

Increasing participation to tackle the onset of obesity: 'Get Active, Get Moving'

Netherhall (Cambridgeshire) School Sport Partnership



Workshop 8



What we wanted to do:

At a local level we wanted to help tackle the onset of obesity in children under the age of 11. Statistics show that a huge percentage of children (particularly girls) remain inactive in life if they are inactive at the age of 9 years old. We wanted to reach this group of youngsters and increase their participation in physical activity.



What we did:

A part-time Wider Community Co-ordinator was appointed for 6 hours per week, and a working group was formed. The group incorporated PLTs, School Health Co-ordinators, local authority Sport Development Officers, a Dietician and Child and Family Nurse.

Year 4 pupils were targeted with a two-week pedometer challenge for all 6 schools (350 pupils) and their staff (85), to coincide with the Commonwealth Games in March 2006. Subsequent challenges on national events such as The Ashes, Tour de France and Rugby World Cup have taken place. A similar challenge based around the Football World Cup was held with year 6 pupils.

Cross-curricular resources around event locations were provided, along with resources for data collection, maps and pedometers. Class, individual and most improved walker challenges were set and physical activity based prizes were awarded. All schools participated in the 'Walk to School Week' in the summer term.

A 'Health Check in Centre' based around the 'Healthy Lunchbox' was also piloted at one primary school during their Open Evening. A dietician was on hand to offer food advice.

Following the pedometer challenge we set up Activ8. The results of the pedometer challenge helped to identify the least active children. Each school was then asked to recommend 5 children to take part that had a low activity level and were passive in PE lessons and/or inactive in OSHL club.

A 12-week Activ8 pilot was run using Top Activity. The session's included 45 minutes of physical activity and a 15 minute session on a healthy lifestyle topic with information sheets to take home. During the latter few weeks of the course we worked with each child to try to integrate them into an after-school or community club.

The difference it made:

- Over 1600 children have engaged in a pedometer challenge. Some children were so motivated by the challenge they bought their own pedometers and still continue to track their daily steps. More children now show a greater understanding of the need for regular physical activity.
- Eleven of the 16 schools that took part have incorporated 'Take Ten' into their curriculum for the whole school. This means 2420 primary-aged youngsters now participate in 10 minutes of additional daily exercise. Other partnership schools have heard about its success and 6 more schools have introduced 'Take Ten' across the whole school this year.
- Participation in year 4 OSHL has increased by an average 9%. One of the individual winners' whole family joined Next Generation fitness club as a result of their prize!
- Activ8 has been successful in it's first pilot club with children enjoying the non-traditional activity. The children grew in confidence during the club; they took on board the healthy living information and tried to increase their daily activity levels to achieve 60 minutes per day.
- The low socio-economic and BME mix of participants illustrated involvement of children who may not have been active before. Following the pilot club three of the children enrolled on summer activity courses.

It worked because:

Establishing the working group, involving local authority partners, empowered the participants to contribute to the decision making process and provided a sense of ownership to the project. It also provided a non-school specific approach.

Approaches to the activities differed but were specific to needs i.e. the mass participation approach of the pedometer challenges worked to provide motivation and an element of competition, whilst Activ8 worked well because it was a small, very personal group of inactive children with an emphasis on having fun.

