

Press release: Schools not 'silver bullet' to tackling childhood obesity

Lobby groups should not see schools as a 'silver bullet' to tackle childhood obesity, a new report from Ofsted says.

While schools have an important role to play in encouraging healthy lifestyles and exercise as part of a rich, broad curriculum, expecting too much of schools will not solve the problem, and risks further increasing teacher workload. As the government's recently published [obesity strategy](#) acknowledges, this is a complex societal issue, requiring solutions from many different players.

Last year the inspectorate carried out research to understand whether schools are demonstrably having an impact on levels of childhood obesity, and if there is any good practice out there from which other schools can learn. Inspectors visited 60 schools around the country, and found that most have responded well to government initiatives, including expectations around physical activity and healthy eating. But it was not clear that the specific interventions that schools make could, by themselves, overcome other factors that affect the weight of their pupils.

PE, personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and design and technology (D&T) all provide valuable learning for children, who may not be taught about healthy eating and the benefits of exercise at home.

Reinforcing messages, imparting knowledge and developing skills is what schools do well. The report says that schools should focus on improving the things they are best placed to do, such as:

- planning a challenging and well-sequenced curriculum, including learning about the body in PE and science, and about healthy eating and cooking
- providing ample opportunity for children to take physical exercise during the school day – with lots of opportunities to 'get out of breath'
- teaching particular skills like how to cook or how to dance
- updating parents on their children's physical development, such as agility, balance and coordination

Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman said:

Obesity is a serious public health challenge with wide-ranging and deep-rooted effects. Schools have an important role to play in the fight against childhood obesity. A broad curriculum, which emphasises healthy lifestyles and high quality PE is vital to this, but is too often given insufficient focus.

We must also recognise that schools cannot provide a silver bullet for all societal ills. Teachers and school leaders are already

stretched; they should not be held responsible for an issue that requires concerted action across the board.

Families, government, industry, and other parts of the public sector all have a role to play in making food and drink healthier, and supporting children to make better choices.

Inspectors found that schools put too much effort into activities designed to influence parents without any evidence that they either have an impact or are what parents want. Eighty-three per cent of parents said they had been invited to an event at school. But many of them told Ofsted they are time-poor and what they really want is readily available information about what their child is doing at school: what they are eating and learning about, so that this can be followed up on at home.

Parents also said they wanted more time for PE in the curriculum. And while extra-curricular activities are a good way to broaden the opportunities for children to learn new skills and to exercise, a quarter of parents said that their child couldn't access all the clubs and activities they wanted.

Amanda Spielman continued:

It is essential that schools do not get distracted from their core educational purpose. Education for health is essential and must be done well. But this will not happen if schools are devoting time and energy to things in which they are neither expert nor likely to have an impact.

As part of their research inspectors spoke to school senior managers, governors, school staff with responsibility for healthy eating or physical activity, teachers, teaching assistants, catering staff, school nurses, pupils and the pupils' parents. They observed lessons related to healthy eating and physical activity, looked at extra-curricular provision, and at the content of school lunches.

[News story: Dry weather update – 17th July 2018](#)

The Environment Agency continues to urge people to follow water company advice and use water wisely during these hotter summer months to help manage demand and reduce the impact on the environment. United Utilities has announced a 'temporary use ban' which is likely to come into effect in early August for its customers in the North West.

Paul Hickey, head of water resources at the Environment Agency, said:

Over two very dry months, we have seen a rapid decline in reservoir levels in the North West and we support the announcement by United Utilities to manage water supplies by introducing household restrictions.

Across the rest of England, most groundwater supplies are at healthy levels and water companies have enough water to maintain supplies if resources are managed properly.

Many rivers around the country have dropped to lower levels than normal for this time of year, which can be damaging to wildlife. We have robust plans in place to respond to these pressures and have stepped up our incident response as well as regulation of those abstracting water to ensure the environment is protected.

We are meeting with affected groups including farmers to provide practical advice about conserving water and planning for prolonged dry weather. We encourage everyone to use water wisely to conserve supplies and protect the environment.

During hot weather the Environment Agency works with water companies and other organisations to reduce the impacts of the hot weather on the environment. Steps include rescuing fish, responding to incidents, regulating water abstraction, advising businesses and farmers on water usage and monitoring for environmental impacts.

The Environment Agency also takes action to ensure water companies have made robust plans for managing water supplies, although water companies themselves would decide on proposing water restrictions.

If the public see fish gulping for air that could be because of reduced oxygen and river flows, please report it the Environment Agency incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

More detail on the current water situation is available on the Environment Agency's Creating a Better Place blog:

[Summer has started – what does that mean for the water situation in England?](#)

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Press release: FC0 statement on the Hong Kong National Party

We note with concern the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government plans to prohibit the continued operation of the Hong Kong National Party. The rights to stand for election, of free speech and of freedom of association are enshrined in the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the Hong Kong Bill of Rights.

The UK does not support Hong Kong independence, but Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy, and its rights and freedoms, are central to its way of life, and it is important they are fully respected.

News story: A big day for our Bus Station investment

BEC has submitted a formal planning application for permission to do the work, which will be the catalyst for wider development of North Shore.

The total Bus Station project cost is £4.1m, of which Sellafield Ltd is providing £2.6m.

It will create a hothouse for tech, digital, media, and creative start-ups.

Alongside units for fledgling firms, the plan includes:

- conference and meeting space for 75 people
- an artisan food and drink outlet, open to the public
- health and wellbeing facilities

The scheme is part of our Transformation Programme, which seeks to leverage public and private sector investment to help grow and diversify the West Cumbrian economy.

To comment on the plans, quoting ref: 4/18/2292/0F1 visit:

Copeland Borough Council Office

Market Hall Office
Whitehaven

For further information, read the [‘Sellafield invests £2.6m to create Cumbria business hub’](#) article published in April 2018.