What is the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP)?

The NCMP is part of a national effort to improve children’s health and wellbeing. The NCMP will help us to find out more about the way children are growing in England.

Children in Reception and in Year 6 in the primary school will have their height and weight recorded by a trained health worker.

Why do we want to weigh and measure children?

Today about a third of children are overweight or obese and the numbers seem to be rising. The worry is that this will have major health implications for the individuals themselves and for society in general in the future.

The information collected in the NCMP will help local health services to know how best to use resources for children’s health and to find out if the things we do to help families and children lead healthier lives are really working.

How will the information be used?

The most important thing to know is that the information collected will be kept completely confidential and anonymous. It will not be used to identify individual children’s heights and weights. It will only be used to understand the levels of underweight, overweight and obesity in England and across Cornwall.

Does my child’s school have to take part in the NCMP?

No. However we are encouraging all schools to take part as we see participation in the NCMP as an important way to promote the health of children. We have found that at schools taking part most parents agree to have their children weighed and measured.

Why are we encouraging you to allow your child to be included?

As parents and carers you can choose to withdraw your child from the NCMP (your school will send you a letter with a slip on it for you to sign to say you don’t want your child to be included). BUT we would encourage you to take part because the more children who are weighed and measured the more accurate and useful the information we collect each year will be. This means it will be more useful in helping children be healthier now and in the future.

What will happen on the day?

The school will work with the school nurse to choose a day for the weighing and measuring.

The school will send you a letter telling you about the programme. If you send back the slip withdrawing your child he/she will not be included on the day.

All the people involved in the programme across Cornwall will have been especially trained to ensure they carry out the weighing and measuring accurately and to make sure children are treated sensitively.

A separate room / area will be made available and individual children will be called to have their height and weight measured away from their classmates and school staff.

Children will not be asked to remove clothing other than shoes and outdoor coats. Their weight and height will be written down quietly and discreetly and no-one in school will be told their height or weight. That’s all there is to it.

How will the information be recorded?

The form used to record the heights and weights will have children’s names, date of birth and post code on it. This is because you can ask to be sent a letter with your child’s height and weight in it. Once all these requests from parents are dealt with all the personal information will be destroyed and just the heights and weights will be shared with the Department of Health to put together the national picture. From September 2008 the heights and weights of all children taking part will be automatically sent to parents and carers.

What can I do if I am worried about my child’s weight?

If you are worried about your child’s weight you can arrange to speak to the school nurse privately to get further advice or information.

What is being done to help my child be healthier?

There is a lot going on in the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Primary Care Trust to help children. We have a local strategy to reduce obesity and are working to implement the newly published government strategy: Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives.

Schools are encouraged to promote the health and well-being of their pupils and staff through the Healthy Schools Programme. We are very pleased that all schools in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly are involved in Healthy Schools and recognise the importance of prioritising work on becoming or remaining a healthy school.

This includes taking a ‘whole school’ approach to support pupils to have the confidence, skills and understanding to make healthy food choices, and provide all pupils with a range of opportunities to be physically active. This work aims to have a positive impact on improving children’s attainment and will help towards halting the increase in childhood obesity.
What can I do to help my child be healthier?

To achieve a healthy lifestyle encourage and support your children to eat a diet which is low in fat, sugar and salt and contains at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day.

Physical activity is another key aspect of a healthy lifestyle, and children should take part in physical activity that makes them breathe slightly harder and make them feel slightly warmer for an hour every day.

The good thing is that one hour of activity can be done in ‘bite sized chunks’ of 10 or 15 minutes at a time. The walk to and from school can be a really good opportunity to get a chunk or two fitted in.

For more information about the NCMP or healthy living. Please contact:

The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Health Promotion Service, Healthy Schools Team  01209—310061

or visit our website where you can download more information.  
www.healthpromcornwall.org/