

Children and Young People Committee: Inquiry into Childhood Obesity

Estyn evidence

There is widespread recognition of the need to tackle obesity in children through encouraging **physical activity and better diet** in schools. Estyn recognises the central role that schools, together with parents and other bodies, have in tackling obesity in children in Wales. Schools have a particularly important role in helping young people to have a clear understanding of the importance of a healthy and balanced diet as well as a commitment to an active lifestyle in preventing and reducing obesity levels among children and young people.

Physical activity in schools

Government and schools should continue to reinforce the importance of physical activity and encourage more physical activity in schools. 'Creating an Active Wales' (Welsh Government 2009) emphasises the provision of high-quality physical education and the effective delivery of physical literacy as essential for young people to develop the skills and confidence for lifelong participation in sport and physical recreation. It identifies well-delivered and appropriately designed physical education programmes, complemented by a range of school-based activities, as critical factors in helping children and young people to live active lives and become active adults. This aim is reinforced in the Welsh Government's 'Programme for Government 2011-2016' (Welsh Government 2011), which sets out its commitment to promote physical activity for people of all ages.

In the last decade, Estyn has carried out several thematic surveys about physical education and school sport. These include:

- The management of safety in physical education and outdoor activities - April 2005
- PE and School Sport Initiative: Progress in the implementation in Development Centre schools in Wales 2004-2005
- PE and School Sport Action Plan: An in depth look at progress made in the implementation of the PESS Action Plan – 2006
- Progress made in the implementation of the PE and School Sport Action Plan in schools - March 2007
- Girls' participation in physical activity in schools - July 2007
- Progress in implementing the Physical Education and School Sport Action Plan - May 2008
- Physical education for pupils with learning difficulties: identifying good practice - February 2009
- Physical education in secondary schools - February 2012

These reports include references to the contribution physical education and school sport can make to helping reduce levels of obesity. In particular, Estyn has produced four reports on the progress made in the implementation of the PESS Action Plan, which was introduced in 2001. The most recent report ('Progress in implementing

the physical education and school sport action plan') was published in 2008. This report stated that in most primary schools, pupils of all ages know about the physical, social and mental benefits of physical activity and can explain the importance and benefits of exercise to a healthy lifestyle.

As part of the PESS initiative a health-related exercise development group has produced a range of high-quality and comprehensive resources. These resources focus directly on improving pupils' learning and understanding of health and well-being issues. The material is consistent with the health-related exercise requirements of the National Curriculum including related science and personal and social education requirements. The resources include a comprehensive and well-designed series of progressive tasks, related to different areas of physical education, that address specific health-related exercise learning outcomes. There is a very clear focus on the social, mental and physical benefits of exercise and a healthy lifestyle.

A report published by Estyn in 2007 entitled 'Girls' participation in physical education in schools' drew attention to national concerns about girls' levels of participation and the effectiveness of initiatives to increase girls' participation in physical activity. The report noted that many factors including the historical development of sports, peer pressure, parental attitudes and the coverage of women's sport in the media all influence the take up of physical activities by girls in school. The report indicated that many physical education teachers offer a predominantly traditional team games programme and said that many girls would prefer greater variety including more creative and fitness activities. As a result, in some schools, there are significant numbers of girls who find excuses to avoid participating in physical education, especially in key stage 4.

The report made a number of recommendations, for example that schools should:

- acknowledge the importance of physical activity for all by raising the profile of sport and physical activity in school;
- consult with girls and make every effort to offer the activities within the physical education curriculum that girls want to do; and
- make a wider range of activities available, other than traditional team games, including at lunch times and after school.

While many schools have modified the curriculum and extended the range of learning experiences, partly as a result of the 5x60 initiative, schools still need to do more to increase girls' participation in physical activity.

In February 2012, Estyn published a report on 'Physical education in secondary schools'. The report stated that:

- Many pupils have a sound appreciation of the short-term and long-term effects of exercise on the body. In a few cases, pupils display a well-developed understanding of the key principles that underpin health and fitness.
- In many lessons, pupils are physically active although the degree of intensity varies according to the nature of the activity. However, in a few lessons, pupils are not active enough and there is a lack of intensity in their work, which leads to a loss of interest.

- In many schools, key stage 3 pupils receive two hours of physical education each week. This is generally the case in each year group although, in a few schools, Year 9 pupils have less than two hours a week.
- At key stage 4, very few schools provide two hours of physical education as part of pupils' core provision and entitlement. In almost all schools visited, key stage 4 pupils have just one hour of core physical education each week. This restricts opportunities for these pupils to become informed and competent participants in physical activity.
- Most schools offer pupils a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. The 5x60 initiative has been particularly successful in complementing and extending the more traditional, largely team-based programmes that most schools offered. Activities such as aerobics, street dance, pilates, zumba and boxercise have had a positive impact on girls' participation levels.
- The 5x60 initiative has also contributed well to improving and extending links with local sports clubs and organisations. However, too often there has not been a close enough link with local clubs and organisations, which has prevented enthusiastic pupils developing their interests further.
- Most schools are promoting healthy lifestyles well in their physical education programmes. A few schools have particularly well-designed cross-curricular arrangements to develop pupils' awareness and appreciation of the key concepts and behaviours that underpin healthy lifestyles. However, few schools plan this work systematically to co-ordinate learning experiences across subject areas.

The report recommends that physical education departments in schools should make sure that lessons provide suitable opportunities for pupils to be physically active and engage in sustained physical activity.

The report also recommends that local authorities should use the 5x60 initiative to promote more effective links with local clubs and organisations to promote healthy lifestyles and lifelong participation in sport and physical recreation.

Estyn considers that every child is entitled to a high-quality physical education programme. The promotion of physical literacy should be a priority in all schools. Physical literacy is an outcome of a high-quality physical education programme and extensive and well-planned provision for school and community sport and physical recreation.

Estyn believes that in regard to improving physical literacy and increasing levels of physical activity among children and young people, it is important that all schools meet the government's expectation of a minimum of two hours high-quality physical education each week.

Children and young people will only develop active lifestyles if their curricular and extra-curricular experiences in schools help them to acquire the competence, skills and confidence to participate regularly in sport within the community and when they leave school.

A critical aspect of this is to ensure that every primary teacher receives an appropriate level of training as part of their initial teacher training that enables them to deliver high-quality and enjoyable lessons and learning experiences that engage

and inspire pupils. This is not currently the case although the PESS initiative has done much good work in tackling this deficit and improving levels of competence among primary teachers.

Better diet and schools

Estyn has also produced two reports during the last five years relating to food and fitness:

- Food and fitness in schools - May 2008
- Food and fitness in schools: An update - April 2009

The main findings relating to what schools can do to encourage more healthy eating and drinking among their pupils are as follows:

Breakfast clubs, particularly in primary schools, have a positive impact on the health and well-being, behaviour, punctuality and attendance of the pupils who participate.

The quality of the dining experience affects whether or not pupils choose to have a school meal. Pupils are more likely to have a school meal where:

- food is freshly prepared;
- queues are not too long;
- the dinner break is long enough;
- the dining hall is attractive, warm and clean and not overcrowded or noisy;
- there are small tables and individual chairs rather than long tables with fixed seats;
- food is served on individual plates and bowls rather than on all-in-one trays; and
- members of staff dine at tables with pupils.

Many schools have kitchens that require investment in new facilities. A few schools do not have kitchens on site and meals are prepared elsewhere and transported to the school; the delay between the cooking and serving of food results in meals that are less appealing for pupils.

Pupils who are allowed off-site at lunch times often buy food in local shops and cafes. Whilst this can be cheaper it is usually not as nutritious as food provided in school. Pupils who are eligible for free school meals often do not take up their free meal if they are allowed off-site, because they wish to be with their friends.

All schools have improved the range of healthy food and drinks on offer in recent years. Almost all offer healthy options at breakfast clubs, tuck shops, snack bars, canteens and vending machines. Even so, most schools still sell food and drinks of little nutritional value as well.

Almost all schools provide opportunities for pupils to learn about healthy living issues as part of the curriculum. As a result, pupils generally have a sound knowledge and understanding of healthy living. However, in a majority of the schools surveyed,

there are not enough facilities to teach pupils how to cook and prepare food for themselves.

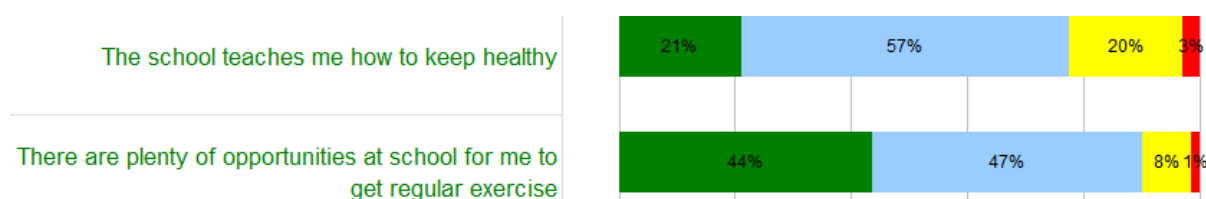
Many schools do not coordinate learning about healthy living effectively across the curriculum. This can lead to repetition and the use of confusingly different models to explain the right balance of foods in a healthy diet. Most members of staff who are responsible for coordinating healthy living work receive enough training but this is usually focused on teaching aspects of healthy living rather coordinating the delivery of healthy living work across the school.

Pupil questionnaires

During this current cycle of inspections starting in September 2010 we have for the first time asked pupils questions relating to healthy living. The learner questionnaire asks two questions directly related to healthy living:

- the school teaches me how to keep healthy; and
- there are plenty of opportunities at school for me to get regular exercise.

The responses to the questionnaires and discussions with learners provide useful evidence on learners' wellbeing and for the school's provision for wellbeing. The outcomes for these questions for secondary schools during the last three years based on some 15,000 pupils answers are as follows:



The Healthy Eating in Schools (Wales) Measure 2009

From September 2013, inspectors will be required to reflect the 'The Healthy Eating in Schools (Wales) Measure 2009' which requires all local authorities and maintained schools in Wales to promote healthy eating and drinking. The Measure came into force for maintained primary schools, maintained secondary and special schools and pupil referral units in September 2013

The Measure requires governors to take action to promote healthy eating and drinking, to include information on how this is being done in their annual report; and to have regard to any guidance produced by the Welsh Government.

The Measure requires Estyn to consider the actions taken by schools to promote healthy eating and drinking.

We have amended our guidance on inspecting healthy living and from September 2013 inspectors will need to:

- check that the governors include their arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking in their annual report to parents;

- ask pupils about whether the school encourages them to eat healthily; and
- note any obvious breaches of regulation, such as vending machines that have fizzy drinks, chocolate bars and crisps.

If arrangements meet requirements then inspectors will include in the main evaluation for 2.3 this statement:

“The school has the appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.”

If the school does not demonstrate compliance then the following statement will be used:

“The school does not make appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.”

If there are shortcomings then these need to be identified in the main evaluation and detailed in the supporting evidence for 2.3.1. Shortcomings may affect the overall judgment for 2.3 Care, support and guidance. It may also affect the judgement for leadership as the governors have a responsibility to make arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

The following questions are offered as guidance to inspectors on how to inspect healthy living during school inspections.

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

1.2 Wellbeing

- Do learners have a good understanding of the importance of healthy living and fitness?
- Do learners take part in the opportunities provided to develop healthy living and fitness?
- Do learners show enjoyment in these activities?
- To what extent do learners contribute to the school’s work on healthy living?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

2.1 Learning experiences

- Are pupils given the opportunity to develop their awareness and understanding of healthy living through the curriculum and through extra-curricular work and projects?
- Do pupils have opportunities to develop and extend their awareness and understanding of healthy living in subjects other than PE, PSE and design technology?

2.2 Teaching

- Do teachers exploit opportunities to develop pupils’ understanding of healthy living?

2.3 Care, support and guidance

- Is the school effectively promoting healthy life styles?
- Is the school engaged in initiatives that promote healthy living?
- Has the school gained any awards for its work in promoting healthy living?
- Does the school ensure that any out-of-school-hours provision supports its work on healthy living?

- Does the school have an effective and realistic policy related to healthy living?2.4 Learning environment
- Does the school environment, including dining areas, sports facilities and public areas promote healthy living?
- Does the school have good facilities for healthy eating and physical activity?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

3.1 Leadership

- How well does the school communicate its promotion of healthy living to the pupils, parents and the wider community?

3.2 Improving quality

- How does the school measure the impact of its work on healthy living on pupil outcomes, including attitudes and behaviours?

3.3 Partnership working

- How well does the school work in partnership with others to develop learners healthy living?

3.4 Resource management

- Is the staff trained well enough to promote healthy living?
- Does the school staff have a good understanding of healthy living?

Full details of current guidance on inspecting healthy living is available at <http://www.estyn.gov.uk/download/publication/10128.3/supplementary-guidance-on-inspecting-healthy-living-including-physical-activity-and-food-and-drink-september-2010/>