



# Estyn

*Rhagoriaeth i bawb - Excellence for all*

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg  
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales

## Food and fitness in schools: An update



BUDDSODDWR MEWN POBL  
INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



APRIL 2009

**The purpose of Estyn is to inspect quality and standards in education and training in Wales. Estyn is responsible for inspecting:**

- ▲ nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local authorities (LAs);
- ▲ primary schools;
- ▲ secondary schools;
- ▲ special schools;
- ▲ pupil referral units;
- ▲ independent schools;
- ▲ further education;
- ▲ adult community-based learning;
- ▲ youth support services;
- ▲ youth and community work training;
- ▲ LAs;
- ▲ teacher education and training;
- ▲ work-based learning;
- ▲ careers companies;
- ▲ offender learning; and
- ▲ the education, guidance and training elements of the Department for Work and Pensions funded training programmes.

Estyn also:

- ▲ provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and others; and
- ▲ makes public good practice based on inspection evidence.

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Estyn’s reports follow its guidance for the writing and editing of reports, which is available on the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk)). In this report, the following terms are used broadly to describe the proportions.

Nearly all	with very few exceptions
Most	90% or more
Many	70% or more
A majority	over 60%
Half/around half	close to 50%
A minority	below 40%
Few	below 20%
Very few	less than 10%

## Introduction

- 1 In recent years, Estyn has published a number of reports that relate to aspects of healthy living. These are available on our website [www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk) and include:
  - Progress made in the implementation of the Physical Education and School Sport (PESS) Action Plan;
  - Girls' participation in physical activity in schools;
  - Sex and relationships guidance;
  - Education about substance misuse; and
  - Food and fitness in schools.
- 2 The Welsh Assembly Government, as part of its 2007-2008 remit to Estyn, requested a report on how well schools in Wales were working towards improving pupils' health with an emphasis on physical activity and healthy eating.
- 3 As a result, Estyn published 'Food and fitness in schools' in May 2008. This report was based on evidence from school inspection reports published between September 2005 and December 2007, as well as visits to 20 schools and discussions with school and local authority staff. The report included main findings and recommendations, which are reproduced in the appendix of this report.
- 4 The Welsh Assembly Government set out a detailed response to the recommendations included in the 'Food and fitness report', and introduced a new framework for personal and social education for 7-19 year olds in September 2008, which also has a focus on healthy living. It is important to note that schools do not focus only on pupils' food and fitness but see them as part of healthy living in the context of the whole health of a person.
- 5 In the 2008-2009 Ministerial remit to Estyn, the Welsh Assembly Government requested an update to the 'Food and fitness in schools' survey report. The update report is based on a review of reports on the primary, secondary and special schools and pupil referral units in Wales published between January and November 2008. The sample of schools consists of about a sixth of the schools in Wales. The report also includes a number of good practice case studies based on information from published inspection reports. However, it is still too early to judge the full impact of the measures undertaken by schools and local authorities to address the recommendations from the 2008 report.

## Main findings

- 6 Overall, the findings from the school inspection reports published between January and November 2008 are similar to those outlined in the 'Food and fitness in schools' report published in May 2008. The main improvements since 2007 have been in aspects of leadership and listening to learners.
- 7 The 2008 inspection reports show that most schools are continuing to do well or very well in assuring the healthy development, safety and wellbeing of pupils. Nearly 90% of schools have been awarded a grade 1 or 2 for the question relating to healthy living in the common inspection framework and almost all schools continue to use a wide range of effective strategies to encourage pupils to be healthy.
- 8 In 2007, only a very few schools were identified as having separate policies for food and fitness. In 2008, around half of secondary and special schools and about a third of primary schools have an effective policy on the provision of healthy food and the promotion of physical exercise.
- 9 Since 2007, there has also been a significant improvement in the way in which schools take account of the views of learners. Now around half of primary school and a significant minority of secondary and special school reports highlight the important role played by school councils in influencing schools to promote a healthy living regime.
- 10 There has also been a significant increase in the number of primary schools that promote pupils' awareness of the importance of fresh fruit in a healthy and balanced diet.
- 11 The 'Food and fitness in schools' report published in May 2008 indicated that only a very few schools had effective internal systems to monitor and evaluate the impact of healthy living work. This continues to be the case.

## **Recommendation**

- R1 The Welsh Assembly Government, schools and local authorities should continue to work together to address the recommendations of the 'Food and fitness in schools' report published in May 2008. These are reproduced in the appendix to this report for ease of reference.

## How well are schools doing in relation to healthy living?

- 12 The chart below shows the proportion of grades awarded to the schools whose inspection reports were published between January and November 2008, for the question related to healthy living in Key Question 4 of the common inspection framework: 'How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?'. This relates to how well schools assure the healthy development, safety and wellbeing of learners.

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
28% (23%)*	61% (68%)*	9% (8%)*	2% (0%)*	0% (0%)*

\* Figures in brackets are those reported in the 'Food and fitness in schools' report published in May 2008.

- 13 The chart shows that most schools are continuing to do well or very well in assuring the healthy development, safety and wellbeing of pupils. Inspectors awarded nearly 90% of schools a grade 1 or 2 for the question related to healthy living in Key Question 4 of the common inspection framework and almost all schools continue to use a wide range of effective strategies to encourage pupils to be healthy.
- 14 The percentage of schools awarded a grade 1 (good with outstanding features), has increased to 28% from 23% in the previous 'Food and fitness in schools' report, but there has been a corresponding decrease in the number of schools awarded grade 2 (good features and no important shortcomings). Only a very few schools (2%) were awarded a grade 4 (some good features, but shortcomings in important areas), compared to none in the previous reporting period.
- 15 The inspection reports of a few secondary and special schools and around half of primary schools have identified that the schools involved are taking part in a healthy schools scheme, such as the Welsh Network of Healthy Schools Schemes (WNHSS). This is having a big impact in enabling these schools to develop healthy living work to good standards.
- 16 Overall, most schools are continuing to do well in assuring the healthy development, safety and wellbeing of pupils.

## Food and drink

- 17 Having access to breakfast at school has had a positive impact on pupils' health, wellbeing, behaviour, learning and social skills. It has also resulted in improved punctuality and attendance for some pupils. Schools have benefitted from having a breakfast club and the positive contribution that these make to promoting healthy living.
- 18 Many primary schools sell healthy snacks at break-time, which nearly always includes a selection of fresh fruit. There has been a significant increase in the number of schools which promote healthy living and raise pupils' awareness of the importance of fresh fruit in a healthy and balanced diet.
- 19 Secondary schools sell a variety of products at break-time. Healthy break-time options are nearly always available, but very few schools sell fresh fruit.



- 20 Many primary and secondary schools make good efforts to provide pupils with a healthy menu and a choice of healthy foods at lunch time.
- 21 Many of the schools, particularly primary schools, encourage pupils to drink enough water during the day. They also provide suitable facilities for pupils to access free water.

#### **Healthy school accreditation and the provision of healthy snacks and water during the school day**

A medium-sized south Wales primary school is part of the Welsh Network of Healthy Schools Schemes. The school successfully promotes healthy eating and a healthier lifestyle. Pupils are encouraged to eat fruit at break-time and fresh water is available throughout the day. Pupils also benefit from attending a range of extra-curricular sports clubs, which are very popular.

#### **Learning about healthy eating**

- 22 Learning about healthy living continues to be part of the curriculum of the schools sampled, particularly in science, personal and social education, physical education and design technology. Overall, young people in schools in Wales receive enough education about healthy living. However, a few of the secondary schools in our sample were not making enough progress in responding to the 'Appetite for life' agenda. The healthy living programme was at an early stage of development in a very few primary schools.

#### **Promoting healthy living in a large secondary school**

The promotion of healthy living has been a major focus for this large south Wales secondary school. Modules in the personal and social education programme and activities such as the 'Junk Food Roadshow' have strengthened pupils' understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. The school has revised catering contracts to include healthier menus and vending machines now include healthier options.

A community fitness trail and a high-quality all-weather pitch encourage pupils' participation in physical activity during and outside the school day. The school council has also been prominent in promoting healthy living throughout the school.

#### **Physical activity**

- 23 Most schools continue to provide pupils with access to a wide range of sporting and exercise activities during and outside of the school day. They actually also involve pupils directly in physical exercise, of course. These activities make an important contribution to raising pupils' awareness of the importance of physical exercise as part of a healthy lifestyle. A minority of secondary and special school reports highlight the impact of initiatives such as PESS and '5x60'. Pupils in the majority of primary schools also benefit from initiatives designed to encourage physical exercise. Where primary and special schools have invested in play equipment, it is often used extensively as part of schools' healthy living strategies.

**Use of extra-curricular activities and play equipment to encourage increased physical exercise**

A large south-east Wales primary school promotes pupils' health and fitness very effectively by offering an exceptionally wide range of extra-curricular activities. These include residential periods at an outdoor pursuits centre where pupils can take part in canoeing, sailing, climbing and abseiling activities. Pupils also benefit from using a very good range of outdoor equipment and resources such as the adventure playground in the school itself.

## **How strategic are schools' approaches to healthy living?**

### **Leadership and management**

- 24 Headteachers continue to be committed to pupils' health, safety and wellbeing. Nearly all the inspection reports in our sample highlight the fact that schools view these aspects as a priority and part of the core vision for the school.
- 25 Inspection reports show that significant progress has been made since 2007 when only a very few schools (6%) were identified as having separate policies for food and fitness. Around half (46%) of secondary and special schools and about a third (36%) of primary schools now have an effective policy on the provision of healthy food and the promotion of physical exercise.
- 26 Schools with the best practice usually have a member of the senior management team who has overall responsibility for co-ordinating or delivering aspects of the healthy living curriculum.

### **Good practice in the leadership and management of the healthy living agenda in a secondary school**

The healthy-school co-ordinator in a mid Wales secondary school has undertaken an audit of subject provision to make sure that there is good coverage of the healthy living agenda across a range of subjects. Within the 'learning core', all pupils study an extensive range of topics on health education and healthy eating.

The school's Nutrition Action Group has drafted a healthy food policy. The group also liaises with the school canteen to ensure that it is implemented. Key members of staff have undertaken training in nutrition and provide a pleasing variety of tasty and nutritious dishes and snacks.

### **Curriculum and extra-curricular provision**

- 27 Many primary schools and around half of secondary schools provide opportunities to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of issues related to health, fitness and wellbeing within personal and social education, physical education and design technology.

### **Effective whole-school policy for healthy lifestyles in a secondary school**

A south Wales secondary school has an effective whole-school policy for healthy lifestyles which follows guidelines in the Welsh Assembly Government's 'Developing a whole school food and fitness policy'. There are healthy menus available in the canteen and a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular physical activities available for pupils. Pupils have a mature awareness of the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise. A number of subjects in the curriculum contribute well to the importance of healthy activities in daily routines.

### **Partnership working**

- 28 Partnership working continues to be a key element in the success of schools that are most effective in addressing healthy living issues. This usually involves a wide range of participants including teachers, support assistants, caterers, caretakers, visiting specialists, volunteers and others who share the same vision and understanding.
- 29 Parents also have a very important role to play in working with schools to support healthy living work. For example, one primary school arranged for parents and pupils to taste a range of healthy foods. This had a positive effect on the choices which pupils made at lunch time and the contents of their lunchboxes.

### **The effectiveness of schools working in partnership with stakeholders**

Inspectors considered one north Wales primary school's provision for the healthy development, safety and wellbeing of their pupils to be outstanding as a result of its partnership arrangements. The school, which has been involved in the local healthy school scheme as part of WNHSS for three years, has firmly embedded many of its principles into school life.

The school recently undertook a consultation with pupils, parents, governors, the school cook and local authority to ask what they thought should be included in a health and fitness policy. They used the results to develop a school health and fitness policy together with a detailed plan of actions they would take to expand the range of health-related activities in the school. The school has appointed a club organiser to implement these activities and it is also involved with the Dragon Sport programme which enables pupils take part in sporting activities outside of school physical education lessons. Some parents have also undertaken training to help the school deliver an exciting programme of activities which include gymnastics and team games such as cricket and netball.

### **Listening to learners**

- 30 Since 2007, there has been a significant improvement in the way in which schools take account of the views of learners. Around half (48%) of primary school and a significant minority (38%) of secondary and special school reports highlight the important role played by school councils in influencing their schools to follow a healthy living regime.
- 31 School councils continue to play an important role in shaping food and fitness policies and they have often influenced the increased availability of healthy food choices at break and lunch time. For example, a special school in south Wales set up a school Nutrition Action Group which has impacted on healthy living provision in the school.

**The positive impact made by school councils in driving forward the healthy living agenda**

In a south Wales valley secondary school, the school council has had a positive impact on developing the school's policies for improving pupils' fitness and promoting healthy eating. There are now enough choices available in the canteen to enable pupils to choose from a range of healthy options. The personal and social education programmes stress the benefits of fitness and pupils are encouraged to take part in regular exercise.

**Monitoring and evaluation**

- 32 The 'Food and fitness in schools' report in May 2008 indicated that only a very few schools had effective systems to monitor and evaluate the impact of healthy living work. This continues to be the case and most schools still rely on the processes required for external award schemes, such as the Healthy School scheme, to monitor and evaluate their provision.

## Appendix

### Main findings from 'Food and fitness in schools' (May 2008)

#### Food and drink

- i Breakfast clubs, particularly in primary schools, have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing, behaviour, punctuality and attendance of the pupils who participate.
- ii 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.
- iii 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.
- iv 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.
- v 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.
- vi 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.

- vii Many schools do not co-ordinate 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 co-ordinating healthy living work receive enough training but this is usually focused on teaching aspects of healthy living rather co-ordinating the delivery of healthy living work across the school.

### **Physical activity**

- viii Schools that participate in initiatives such as Physical Education and School Sport (PESS) and Dragon Sport are effective in encouraging pupils to be more active. These schools normally provide pupils with the recommended minimum of two hours a week of physical education. However, six out of every 10 of the schools surveyed do not provide this minimum. Many schools find it difficult to provide a wide range of physical activities that all pupils can enjoy and only a few provide alternatives to traditional physical education or sports activities.
- ix Most schools have good arrangements to encourage pupils to be active during break times and lunch times, but only a few are successful in getting pupils to walk or cycle to school.
- x Many schools use community sport facilities well and often this leads to pupils using the facilities outside school time. Many schools have generally good equipment for physical activities, although changing areas and shower facilities are of more variable quality.

### **Strategic approaches for healthy living**

- xi School leaders are committed to young people's health and wellbeing. Most schools are actively developing their policies and practices for healthy living, particularly in relation to food and drink. Many use award schemes as a catalyst for this work. This is particularly true of Healthy School schemes and the Eco-Schools programme.
- xii Nearly all schools rely on extra funding to sustain healthy living work, particularly on targeted funding from the Welsh Assembly Government. Few schools have planned how to continue this work when funding ceases.
- xiii Most schools work well with parents, health and social care professionals, police officers, and local and national voluntary organisations to encourage healthy and active lifestyles. Most pupils think that members of staff in their school are good role models for healthy living.
- xiv Aspects of toilets are unsatisfactory in half of the secondary schools and in a quarter of primary schools surveyed. Where pupils are not happy with the condition of school toilets, they are more likely not to drink enough water during the school day so as to avoid using them.
- xv The school council in every school surveyed has discussed healthy living in the last two years. In most schools, taking account of the views of pupils has resulted in minor changes to the food and drink available and the arrangements at break times and lunch times. Most school councils have discussed issues that impact on physical activity, particularly the safety of walking to and from school and the range of after-school clubs on offer.

- xvi Only a very few schools have effective systems for evaluating the impact of their healthy living work. Most schools monitor whether planned actions have been carried out rather than evaluating the effectiveness of their actions in improving pupils' health.

### **Recommendations from 'Food and fitness in schools' (May 2008)**

#### **Schools should:**

- R1 review their lunch time arrangements to ensure that they support healthy living in line with the good practice highlighted in this report;
- R2 plan for and set targets to increase the take-up of free school meals;
- R3 plan to meet the new nutrient, food and drink standards in the Appetite for Life Action Plan;
- R4 improve the co-ordination of healthy living work across the curriculum, provide more opportunities for pupils to learn how to prepare food and use a consistent approach to teaching what makes a balanced diet;
- R5 provide pupils with the recommended minimum amount of physical education and offer pupils a wider range of physical activities;
- R6 ensure that toilets and changing facilities meet appropriate minimum standards; and
- R7 evaluate the effectiveness of their actions to improve pupils' health.

#### **The Welsh Assembly Government should work with schools and local authorities to:**

- R8 ensure that all schools meet the new nutrient, food and drink standards in the Appetite for Life Action Plan as soon as is practicably possible and set a target date for this;
- R9 fund improvements to catering and dining facilities and facilities for teaching pupils how to prepare and cook food;
- R10 introduce minimum standards for school toilets and changing facilities; and
- R11 provide guidance for schools on how to evaluate the effectiveness of their actions to improve pupils' health.



<b>Schools used in the report as exemplars of good practice</b>
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**Secondary schools**

- Hawthorn High School – Rhondda Cynon Taff
- Penglais school – Ceredigion
- Dyffryn School – Neath Port Talbot
- Ysgol Gyfun Cymer – Rhondda Cynon Taff

**Primary schools**

- Victoria Primary school – Torfaen
- Llanishen Fach primary School – Cardiff
- St Marys CIW Aided – Wrexham

## Glossary

<b>5x60</b>	The 5x60 programme is managed by the Sports Council for Wales and funded by the Welsh Assembly Government. It aims to encourage secondary school pupils to be more active. The programme was piloted in eight schools in 2006.
<b>Appetite for Life</b>	This is Welsh Assembly Government initiative designed to promote a balanced diet as part of a healthy lifestyle and to improve the nutritional standards of food and drink in schools.
<b>Dragon Sport</b>	Dragon Sport is managed by the Sports Council for Wales and funded by the National Lottery. It aims to encourage 7-11 year-olds to be more active by introducing them to a range of sports outside school physical education lessons. The programme provides pupils with opportunities to feed into and progress through sports development programmes in clubs and the community.
<b>Healthy School</b>	A healthy school is one which is following the Welsh Assembly Government's five year Food and Fitness Plan and Appetite for Life Action Plan. These plans outline actions to improve nutrition and physical activity amongst children and young people and help promote healthy living in school.
<b>PESS</b>	The Physical Education and School Sports (PESS) initiative is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government and aims to improve all aspects of PE and school sports.
<b>PSE</b>	Personal and Social Education (PSE) comprises all that a school undertakes to support and promote the personal and social development and well-being of its learners.
<b>WNHSS</b>	The Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes (WNHSS) encourages the development of local healthy school schemes within a national framework. Each local authority works in partnership with local staff from the National Public Health Service to support schools to develop actions to address health issues.

## The remit author and survey team

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