



Public Health  
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

# **National Child Measurement Programme 2016**

## **Information for schools**

For headteachers

# About Public Health England

Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. It does this through world-class science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. PHE is an operationally autonomous executive agency of the Department of Health.

The National Child Measurement Programme is focused on tackling childhood obesity in England. Local authorities have a statutory responsibility for delivering the programme, and school participation is voluntary. This advice is primarily for school leaders, school staff and governing bodies in state-maintained schools and academies. It may also be useful for local authorities and parents. It explains the purpose of the programme and what schools can do to support delivery of the programme locally.

If you have queries about the National Child Measurement Programme, you can email Public Health England at [ncmp@phe.gov.uk](mailto:ncmp@phe.gov.uk).

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## Executive summary

- 1.1 The National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) is an annual programme, delivered by local authorities, which involves measuring the height and weight of all school children in reception and year 6. Over 99% of eligible state-maintained schools across England, including academies, participate in the NCMP.
- 1.2 Delivering the NCMP provides vital information that enables local authorities and their partners to plan for and invest in key services to tackle obesity and its wider determinants. It also helps to raise parents' awareness of overweight and obesity, its consequences and healthy lifestyle choices.
- 1.3 The NCMP 2011-12 data show that over one fifth of reception and one third of year 6 children are overweight or obese.<sup>1</sup> Children who are overweight or obese are more likely to develop illnesses such as type 2 diabetes and to go on to experience weight and health problems in adolescence and later life.
- 1.4 Being overweight or obese does not only endanger children's health. It can affect their attendance at school, their learning and their academic achievement. It may also call for extra staff training to ensure that children with health conditions can be appropriately supported during the school day.
- 1.5 Support from schools is crucial to delivering the NCMP. This guidance provides information for school leaders, staff, governing bodies and academies on key tasks that schools can help with to ensure the programme runs smoothly.

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<sup>1</sup> The Health and Social Care Information Centre. National Child Measurement Programme: England, 2011/12 School Year. London: Health and Social Care Information Centre. December 2012.

# Overview of the NCMP

## What is the NCMP?

- 2.1 The NCMP was established in 2006. Over 99% of eligible state-maintained schools, including academies, participate in the programme on a voluntary basis. Every year, over one million children in reception and year 6 have their height and weight measured in schools as part of the programme.
- 2.2 From 1 April 2013, Public Health England (PHE) took on responsibility for national oversight of the NCMP from the Department of Health. At the same time, the surveillance components of the programme became a mandated public health function of local authorities, as they took on responsibility for improving public health.
- 2.3 Data collected through the NCMP is returned to the Health and Social Care Information Centre (acting on behalf of the NHS and social care to collect and analyse health data), where it is analysed. A report summarising local and national data is then published. Local areas use this high-quality data to inform the delivery of services to tackle child obesity. Nationally it is used to track trends in child obesity levels over time and to inform policy.
- 2.4 Individual height and weight measurements are also shared with each child's parents. This helps to encourage parents to monitor their child's growth and to adopt healthier lifestyle behaviours. Because many children in England are now overweight, parents and health professionals often cannot tell just by looking at a child whether he or she is a healthy weight. This is why taking an objective measurement through the NCMP and sharing that information with parents is important.

## Why should schools participate?

- 2.5 National data from the NCMP show that obesity prevalence roughly doubles from 9.5% of children at the start of primary school to 19.2% at the end of primary school (that is between reception and year 6). Children who are overweight or obese are more likely to develop a variety of illnesses in childhood and later life, such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular problems, respiratory illnesses, joint and movement problems, and psychological disorders. But health is not the only issue. Overweight children can also be affected by:

- teasing or bullying
- behavioural problems stemming from anxiety or depression
- avoidance of active play or learning opportunities in school sport and PE.

This can have an impact on:

- a child's attendance, as they may need to miss school for medical appointments or treatment
- a child's learning and academic achievement

- staff training and expertise, as staff will need to provide extra support to children with health problems arising from overweight and obesity (for example, type 2 diabetes) to ensure they manage their condition effectively during the school day.

- 2.6 Supporting the delivery of the NCMP in your school ensures that vital information is available to help local authorities and their partners plan, target and deliver services to prevent and manage overweight and obesity in children – and in turn address the issues set out above.
- 2.7 Information on the prevalence of school overweight and obesity, compared with local or regional averages, can be shared with schools. This data, in conjunction with action taken by local authorities, can be used to make a real difference in preventing the continued increase of overweight and obesity in children from reception to year six, benefiting not only the health and wellbeing of pupils but also their learning and achievement in school.

## The role and responsibilities of local authorities

3.1 From 1 April 2013, local authorities became responsible for delivering the NCMP as part of the government's public health reforms. Local authorities, or the provider organisations they commission, will follow the process shown in Figure 1 when implementing the programme and in doing so will be responsible for:

- **ensuring that a healthcare professional oversees implementation** of the programme
- **securing the class-list information on children in reception and year 6**, including school name, unique reference number, pupil name, sex, date of birth, ethnicity code, home postcode, home address and home telephone number, by liaising either directly with schools or with their local authority education officer
- **developing and disseminating a pre-measurement letter to parents.** The NCMP is operated on an opt-out basis, so local authorities must ensure that parents are given adequate opportunity to withdraw their child from the programme. Some areas do this by liaising with schools to disseminate a letter through the pupil post (see Annex 1 for an example of this letter)
- **raising awareness of the programme among parents, school leaders and staff, children and governors.** Many NCMP leads will seek to include short articles in school newsletters, provide governors with information and deliver assemblies to ensure parents, children and teachers understand what the programme involves and why it is done (an example of information about the programme that may be covered by these activities is included in Annex 2)
- **planning the logistics of measuring children's height and weight** and liaising with schools to arrange appropriate days and times to take measurements
- **taking the height and weight measurements** of children in reception and year 6
- **returning the data collected** to the Health and Social Care Information Centre
- **providing parents with feedback**, within six weeks of measurement, either in the form of a letter (see Annex 3 for an example) and/or through a telephone call and/or electronic means. The feedback provides parents with individually tailored information on their child's height, weight and body mass index (BMI) centile classification (underweight, healthy weight, overweight, very overweight), together with signposts to sources of support and advice
- **providing schools with feedback** on how overweight and obesity prevalence in their results compare with the local or regional average

Figure 1: Overview of the key delivery elements of the NCMP

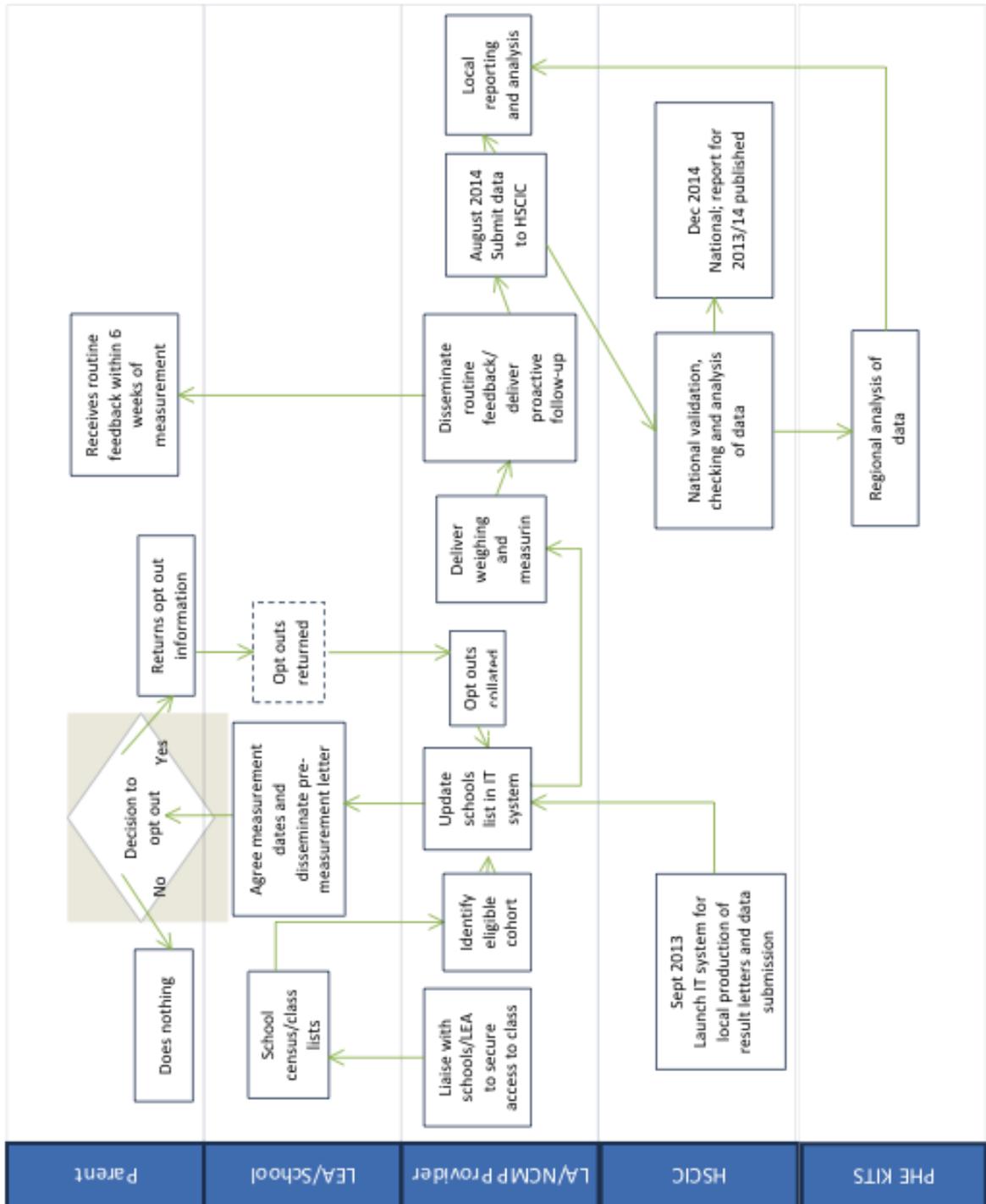


Figure 1. Overview of the key delivery elements of the NCMP

## Supporting delivery of the NCMP in your school

4.1 Your local authority is responsible for delivering the NCMP. However, the programme has been most successful in areas where schools have provided support. Therefore, local NCMP leads may contact your school to ask for your help by:

- **providing them with a class list for all children in reception and year 6**, containing the school name, unique reference number and the name, sex, date of birth, ethnicity code, home postcode, home address and home telephone number of each pupil
- **letting them know if there are any children on the class list who are not eligible to participate in the height and weight measurement exercise** because they are unable to stand unaided. The NCMP lead can make alternative arrangements for these children (an example letter that local areas can send to parents or carers of children who are unable to take part because they cannot stand unaided is included in Annex 4)
- **facilitating the dissemination of the pre-measurement letter**. The local authority is responsible for ensuring that parents are given a reasonable opportunity to opt their child out of the programme and may seek your support to send a pre-measurement letter through the pupil post (an example of this letter is in Annex 1)
- **letting the local authority know if any parents have opted their child out**. Although parents will be asked to let the local authority know if they have chosen to opt out, some parents may respond directly to the school. Relaying this information to the NCMP lead will ensure that parents' wishes are respected
- **confirming a convenient day and time for NCMP staff to come into the school** to measure the height and weight of children in reception and year 6
- **raising awareness of the NCMP**. The NCMP has been successful in areas where governors, parents and children have a good understanding and awareness of the programme and its importance. The local NCMP lead may liaise with you to arrange an assembly where the NCMP lead can talk to children about the programme; put up NCMP posters around the school; include an article on the NCMP in the school newsletter; share information on the programme with governors
- **providing a room where children's height and weight can be measured** and supervising children's movement to and from the room. It is important that each child's height and weight is measured in privacy, without being seen or heard by other pupils. Schools will need to identify a private area, with adequate space and appropriate flooring (ie, level, non-carpeted flooring to ensure that scales give an accurate reading). If a separate room is not available, a screened-off area can be used

# Appendix 1: Specimen pre-measurement letter to parents and carers

Local public health teams delivering the NCMP should use this specimen letter to send to parents and carers of children eligible for inclusion in the 2013-14 NCMP. This template may be amended to suit local needs; however the wording shown in bold should be followed closely because this sets out the legal requirements for the programme and the intended use of the data, and due effort must be made to inform parents and carers of this.

Local authorities may wish to produce the letter in other languages or formats depending on the needs of parents and carers in their area. We recommend that a copy of the leaflet for parents and carers 'Why your child's weight matters' is enclosed with the letter.

## **Measuring the height and weight of children in reception year and Year 6**

It is important to have a good understanding of how children are growing, so that the best possible advice and support can be provided for them and their families. Helping children to achieve a healthy weight is both a national and local priority.

Children in England in reception year and year 6 have their height and weight measured and your child's class will take part in this year's measurement programme. **The measurements will be supervised by trained healthcare professionals. Children are fully dressed except for their coats and shoes and the measurements will be done in a private area away from other pupils.**

**Routine data, such as your child's name, sex, address, postcode, ethnicity and date of birth, will also be collected. This information will then be used within the local authority and NHS to help us plan the provision of advice and support for children and their families in your area. We may store the information on your child's health record. No child's height or weight measurements will be given to school staff or other children.**

**These data will also be submitted for national analysis and publication, in a way that means individual children cannot be directly identified. All information and results will be treated confidentially.**

After the measurement, we will send you your child's results as well as general advice on healthy eating and being active. *[where pro-active follow-up is implemented this should be identified]*

## **Opting your child out of the programme**

If you are happy for your child to be weighed and measured, **you do not need to do anything**. If you do not want your child to take part, please let us know using the contact details at the top of this letter. Children will not be made to participate if they do not want to.

Yours faithfully

[Insert name]  
Director of Public Health

[Insert name]  
Director of Children's Services

## Appendix 2: Questions and answers on the NCMP

### 1. What is the NCMP?

Every year in England more than a million children in reception and year 6 have their height and weight measured as part of the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP). If your child is in reception or year 6, you should receive a letter with more information about the programme in your child's school.

Trained staff will measure your child's height and weight at school. They will take care to ensure that the measurements are done sensitively and in private, and your child's results will not be shared with teachers or other children. Your child does not have to take part, but we urge you to encourage your child to do so.

### 2. Why is it important for all eligible children to take part?

Almost one in three children in England is overweight or obese by age 11. With so many children affected, an overweight child may not look that different from their friends. Accordingly, we tend not to notice when a child is overweight and we are beginning to see heavier children as the norm. This is why an objective measurement of how a child is growing is useful.

Collectively, information about children's weight helps to build a national and local picture on how they are growing. The more children that take part, the clearer that picture will be. The information collected is used to help plan and provide better health and leisure services for children in your area.

### 3. Will parents be given their child's results and what will the results tell them?

How parents get their children's results will depend on how the programme is run in your area. Most areas will send all parents a letter with the results, while in some parents may need to ask for the results. The letter telling you about the programme in your child's school will advise you of this.

The result will tell you your child's height and weight when they were measured and whether this means they are underweight, a healthy weight or overweight for their age, sex and height. The letter will also include details for getting further advice and support to help your family lead a healthy lifestyle.

### 4. What happens to the results?

Results from all the schools in your area will be gathered together and held securely by your local public health team. Some of the information will be sent to the Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC). The HSCIC collects and holds health data on behalf of the NHS and social care. This information is used to produce reports and information to develop services that help families lead healthy lifestyles.

### 5. Why is a healthy weight important?

Research shows that modern living makes it more difficult to be a healthy weight. If we carry on as we are, many children may grow up with dangerous amounts of fat in their bodies, putting them at a greater risk of developing cancer, type 2 diabetes and heart disease in later life.

Because it is not easy to tell just by looking if a child is overweight, the results can help parents make decisions about their children's lifestyles and make simple changes if necessary.

To help your child achieve and maintain a healthy weight, encourage the whole family to enjoy eating healthily and being active. Children who see their parents, grandparents and carers following a healthy and active lifestyle tend to join in and learn by example. These habits become a normal part of everyday life for the whole family.

## Appendix 3: Specimen result letters to parents and carers

Local authorities can use these template result letters when sharing results with parents. The templates can be edited if required to suit local preferences. It is recommended that the HSCIC's NCMP IT system is used to generate the result letters, as this will help with filling the templates with the relevant information for each child. The letters should be posted to parents as soon as possible (at most within six weeks of measurement).

### Underweight

#### Private and confidential

Parent/Carer of «Child\_Firstname» «Child\_Surname»  
 «Child\_Address1»  
 «Child\_Address2»  
 «Child\_Address3»  
 «Child\_Postcode»

«LA\_Name»  
 «LA\_Address1»  
 «LA\_Address2»  
 «LA\_Address3»  
 «LA\_Postcode»  
 Tel: «LA\_Telephone»  
 Email: «LA\_Email»

[Date]

NHS number [Optional]

Dear Parent / Carer of «Pupil's first name» «Pupil's last name»,

We recently sent you a letter about measuring «Pupil's first name»'s height and weight in school as part of the National Child Measurement Programme. The measurements have now been done.

Seeing if your child's weight is within the healthy range for their age, sex and height can help you make informed choices about their lifestyle.

«Pupil's first name»'s results	
Height (cm)	«Height»
Weight (kg)	«Weight»
Date of measurement	«DOM»

These results suggest that your child is underweight for their age, sex and height. Many underweight children are perfectly healthy, but some can develop health problems.

If you would like to speak to one of us about your child's result, please call us on [phone number].

You can find out how «Pupil's first name»'s result was calculated, and check how Anna is growing over time, by going to [www.nhs.uk/bmi](http://www.nhs.uk/bmi).

This information has not been shared with «Pupil's first name», other children or school staff. Locally, this information is held by your [local NHS/local authority public health team] and is treated confidentially.

**Thank you for reading this letter - we hope this information is useful to you. If you need any help or advice, please call us on the number above.**

Yours sincerely,  
[Sender name]

## Healthy Weight

### Private and confidential

Parent/Carer of «Child\_Firstname» «Child\_Surname»  
«Child\_Address1»  
«Child\_Address2»  
«Child\_Address3»  
«Child\_Postcode»

«LA\_Name»  
«LA\_Address1»  
«LA\_Address2»  
«LA\_Address3»  
«LA\_Postcode»  
Tel: «LA\_Telephone»  
Email: «LA\_Email»

[Date]

NHS number [Optional]

Dear Parent / Carer of «Pupil's first name» «Pupil's last name»,

We recently sent you a letter about measuring «Pupil's first name»'s height and weight in school as part of the National Child Measurement Programme. The measurements have now been done.

Seeing if your child's weight is within the healthy range for their age, sex and height can help you make informed choices about their lifestyle.

«Pupil's first name»'s results	
Height (cm)	«Height»
Weight (kg)	«Weight»
Date of measurement	«DOM»

These results suggest that your child is a healthy weight for their age, sex and height. To help your child remain healthy, you can:

- Take a look at the tips [on the next page / in the enclosed leaflet]
- Go online for practical advice at: [www.nhs.uk/change4life](http://www.nhs.uk/change4life) and [www.nhs.uk/ncmp2](http://www.nhs.uk/ncmp2)

You can find out how «Pupil's first name»'s result was calculated, and check how «Pupil's first name» is growing over time, by going to [www.nhs.uk/bmi](http://www.nhs.uk/bmi).

This information has not been shared with «Pupil's first name», other children or school staff. Locally, this information is held by your [local NHS/local authority public health team] and is treated confidentially.

**Thank you for reading this letter - we hope this information is useful to you. If you need any help or advice, please call us on the number at the top of this letter.**

Yours sincerely,  
[Sender name]

## Overweight

### Private and confidential

Parent/Carer of «Child\_Firstname» «Child\_Surname»  
«Child\_Address1»  
«Child\_Address2»  
«Child\_Address3»  
«Child\_Postcode»

«LA\_Name»  
«LA\_Address1»  
«LA\_Address2»  
«LA\_Address3»  
«LA\_Postcode»  
Tel: «LA\_Telephone»  
Email: «LA\_Email»

[Date]

NHS number [Optional]

Dear Parent / Carer of «Pupil's first name» «Pupil's last name»,

We recently sent you a letter about measuring «Pupil's first name»'s height and weight in school as part of the National Child Measurement Programme. The measurements have now been done.

Seeing if your child's weight is within the healthy range for their age, sex and height can help you make informed choices about their lifestyle.

«Pupil's first name»'s results	
Height (cm)	«Height»
Weight (kg)	«Weight»
Date of measurement	«DOM»

These results suggest that your child is overweight for their age, sex and height. If your child is overweight now they are more likely to grow up to be overweight as an adult. This can lead to health problems.

You and your child can make simple changes to be more active and eat more healthily. As a first step, please call us on [phone number] to find out how you can benefit from free local support. You can also:

- Take a look at the tips [on the next page / in the enclosed leaflet]
- Go online for practical advice at: [www.nhs.uk/change4life](http://www.nhs.uk/change4life) and [www.nhs.uk/ncmp3](http://www.nhs.uk/ncmp3)

You can find out how «Pupil's first name»'s result was calculated, and check how «Pupil's first name» is growing over time, by going to [www.nhs.uk/bmi](http://www.nhs.uk/bmi).

This information has not been shared with «Pupil's first name», other children or school staff. Locally, this information is held by your [local NHS/local authority public health team] and is treated confidentially.

**Thank you for reading this letter - we hope this information is useful to you. Please do call us and take advantage of the free support we offer.**

Yours sincerely,  
[Sender name]

## Very overweight

### Private and confidential

Parent/Carer of «Child\_Firstname» «Child\_Surname»  
«Child\_Address1»  
«Child\_Address2»  
«Child\_Address3»  
«Child\_Postcode»

«LA\_Name»  
«LA\_Address1»  
«LA\_Address2»  
«LA\_Address3»  
«LA\_Postcode»  
Tel: «LA\_Telephone»  
Email: «LA\_Email»

[Date]

NHS number [Optional]

Dear Parent / Carer of «Pupil's first name» «Pupil's last name»,

We recently sent you a letter about measuring «Pupil's first name»'s height and weight in school as part of the National Child Measurement Programme. The measurements have now been done.

Seeing if your child's weight is within the healthy range for their age, sex and height can help you make informed choices about their lifestyle.

«Pupil's first name»'s results	
Height (cm)	«Height»
Weight (kg)	«Weight»
Date of measurement	«DOM»

These results suggest that your child is very overweight for their age, sex and height. Being very overweight can lead to health problems for your child, such as high blood pressure, early signs of type 2 diabetes and low self-confidence. But you and your child can make simple changes to be more active and eat more healthily.

As a first step, please call us on [phone number] to find out how you can benefit from free local support. You can also:

- Take a look at the tips [on the next page / in the enclosed leaflet]
- Go online for practical advice at: [www.nhs.uk/change4life](http://www.nhs.uk/change4life) and [www.nhs.uk/ncmp4](http://www.nhs.uk/ncmp4)

You can find out how «Pupil's first name»'s result was calculated, and check how «Pupil's first name» is growing over time, by going to [www.nhs.uk/bmi](http://www.nhs.uk/bmi).

This information has not been shared with «Pupil's first name», other children or school staff. Locally, this information is held by your [local NHS/local authority public health team] and is treated confidentially.

**Thank you for reading this letter - we hope this information is useful to you. Please do call us and take advantage of the free support we offer.**

Yours sincerely,  
[Sender name]

# how many ways are you changing?

change  
**4 life**  
Eat well. Move more. Live longer.

**1** 5 a day

Our family are trying to eat 5 portions of fruit and veg every day.



**2** cut back fat

I am changing how I cook to make our meals more healthy.



**3** watch the salt

Even food that doesn't taste salty can have lots of salt inside. We're checking the label and trying not to add salt to our food.



**4** sugar swaps

Our family are swapping sugary drinks for water, milk or unsweetened fruit juice.



**5** get going every day

I'm getting the kids to spend at least 60 minutes walking, playing sport, running around or being active every day.



Want more tips to help you stay healthy and happy?

 Search Change4Life

## Appendix 4: Specimen letter to parents of children unable to be measured unaided

Local authorities can send this letter to the parents or carers of children who are unable to take part in the NCMP because they cannot stand unaided to have their height and weight measured. The letter can be edited to meet local needs.

### **Measuring the height and weight of children in reception year and Year 6**

It is important to have a good understanding of how children are growing, so that the best possible advice and support can be provided for them and their families. Helping children to achieve a healthy weight is both a national and local priority. As a result, children in England in reception year and Year 6 have their height and weight checked each year through the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP).

Your child's class will take part in this year's measurement programme. However, due to the type of equipment used to weigh and measure children, only those who are able to stand unaided can be weighed and measured in school. This means that some children who are unable to stand unaided, for example due to a physical disability or injury, will not be able to take part in this exercise in school.

From what the school has told us, we understand that your child [insert pupil's name] may not be able to participate. We would therefore like to offer you an alternative arrangement. [Local areas can personalise further if appropriate, for example stating where the measurements will take place.] If you wish to take up this offer please contact [insert name] on [insert contact details] to arrange an appointment at your convenience. You can also contact [insert name and contact details] if you have any concerns or wish to discuss this matter further.

A leaflet entitled 'Why your child's weight matters' is enclosed to provide more information about the NCMP and tips on healthy eating and being active.