

# How are schools using PESS to increase pupils' involvement in healthy, active lifestyles?

The stories here show just some of the ways that schools involved in the PESS investigation have used PESS to increase pupils' involvement in healthy, active lifestyles. For more examples, visit QCA's PESS website at [www.qca.org.uk/pess](http://www.qca.org.uk/pess).

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# Fit and ready

**The school:** Manor Primary School in Ivybridge, Devon, which has 276 pupils aged 4 to 11

**The objective:** To increase pupils' involvement in healthy, active lifestyles by improving their commitment to, and understanding and enjoyment of, purposeful physical activity

## The starting point

Key stage 1 pupils at Manor Primary took part in three 45-minute sessions of high quality PESS each week, while key stage 2 pupils had two one-hour sessions per week. Staff enjoyed teaching PE and between them offered expertise in everything from outdoor education to rhythmic gymnastics. However, they felt that there was scope for pupils to improve their performance against the PESS high quality outcomes, in particular understanding, thinking and decision making, commitment and enjoyment.

There were over 20 clubs on offer promoting a wide variety of activities, from the main sports to gardening, cookery and media. All staff contributed to these clubs and were generally positive, enthusiastic and open to new activities. The school had strong links with a range of outside organisations that helped to deliver PE and support school sport, including Ivybridge Tennis Club, Ivybridge Community College and Devon Active Sport. However, staff were keen to develop more links to further increase participation in out-of-school-hours (OSHL) learning.

Daily physical activity happened informally, depending on staff time and availability. Children used the covered area – mainly for football – on a rota basis at break and lunchtimes. However, playtime provision was insufficient for many pupils, with some groups calling for a more stimulating environment and new play options. A system needed to be established for increased activity levels at these times.

## Action

Dance and gymnastics lessons were adversely affected by the school hall being used as a classroom during building work. As a short-term solution the school offered more outdoor PE and made full use of the swimming pool and covered area for wet weather games sessions so that children did not miss out on lessons. To raise awareness and understanding of the PESS high quality outcomes, staff produced their own meaningful, pupil-friendly descriptions. Input from a gymnastics consultant improved the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school and staff started to use the QCA medium-term planning sheets for gymnastics. These assessment for learning principles are gradually being adopted across all areas of activity.

To encourage greater participation in physical activity, staff set up a rewards scheme, including family rewards. Under-served pupils were identified, including those who were frail, lacked confidence, didn't participate, were overweight or had medical conditions. These pupils were then targeted to take part in a new range of activities identified to help develop health and wellbeing. Teachers, other adults and young leaders were given multi-skills training, and multi-skills and fitness clubs were set up. Yoga, gardening, walking and cycling were introduced, making use of the school's natural environment. A 'Friday Fest Sports Club' at lunchtimes – which involved a weekly intra school competition for all year groups – proved particularly effective.

The playground was divided into zones and playtime activity rotas were drawn up so that all pupils had access to all areas, including a new fitness/agility trail. Year 6 pupils planned and ran lunchtime activity clubs for younger children.



## Impact

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The number of pupils involved in OSHL activities increased dramatically. Lunchtime participation rates rocketed from 10% to 77% in years 3 and 4, and from 0% to 83% in years 5 and 6. There were also smaller increases in participation in after-school activities.

The school achieved both Healthy Schools and Activemark status.

Staff also saw improvements in pupils' performance against the targeted PESS high quality outcomes. More than half of all pupils were able to explain and describe how school and different activities contributed to how they felt about themselves (outcome 3). In years 5 to 6, there was much more evidence of pupils volunteering questions and answers, asking for help, taking the initiative to help others and being ready to participate as players, coaches, administrators and spectators (outcome 4). Similarly, staff saw improvements in pupils' concentration levels and ability to maintain activity and energy levels (outcome 9). Finally, pupils' increased enjoyment of PESS (outcome 10) was reflected in greater interest in the PE and sport notice boards and a new willingness to make time to take part.

# Having a ball

**The school:** Biddulph High School, a mixed 13 to 18 comprehensive school in a deprived area of Staffordshire

**The objective:** To develop positive attitudes towards physical activity and healthy eating among a group of year 11 girls

## The starting point

The school identified a group of year 11 girls who lacked confidence in PE lessons and did not take part in any school sport activities at lunchtime or after school. Through discussions and an attitudinal survey, it soon emerged that the girls linked club attendance to competitive games and felt inhibited by the 'sporty girls' who tended to take over, leaving them on the sidelines. As a result, the most activity they undertook in a week was one to two hours of gentle exercise. All stated that they would like to be more physically active.

## Action

A group of 20 girls were selected who:

- lived in the health action zone in the school's catchment area
- never attended out-of-hours sporting activities
- had low self-esteem
- had poor dietary habits at school
- intended to go to the end-of-term prom event!

All were invited to attend a 'Prom Club'. This was a 10-week taster programme in the run-up to the school prom that introduced the girls to activities available in the local community such as aerobics, 'hips, bums and tums', yoga, spinning, boxercise and step aerobics. Slots of between 45 minutes and an hour were carefully geared to stamina levels, bearing in mind that the girls were not used to such activity. The school was keen to avoid fragile confidence levels being affected by overzealous fitness instructors.

To supplement the activities, a dietician advised the girls on healthier eating in school and local companies were invited in to talk to them about hairstyles, nails and make-up.

The head of year 11 and some of the female form tutors attended all 10 sessions, which boosted the pupils' confidence and created a real buzz around the school. It

also raised the profile of the project and of physical activity, with many pupils not involved asking to join in.

Commitment levels among the target group ran extremely high – several girls were on college placements during the course and had to make a significant effort to arrange transport to return to school for the sessions. Bearing in mind that these pupils had never attended extracurricular activities before, this was a remarkable achievement.

## Impact

Canteen staff reported a big impact on the take-up of healthy options, both among the pupils participating in the project and their peers. There was a marked increase in snacking on fruit instead of crisps and comments such as 'I eat less junk' were commonplace. By the end of the 10 weeks, 90% of the girls said that they had improved their dietary habits as a result of their involvement in the prom club.

All 20 girls attended the prom and clearly showed increased self-esteem. Since the prom, 10 have continued with some form of exercise, both at school and in their own time. Two have started regular swimming sessions that they instigated themselves. Fifteen say that they intend to stay on at school next year and are planning to carry on with some form of exercise or activity. Feedback was 100% enthusiastic, with comments such as 'Everything was ace, Miss. Well done. School was fun!' appearing on evaluation sheets. When asked about suggested improvements, over 70% of the girls said that they would like to have the opportunity to invite their own ('non-sporty') friends to join them in the activities and to offer moral support.

As so many other pupils expressed an interest in joining the club, the school is planning to run more extracurricular sessions next year that will be open to all pupils in the sixth form. It is also hoping to involve parents in these sessions, to spread the healthy lifestyle messages from school to home.

# Preparing a pamper day

**The school:** Brierton Community School (A Specialist Sports College) in Hartlepool, an average-sized comprehensive for pupils aged 11 to 16

**The objective:** To increase year 9 girls' involvement in healthy, active lifestyles and, in the process, improve their attendance and attitudes to learning

## The starting point

Pupils from Brierton Community School – which is in an area of considerable social and economic disadvantage – have a life expectancy that is 10 years less than the national average. With this in mind, the school was keen to encourage pupils to look at what they are doing to their bodies now and enable them to make informed choices about their future.

The project focused on a group of 11 year 9 girls with poor attendance records (in some cases below 70%). Nine of them attended less than 85% of PE lessons. Records of the girls' eating habits in the school cafeteria showed that they were regularly eating bacon butties for breakfast, a burger at break time and then a full school meal for lunch. Most had chips every day and two only ate crisps and Mars bars. The girls' responses to a questionnaire based on the PESS high quality outcomes showed that they were also making poor lifestyle choices with regards to sleep and rest. Late nights were the norm and they were often tired at school. Two of the group attended a youth club – the rest did not take part in any activities outside school hours.

## Action

The targeted girls were taken offsite once a week to attend a 'consultation group' at the local youth centre. Here they talked with youth workers about general health issues and were given an opportunity to discuss particular problems and decisions they faced.

To provide a focus for the project, the school asked the group to organise a 'pamper day' for the rest of the girls in year 9. The targeted girls discussed the day with their youth workers, the Healthy Schools Coordinator and the school nurse, who showed them materials they could use and suggested activities.

The girls decided that the day should revolve around six sessions inspired by issues that they had faced themselves:

- a session with a beauty consultant on skincare
- a drugs education session, which the girls designed and helped to lead
- a sex education session, which they led with support from the school nurse
- a session with a fitness instructor
- a salsa dancing class, which the girls helped to demonstrate
- a healthy eating session, where they served fruit and fruit juice.

On the day, the girls were highly motivated and well organised, arriving early to greet the other year 9 girls, who were off-timetable and allowed to wear non-uniform clothing. Sporting special T-shirts that they had designed themselves, each girl supervised a group all day, taking them to sessions and supporting or leading presentations.

At the same time as organising this project, the school permanently increased the number of PE lessons for year 9 from two to three a week, giving pupils a powerful message about the importance of physical activity. It also added a theoretical element to PE lessons, with one lesson a fortnight being based on the BTEC First in Sport unit 'Body in Sport'.



## Impact

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The project transformed the focus group of year 9 girls. As a result of their conversations with youth workers and their preparation for the pamper day, they are much more knowledgeable about different aspects of healthy, active lifestyles. More of them are selecting fruit in the school cafeteria and fewer are buying crisps. As well as attending PE lessons more regularly (including the extra lesson added to the year 9 timetable), more of the girls are taking part in physical activity after school. Overall, 77% of the group improved their attainment across all subjects, suggesting that their schoolwork is benefiting from better patterns of activity, eating and sleep.

The girls' attendance also improved considerably and five now have 100% records for attending PE lessons. Two won prizes for making a difference and over half showed marked improvements in behaviour, with fewer referrals. Teachers have commented that the girls have grown in confidence, are more involved in lessons and have mature and responsible conversations with their peers and staff. They want to be seen as leaders and are using their influence in a positive way. One in particular – who was rude and thoughtless before the project – is now polite and sociable and has emerged as an outstanding leader.

Although it focused on year 9 girls, the investigation had an impact on the whole school: pupils saw the girls' achievements being celebrated both in school and the local newspaper. In particular, year 9 boys and year 7 pupils showed great interest in the pamper day and have expressed a desire to be part of a similar event.

# Fitness and fun!

**The school:** Broad Street Nursery and Infant School near the centre of Crewe, which caters for children aged 3 to 8

**The objective:** To improve pupils' and parents' understanding of PESS and how physical activity contributes to a healthy lifestyle

## The starting point

When children enter the nursery at Broad Street Nursery and Infant School, many are performing way below the national average in terms of physical development, basic and social skills.

The foundation stage profiles on physical development completed over the past three years showed a general trend of decline. Concerned about this, teachers decided to introduce an early years development profile for special needs, developed by Cheshire LEA, for all of the school's nursery pupils. This involved using a traffic light system to assess pupils' abilities in tasks such as walking with one foot in front of the other in a straight line, bending, stretching and walking on tiptoes for six steps. The resulting chart was overwhelmingly amber, with significant red patches. Language acquisition was well below average and the pupils' social skills were very poor. As a result teachers had to spend a great deal of time on basic skills such as sitting quietly and talking in turn and in appropriate ways.

Overall, pupils were enthusiastic about PESS and in years 1 and 2 pupils scored above 90% against most of the high quality outcomes. Reception pupils scored slightly lower in creativity and participation in healthy, active lifestyles. Only 50% of the nursery children could participate in creative and challenging activities successfully (although most were willing to take part by the end of the year singly, in pairs or in small groups). Stamina showed room for improvement across all year groups, with several pupils in years 1 and 2 saying that they were 'puffed out' after any exercise, however limited.

## Action

This year's investigation focused mainly on the foundation stage, with staff working together as a team to develop ideas, resources and plans for nursery and reception children.

Initiatives began in November 2005, when staff and 13 parents were trained in the use of Youth Sport Trust resources TOP Start and TOP Tots with targeted nursery and pre-school children and their parents. This was followed after Christmas by the introduction of 'Borrow Bags', which were distributed each Friday to the 13 families involved in the project for return the following Thursday. The bags contained simple ideas and equipment for activities that parents could try with their children at home, from balancing an egg on a spoon and balancing a beanbag on different parts of the body, to moving to music as a robot, warrior, snake, ballerina, butterfly and bird.

The health and body awareness topics in nursery and reception were revamped in January 2006 to incorporate the knowledge that PESS contributes to a healthy, active lifestyle, keeps children fit and allows them to explore their feelings. The reception curriculum was modified to include new ideas based on gymnastics, dance and games, while the nursery programme focused on gross and fine motor skills and dance. As a result of the changes, all gym and PE sessions held in the hall have an element of music, whether in warm-up activities, action songs, body awareness, performing actions or spatial awareness. Games activities with small equipment, apparatus work or parachute games are always followed by a cool down to music, teaching relaxation techniques and 'stillness'.



Outside designated hall times, every class in the school was given a burst of physical activity each morning through 'Groovy Groovers' – a programme of dance/creative body movements carried out in the classroom. The school piloted this with a year 2 class in 2004/5 and it had such a remarkable effect on the pupils' dance skills, creative writing, emotional literacy and leadership qualities that it was extended across the school. To create further links across the school, a buddy system was introduced in the summer term with year 2 'Playpals' working with foundation stage pupils in PE and outdoor play.

Throughout the year, the school used ICT to encourage pupils and staff to identify differences in achievement and note improvements. Before and after 'Moviemaker' films were made to show progress. A digital camera was used for on-the-spot analysis with individual pupils of, for example, how a leg was positioned in a particular action. This helped to consolidate language skills and provide feedback with instant, visual illustration.

## Impact

The decline in foundation stage profiles on physical development has been reversed this year. Skills recorded using a traffic light system on the early years development profile for special needs went from amber/red to green at age-related levels. At least 50% of nursery children are now performing at the level expected for their age plus one year.

By far the greatest improvements have been seen in the nursery children, whose ability to participate in creative and challenging activities rose from 50% to 100% by the end of the year. The Borrow Bags played a major part in this – 80% of children whose parents worked with them at home showed significant improvements. All of the parents were enthusiastic about the project, saying that the activities gave them ideas, explained their children's development, showed how to help further and most of all were 'great fun'. One parent, also a childminder, called the bags, 'An absolute godsend, because it gives the ideas of what to do with the children'.

Reception teachers' hard work in promoting physical development led to major improvements in pupils' creativity and participation in a healthy, active lifestyle, with 100% of pupils now achieving the high quality outcomes. One pupil with cerebral palsy is working at levels way beyond his expected ability, going to the top of the climbing apparatus independently (wearing his protective helmet). His development has been supported by the teacher integrating some of his physiotherapy exercises into warm ups and cool downs in each PE lesson. After many sessions of teacher modelling and a great deal of language work on the meaning of 'improvement', all pupils can now say and show how to improve. Using digital cameras and Moviemaker helped even 4-year-olds to see the next steps in their learning.

Year 1 and 2 pupils scored at least 95% against all of the PESS high quality outcomes, with the most significant improvements seen in confidence. The lowest scoring group last year – 90% in year 1 – scored 100% this year. Armed with their new-found confidence, 12 year 1 and 2 pupils even took part in a public Bhangra dance performance at the local university.

Stamina has improved noticeably across all year groups. In years 1 and 2, 96% of children can now complete at least 40 minutes of continuous exercise without being puffed out. The only pupils unable to achieve this goal have chronic medical conditions.

Despite the fact that Broad Street Infant and Nursery School is merging with its partner junior school in January 2007, staff enthusiasm, rigorous planning and building of resources will ensure that progress is sustainable. Junior pupils have already become Groovy Groovers and there are plans for the Borrow Bags scheme to be extended.

# A healthier lifestyle for all

**The school:** Calthorpe School and Sports College, a special school in Birmingham with around 270 pupils aged 2 to 19

**The objective:** To increase pupils' involvement in healthy, active lifestyles, focusing in particular on those with severe learning difficulties (SLD) aged 11 to 19

## The starting point

The school was concerned that only 17% of SLD pupils were involved in lunchtime clubs and just 11% took part in after-school clubs. Only two of the pupils belonged to community sports clubs, largely because local facilities did not cater for their needs. The vast majority went home and were sedentary, watching television or playing computer games. More than half (56%) were classed as obese according to a body-composition analyser.

Anecdotal evidence from staff suggested that the pupils made unhealthy food choices and struggled to understand the concept of 'good' and 'bad' food. They liked both fruit and crisps, but had no idea that one was healthier than the other.

At the start of the project, the SLD pupils had almost no knowledge or awareness of their own bodies and how they work. They did not understand the benefits of regular exercise, could not answer questions about health and fitness, and were not leading warm-up and cool-down activities.

## Action

To improve the opportunities available for the pupils in the community, the school worked in conjunction with several local sports clubs to ensure that their coaches had the skills needed to work with SLD pupils. It also arranged for learning mentors to take pupils to the clubs and stay with them, to ensure that they were able to participate effectively. As Calthorpe has such good sports facilities, some community clubs chose to set up activities on the school's site, which made it easier for pupils to attend.

To complement these new opportunities, the school introduced judo, multi-skills and swimming as lunchtime activities, in addition to the existing fitness and football. It bought rowing machines to encourage more pupils to use

the fitness suite and teachers targeted those classed as obese to take part in lunchtime sessions. Staff actively sought out SLD pupils who weren't participating in clubs and asked them if they were interested in joining. Notices were put up in classrooms featuring photographs of the staff who were running each club, so that pupils knew who to contact if they were interested.

Structured playground activities were introduced for the first time. Teaching assistants and lunchtime supervisors were trained to encourage the pupils to take part in active play.

Core tasks and assessment for learning were introduced in PE lessons and staff focused on helping pupils to understand what they were doing and how to make progress. A strong emphasis was also placed on using correct vocabulary about the body (eg muscles, bones, joints). Over the course of the year, staff began to give pupils more responsibility for leading warm-up and cool-down activities, with more able pupils supporting those who could not manage alone.

A small group of pupils classed as obese were given an extra session each week on healthy and unhealthy food choices.

Entry level GCSE was introduced for more able pupils. One group worked specifically on its own personal fitness targets, with pupils regularly measuring their flexibility and strength and setting up their own fitness programmes.



## Impact

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Just under half (48%) of SLD pupils at Calthorpe are now classed as obese, a fall of 8%. This is extremely encouraging considering how difficult it is for anyone obese to lose a significant amount of weight in just nine months.

The school surpassed all of the targets it set itself for this investigation. Thirteen SLD pupils are now members of community sports clubs – a rise of 450% – and are involved in activities ranging from football and cricket to swimming and special Olympic clubs. Five have been selected to attend the gifted and talented camp at the local university. As a result of the success of this year's initiatives, more local clubs are showing an interest in becoming involved in catering for SLD pupils.

Participation in lunchtime clubs among the targeted pupils has more than doubled to 40%, while nearly four times as many are now members of after-school clubs than at the start of the year. Buying rowing machines has motivated more pupils to use the fitness suite at lunchtime and some have taken part in inter-school rowing competitions.

The use of core tasks and assessment for learning proved a great success. Pupils are now much more aware of their abilities, progress and what they need to do to improve. There has been a huge increase in their knowledge and awareness of their own bodies and their ability to answer questions about the effect of exercise. By the end of the year, many SLD pupils could identify and name muscle groups – a considerable achievement considering their learning difficulties. Others were able to explain that warm-ups increase the heart rate, which makes blood pump round the body more quickly and warms up muscles so that they can be stretched.

Enthusiasm, confidence, enjoyment and willingness to take part have all increased noticeably. In PE lessons, 60% of SLD pupils are now able to lead warm-up activities, 18% without support from a member of staff.

The SLD pupils have also made a lot of progress towards understanding the concept of healthy and unhealthy eating. Those classed as obese who were given extra lessons on healthy eating now choose fruit in preference to chocolate cake. The next step is to see if this can be extended beyond the controlled situation in school.

# Chips for breakfast?

**The school:** Cardinal Langley RC High School, a specialist sports college in north Manchester with approximately 1,100 pupils aged 11 to 18

**The objective:** To increase year 10 girls' participation in physical activity and help them understand its importance as part of a healthy, active lifestyle

## The starting point

Staff at Cardinal Langley were becoming concerned about a big drop in the number of girls participating in physical activity and opting for accredited courses in key stage 4. The problem seemed to begin in year 9, when there was a drop in attendance at extracurricular activities, with the same group of girls attending all the clubs. Feedback suggested that older girls felt that activities such as netball and volleyball were designed for athletic pupils with good body image, fitness and self-esteem.

Conversations with pupils and canteen staff revealed that large numbers of pupils were eating chips, sometimes twice a day (chips as the first meal of the day were not unusual). Pupils were choosing quick, cheap options without thinking about a balanced diet and some pupils were overweight or obese, with low self-esteem.

The school wanted to show pupils that exercise is available for everyone, not just 'sporty' types, and that physical activity can be an enjoyable, sociable activity with long-lasting effects.

## Action

To set the ball rolling, all year 10 girls attended a presentation on health, fitness, obesity, nutrition, dietary intake of calories and the effects of substance abuse (including alcohol and cigarettes). Body image was addressed and it was made clear to the girls that a happy medium between stick-like models and obesity could be achieved through fitness and healthy eating.

At the end of the session, staff invited the girls to apply to take part in a ten-week health and fitness programme. An initial 70 applicants were cut down to 40 after the completion of fitness tests and a health and lifestyle questionnaire on subjects such as sleep, diet and physical

activity undertaken. Some of the girls chosen made it clear from the outset that they were not confident enough to take part in all of the planned activities, which meant that there was a hard core of 30 with another 10 joining in some of the sessions.

The 10-week programme was made up of two sessions per week. The first of these was a workshop led by a nutritionist or visiting expert, which included cookery demonstrations of healthy recipes. The second was a taster session of physical activities such as dance, aerobics, aqua aerobics, pilates, yoga, circuit training, ice skating and mountain biking. Some sessions were held on Saturdays and involved visits to local facilities and fitness suites. A further optional lunchtime session was also held most weeks.

All of the girls taking part in the programme were given the opportunity to visit the Community Sports Officer (CSO) each week for individual, informal chats about sessions. The CSO also provided 60 individual plans for the pupils on sleep, nutrition and the need for breakfast to start the metabolism in the morning (these were based on the results of the initial screening). As a result of discussions with pupils and canteen staff, changes to sandwich options meant that pupils could order fillings of their choice before lunchtime. Free water bottles were provided for all pupils and staff encouraged their use, particularly in warm weather.

To complement the health and fitness programme, staff reviewed the overall key stage 4 PE curriculum and introduced a wider variety of activities in an attempt to re-engage disaffected pupils in PE lessons.



## Impact

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The health and fitness programme proved so popular that it was extended for the rest of the year (it was due to end just after Easter). All of the girls involved are still attending an activity session once per week as a group. They now arrive for PE lessons on time and with their kit, and participate with active enjoyment.

Whereas in the past few years 10 girls were taking part in extracurricular activities, 37 have started a Duke of Edinburgh bronze award (10 of whom were involved in the fitness programme). Seven have also opted for a short course GCSE next year and several more have joined junior gym activities out of school on their own initiative.

Canteen records show that fewer chips are being consumed and they are no longer on the menu every day. As a result of pupil consultation, there is a greater uptake of healthier options and sandwiches are made to order.

# Making lunchtimes active, challenging and fun

**The school:** Combs Ford Primary School, a large community first school in Suffolk with 520 pupils aged 5 to 9

**The objective:** To increase pupils' involvement in healthy, active lifestyles by making sure they were all participating in constructive physical activities at lunchtime

## The starting point

The school has a large playground, a large playing field and a quiet wooded area, but pupils were not playing constructively. Staff saw stereotypical playground behaviour: girls sitting down in groups, boys charging around kicking anything they could find.

## Action

The school conducted a survey among pupils and found that they wanted more structured activities at lunchtime.

Play leaders were employed to lead and supervise lunchtime activities and three zones were created in the playground:

- a 'small skills' zone for skills-based games such as skittles, hula hoops and beanbags
- a ball zone for ball-based games, such as throwing, catching and rolling
- a skipping zone.

The school also fenced off the Astroturf area and set up a rota so that every fortnight each class from years 1 to 4 could have a turn in there. It bought lots of fun and challenging equipment for this area such as bats and balls, Velcro hand balls, koosh balls, ski feet, wooden blocks, a balancing turtle: things that most pupils would not get the chance to use at home. Years 3 and 4 had access to all of this equipment plus kwik cricket, scatterball and rounders. Every Friday the class that had been most active and most responsible with the equipment was awarded a cup and an extra turn on the Astroturf.

Mini-goals were bought for the field and a lunchtime supervisor refereed informal football games. A group of year 4 pupils ran the skipping zone, leading activities,

designing their own badges and giving younger children skipping challenges, rhymes and games. Equipment bought for the skipping zone included one big rope, which needed an adult supervisor and a child to turn the ends, about 30 small ropes, Lo Lo balls, ankle skips and bar skipping ropes.

Staff talked about the Astroturf area during assemblies, demonstrated games and discussed how the school could make the playground a safe, fun, challenging place.

The lunchtime supervisors, supported by the PE coordinator and PESS consultant, set up challenges within the activity zones linked to core tasks that particular groups of pupils were working towards in PE lessons. For example, in the spring term, when pupils were working on a core task that focused on rolling, games like skittles were on offer in the playground.

Games were put onto laminated cards with pictures and basic instructions so that all pupils could access them. Staff also encouraged pupils to make up their own games on 'challenge cards'. These were such a huge success that every day at least two pupils asked the PE coordinator if they could write up their idea for a game or activity. They wrote down the rules, which were then typed onto a card, with a photo of the pupil demonstrating the activity, and the card was added to the pile in the playground. This was a great incentive for pupils to experiment with skills and ideas and it gave them a sense of achievement to see their idea in print and being used by other children.

The PE coordinator visited the playground at least twice a week taking photographs and chatting to pupils about what they were doing.



## Impact

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By the end of the school year more than 40% of pupils were joining in playground activities every day, compared with 24% at the start of the project. The numbers varied depending on the weather, which had a much greater influence than expected. In the autumn term, quite a few pupils did not want to play with slippery, muddy balls, saying their parents had complained about them coming home with dirty coats. The field was often out of use because it was too muddy.

Pupils began to associate the playground with keeping fit and having an active, healthy lifestyle. Seeing the PE coordinator out in the playground helped to emphasise this link. Pupils realised that being active and healthy was a good thing. When asked what they thought of the new activities they were all extremely positive and enthusiastic, saying that they made them 'feel good', they made you 'fit' and that they helped improve their PE skills. In response to being asked now what helps them keep fit and active they say 'the playground!'

Older pupils relished the opportunity to take responsibility for supervising playground activities at lunchtimes. As a result, their leadership skills improved.

# Active for life

**The school:** Golden Hillock School and Specialist Sports and Arts College, a mixed comprehensive in Birmingham with 850 pupils

**The objective:** To increase pupils' levels of physical activity with the aim of making a long-term impact on their involvement in a healthy, active lifestyle

## The starting point

Before the investigation began, pupils generally had a positive attitude to PE but tended to treat lessons as an enjoyable leisure activity. Participation rates stood at 100%, with very few incidences of pupils not bringing kit or being late for lessons. All pupils changed for lessons, even if injured or unfit, and took part as officials or leaders.

For cultural reasons, only 40 girls took part in out-of-hours activities compared to 240 boys. Parents were more ready to accept involvement in one-off activities than a regular club that meant girls were late home from school. Only 15 pupils at the school took part in community activities – 11 boys who played football and 4 girls who belonged to a basketball club. Pupils used community facilities in school time, but not independently. Of 20 pupils trained as playground leaders, only 8 went on to use their skills to lead activities. Just three boys helped out with inter-form sports, officiating in football matches.

Around 15% of pupils represented the school in sports activities. There was little celebration of pupils' sporting success throughout the school, with limited assembly opportunities. No photographs of pupils are displayed for cultural reasons.

A whole-school audit of the PESS high quality outcomes carried out by both pupils and teachers raised particular concerns about levels of confidence (outcome 4), skills (outcome 5), and stamina, suppleness and strength (outcome 9).

## Action

Staff began by reviewing and rewriting the key stage 3 schemes of work for PE to ensure that pupils of all abilities were able to reach their full potential through themes such as health, fitness, leadership and officiating. The new schemes of work were directly linked with the key stage 4 programme, which was also reviewed. Applied GCSE PE – an inclusive course that allows for personalised learning – was introduced in years 9 and 10.

A whole-school survey at the start of the year had revealed that girls tended to prefer less formal sessions to regular after-school clubs or events, so informal lunchtime sessions were set up for mixed sports to complement the school's existing programme of playground activities. Inter-form sports events were expanded to increase competitive opportunities and give pupils a chance to use their new organisational and officiating skills. A basketball event and a dance course were organised for the summer holidays to encourage more pupils to get involved. Fitness testing was carried out on all year 7, 8 and 10 pupils and those identified as vulnerable because of health or weight issues were offered personal training through a community outreach programme. Eight boys in year 7 identified as needing to take part in more physical activity, received personal training on Saturdays to increase their health, fitness and well-being.

Branded water bottles were introduced to school along with leaflets explaining why regular drinking of water is beneficial for pupils. To support this, the school canteen began to offer a more varied menu and is planning to start monitoring pupils' choices.



Communication and celebration played an important part in the school's investigation for the year. The results of the whole-school survey were displayed in the PE department to encourage pupils to share ownership of their learning. The monitoring process was also shared with heads of department, who are now planning to implement the procedures used by the PE team across the curriculum. Display boards with healthy-living slogans and photographs of physical activity were set up around the school, including displays designed specifically to attract girls to out-of-hours activities and events. Half-termly assemblies were held to celebrate pupils' sporting successes and regular participation in events and lessons.

The PE team sees the involvement of staff as central to the success of the new emphasis on healthy, active lifestyles. Staff were given advice on health and well-being on their annual INSET health day. Weekly fitness and aerobics sessions set up for non-specialist members of staff were well attended.

## Impact

Pupils' levels of participation in, and enthusiasm for, PE and sport rose considerably as a result of all the initiatives introduced by the school. The number of girls taking part in out-of-hours activities grew from 40 to 60, a significant increase in an area where after-school activities have always proved problematic for cultural reasons. A further 50 girls regularly attended lunchtime sessions of mixed sports. Twice as many pupils represented the school in sports activities – 160 boys and 90 girls. The impact on participation in community activities was even more marked, with the number of pupils taking part rising from just 15 to 50.

The new key stage 3 schemes of work meant that pupils with physical disabilities were able to participate more effectively. Confidence in leadership roles increased considerably – boys who in the past preferred to show performance skills began to volunteer to umpire games such as hockey. Ten boys in year 11 helped to organise and run inter-form football as part of their Junior Football Organiser Award. The eight playground leaders were joined by a further eight volunteers and together they helped to plan a Sport Relief Day.

To evaluate whether the investigation had made any impact on the proportion of pupils achieving the PESS high quality outcomes, the school asked pupils to complete a questionnaire at the start and end of the year. Results were positive across all areas:

- commitment (outcome 1) – 91% (up 19%)
- understanding (outcome 2) – 86% (up 10%)
- healthy, active lifestyles (outcome 3) – 96% (up 2%)
- confidence (outcome 4) – 76% (up 23%)
- skills and control (outcome 5) – 79% (up 25%)
- willingness to take part in a range of activities (outcome 6) – 86% (up 12%)
- thinking and decision making (outcome 7) – 84% (up 27%)
- desire to improve (outcome 8) – 93% (up 4%)
- stamina, suppleness and strength (outcome 9) – 80% (up 28%)
- enjoyment (outcome 10) – 90% (up 13%).

Plans are already well underway to build on this year's achievements. A senior teacher has been given a remit on health issues and a working group has been set up to develop a whole-school health ethos. As part of their induction programme, year 6 pupils moving to Golden Hillock in September 2006 were introduced to the playground activities on offer during PE lessons. Once at the school, there will be an emphasis on health awareness rather than fitness testing for the new year 7 pupils.

# Eat well – get active!

**The school:** South Hetton Primary School, an average-sized school in an ex-coliery village near Durham

**The objective:** To increase pupils' involvement in healthy, active lifestyles

## The starting point

The school was concerned about pupils' lifestyle and the effect this was having on their health and concentration.

An analysis of packed lunches showed unbalanced meals, with too many sweet things and low levels of fruit. Less than half of pupils brought in water bottles. Although science lessons involved discussions of healthy eating and the benefits of a balanced diet, there was little sign of pupils putting theory into practice.

Around 40 out of 260 pupils attended the three after-school clubs on offer (cricket, football and hockey). The school had just one weak link with a community club and no specific provision for gifted and talented pupils. There were no structured playground activities and no measures in place to support pupils' emotional well-being.

## Action

The school began by tackling pupils' eating habits. Its breakfast club promoted healthy eating at the start of the day, providing continental breakfasts, toast, cereal, dried fruit and porridge. The tuck shop started selling fruit and juice instead of crisps, and a new rule banned any sweets being brought into school. A parents' meeting was arranged with the Primary Care Trust to offer advice on healthy packed lunches and a representative from ASDA worked with year 3 and 4 pupils on healthy sandwiches. As part of a 'health week', the school caterers were persuaded to promote the benefits of a healthy cooked dinner by providing a free school meal for children who usually brought in packed lunch. Pupils learnt about the 'five-a-day' strategy through a pack of activities and worksheets, and teachers focused on specific items in their classes to reinforce the message. All staff attended courses and INSET days as part of work towards the Healthy Schools standard.

In its drive to increase physical activity, the school looked at the PE curriculum and decided to increase time spent on PE to almost two and three-quarter hours in year 5 and over two hours for other year groups. It also started an 'Early Birds' daily exercise session with the direct goal of increasing pupils' concentration.

The range of after-school clubs on offer was extended to include multi-skills, a gifted and talented academy, curling and year 6 swimming. A fitness instructor was employed (with Behaviour Improvement Programme and Community Learning funding) to provide training in health and fitness issues and to run clubs at break times. All activities were advertised to pupils and parents online and through newsletters, school notice-boards and assemblies.

A number of outside agencies were brought in to motivate pupils and provide high quality activities both during and after school. The Sunderland Association Football Club 'football fitness' initiative – a weekly one-hour session including theory on the importance of a balanced diet – was introduced in years 5 and 6. The Club also launched an after-school club at South Hetton and provided skills sessions in PE lessons for children from reception to year 4. Peterlee Pumas provided rugby league coaching to key stage 2 pupils during curriculum time and, due to its success, set up an after-school club for years 4 and 5. Shotton Hall Performing Arts School offered a street dance club for boys and organised a performance at a local dance festival. Durham University provided cricket coaching that involved 65 pupils and included a competition after school.

To support the new emphasis on physical health, the school developed links with Place to Be (P2B) at Easington Colliery Primary School, where a counsellor is on hand to work with a number of identified children from the school.



## Impact

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An analysis of pupils' break and lunchtime eating habits showed that 25% more pupils were avoiding sweet foods and 50% more fruit was being brought in by the end of the year. Staff reported that 80-90% of pupils now bring in water bottles (compared to less than half before the project began).

As a result of extending PE time and introducing new school sport activities, the school has achieved Activemark Gold. Some of the after-school clubs are so popular that places have to be rotated to accommodate the large number of pupils who want to participate. The school has achieved considerable sporting success as a result of the new levels of physical activity: the cricket team reached the county finals, athletes were very successful at the county athletics festival and rugby league teams put in good performances at local competitions. Several pupils have gone on to join community clubs.

The improvement in pupils' lifestyle has been reflected in their behaviour and attitude to learning. Behavioural incidents at lunchtime have fallen by 10% and staff report better behaviour and more focused work in afternoon sessions. There was a marked improvement in the behaviour of some particularly disaffected boys in years 5 and 6. Teachers have commented on pupils being more alert in class and have noticed the difference that the Early Birds exercises have made to their concentration in the morning.