietitian and member of the INDI, Ruth's appointment fees may be claimed back by clients through out-patient expenses with the following companies: VHI Healthcare, LAYA Healthcare, Aviva Healthcare and Glo Healthcare. They can also be included with the Med 1 tax form.

If you are interested in receiving regular nutritional updates from Ruth, please 'LIKE' her FBpage: CNC Nutrition4u and email ru th@nutrition4u.ie to join the mailing list. Ruth is contactable by phone 087-2385230 for queries and appointments. Her website address is www.nutrition4u.ie

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