

## Case study for Healthy Schools Plus ... Connor Downs Primary School

My first piece of advice (as a part time teacher) is not to be too ambitious! Yes, it's good to go that extra mile ... but be realistic. I tried to do too many things at once - and it didn't work! Remember that you have to plan, assess, write APP's, IEP's and teach as well!! ... oh, and have a life!

Anyway, as a school, we wanted to address the issue of obesity in children. Here rose the first problem as we didn't like the term 'obesity'... Kate helped us out and suggested 'healthy weight'. This national problem was to be met by:

- increasing the amount of exercise done by all the children;
- involving parents in their own activity (Change 4 life ... weight management)
- Family Fun fit
- input into 'healthy eating' lunch boxes;
- latterly, targeting our Year 5 and 6 girls. (This was a later addition ... and it's been brilliant!!)

By the end of this term we will have completed  $3\frac{1}{2}$  out of the 5 targets. Some of them worked brilliantly and some needed 'tweaking' but surely this is what Healthy School Plus is all about ... finding what works and adapting or modifying things that aren't quite as successful as you would have hoped.

### Successes

#### Skipping

One aspect of our Healthy School Plus programme was to involve all the school (adults as well!) in an inexpensive and 'fun' physical activity ... skipping!!

On Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> October, we did just that. The whole school took it in turns to work with Aimee and myself ... the results were outstanding ... from the Reception children learning to jump over a rope on the ground to parents revisiting a lost youth!!

Don't be put off by thinking the Year 6 boys won't want to take part ... they enjoyed the challenges of long rope skipping just as much as the girls!

Obviously, the most rewarding part of the day was to see children managing to skip for the first time, lots of happy, sweaty children left the hall (it rained!) feeling very pleased with themselves.

"I didn't think I could do it but when I tried I was really good."

James Class 3

"My hair got sweaty and sticking up!"

Ollie Class 1

Before the event, all the classes did a survey ... I repeated the survey after 2/3 weeks and then again the next term ... comparing the results to see if our whole school input has had a lasting effect on the children... I'm pleased to say it did! In October, before the workshops were carried out, 48% of pupils were skipping; after the workshops in March 82.5% of pupils were skipping.

To encourage the children to skip each day, we sectioned off part of our playground to allow the 'skippers' a bit of space at lunch times. We also offered the children an opportunity to buy a skipping rope from the British Heart Foundation and the school paid £1 toward each rope from our Healthy School budget. We bought 75 ropes!

At the beginning of his term I introduced the 1,000 Skip Challenge. Unfortunately, this has been a bit slow to get off the ground ... maybe I have left it too late in the year? Still, I will endeavour to keep reminding the children to skip and I have one more survey to do before all the results can be compared.

#### Change 4 Life ... Weight matters (parents/carers)

This involved a group of parents meeting in our local WI hall on a Tuesday afternoon. The course was run by Mrs Mary Williamson, lasted 8 weeks and was free!

The purpose of the group was to enable parents/carers to make small steps to create a healthier life style for themselves and their families.

Issues such as portion sizes, healthier options, labelling and cooking etc. were addressed and discussions and practical sessions took place.

Those parents who attended really benefited from it and will return to a similar course next term:

"It's easy" ... "it's different" ... "it works" ... "my children eat fruit now" ... were just some of the comments from the parents.

Despite all our efforts to publicise the course we were a bit disappointed by the number of people who actually attended. Was it on the wrong day? Wrong time? Or are our parents just too healthy?

So, Mary has been promoting it at our School Fete and we will have a recruitment campaign next September. We also plan to involve some form of weekly exercise to entice more people.

So, a success for those who attended but we need more people!

### Family Fun Fit

The one activity that I could not get off the ground was Family Fun Fit. I managed to order equipment for the children to play with and sent two TAs on a course but could not actually get the club up and running.

I knew that the club needed to meet 3 times a week; twice after school (one with parents) and once during the lunch time. My two TAs were willing to help with the running of the clubs as I only work two days a week.

I think my main problem was selecting the children and families. I asked all the teachers for the names of the individuals that they thought would benefit from such a group. I still didn't believe that we were going about our selection in the right way and the whole thing 'did not feel right.'

I agonised over it for weeks but could not feel comfortable about it, don't know why! So, I didn't do it!!

Maybe somebody who got it to work could help me sort it out. I do believe that if something doesn't feel right then don't do it!

So, try again next year!

G.P.O. Club (Girl Power Only)

Now this one IS working!

Through talking to the children and looking at completed surveys it became apparent that there is a lack of interest in after- school physical activities amongst our Year 5 and 6 girls. We spoke to the girls in an effort to try to find the reasons for their reluctance. The answer? ... boys! The girls said that they were not comfortable doing P.E. with the boys as they were too competitive and they did not enjoy the activities on offer.

In order to address this issue we decided to hold a girls only activity club. The girls themselves came up with the name Girl Power Only, which was then abbreviated to G.P.O.

The response has been fantastic ... 15 out of 17 girls are attending the club! We aim to get the girls enjoying a wider range of activities or 'taster' sessions... after school on Fridays.

At the first meeting the girls were asked to complete a mini questionnaire about how they feel about exercise, what they would like to try and what they hoped to gain from the next six weeks.

So far we have played rounders, danced on the mats with Aimee, walked to Trevaskis Farm, picked strawberries and walked back. We have plans to use the rowing machines at Pool school and have a kick boxing champion coming in July. Any expense comes from our Healthy Schools Plus budget!

The girls are loving it! Dance mats quotes:

"absolutely excellent" ... Sarah      " wanna do it again!" ... Steren  
"I didn't think it would be so much fun!" ... Skye      "Got all sweaty!" ... Millie  
"We had loads of goes." ... Molly

Walking quotes:

"It was great walking with my mates." "I don't usually walk this far!"  
"Great fun!" "I've eaten all my strawberries!"

My only regret? I wish we had thought about it earlier!!

### Healthy eating lunch boxes

This has been started, but not finished!

I intended to have a meeting after school when parents and children could experiment with different recipes and have a demonstration by a 'chef.'

However, as I said earlier I was totally unrealistic about how much the school could do in a year and continue with a normal, busy timetable.

We have collected ideas for healthy snacks and lunches from parents and a TA has very kindly composed a booklet which will be given out next term. In it we will also include quotes and suggestions from the children.

So, here we are at the end of the year! My next target is to get a member of the senior management to help me complete the online Annual Review ... yes, you're right ... I haven't done it ... yet!

Targets for next year????

- Complete the Healthy lunch box section
- Try to get more parents involved in *Change 4 Life*
- Try to implement the *Active Kids Club*
- If necessary continue with *GPO*
- ... and anything else that crops up throughout the year!!

Remember, don't be afraid to change what you do mid-stream, so long as you are meeting the demands and needs of your own individual children, **GO FOR IT!**

Good luck!

Jean Pollard (Connor Downs Primary School)