

The School Daily Mile – how it could benefit pupils at your school

The Daily Mile hit the national headlines last autumn from a Primary School in Scotland. In 2012, staff at St Ninians Primary School, were concerned about their pupil's fitness levels and stamina. To try and improve these issues the Head teacher decided to get the children to walk and/or run for 15 minutes, outside, everyday. Staff immediately saw the benefits of doing this, not only on pupil's physical fitness but also with their behaviour and ability to stay focussed in class. Three years on it is now fully embedded into the school culture and ethos and takes place on a daily basis.

School children in England are the least fit they have ever been and their sedentary lifestyles are to blame. Nationally, evidence suggests that two thirds of children lack basic fitness and only half of 7 year olds are meeting the physical activity guidelines (60 minutes of moderate activity per day), with girls being significantly less likely to meet the daily guidelines (38%) than boys (63%). Physical inactivity is a major risk factor for obesity. Childhood obesity levels in Dudley are higher than the national average, with 25.94% of reception pupils classed as overweight or obese and 38.67% of year 6 pupils.

A healthy child is much more likely to go on to be a healthy adult, so it is important that we set children on the right trajectory from an early age and continue to encourage healthy lifestyles as they move through life, this means instilling positive behaviour early on. Ukactive recommend a "whole-day approach" by integrating physical activity throughout the school day. The Daily Mile supports this approach and will help children to significantly increase their daily physical activity levels. In addition, the new Ofsted framework now puts a greater emphasis on healthy lifestyles, and schools will have to provide evidence of how they promote and encourage pupils to be physically active and also to eat a healthy diet.

Furthermore implementing a scheme such as the Daily Mile may provide additional benefits such as improved school attendance, due to lower sickness levels. Evidence also suggests a link between being physically active and higher academic achievement, and also improved classroom behaviour across the whole school.

Why is the Daily Mile so successful and sustainable?

- It's simple
All staff can implement it
- It's inclusive
Every child regardless of age, ability or fitness can do it
- It's free
The only requirement is some outside space which is not muddy
- It's safe
The children are in the school site under supervision
- It's non-competitive
It's not a race and pupils walk/run at their own pace
- The weather is not seen as a barrier
The children can go out in almost all weathers
- There is no need for children to change into kit
No time is wasted changing and kit cannot be forgotten
- No equipment is required
No resources are needed, no setting up, no tidy up
- It's quick
Fifteen minute turnaround from leaving desk to returning
- No timetable is needed
Teachers can choose when to go out and this makes it manageable, flexible and sustainable
- Buy in from children and staff
Every class has ownership of their Daily Mile and takes responsibility for making it their own

The Council's Dudley Healthy Schools Programme has developed a Daily Mile guidance pack and resources to support schools to implement the scheme. For more information on the Daily Mile or to request a guidance pack please contact Anna Hill anna.hill@dudley.gov.uk 01384 816264 or Ruth Hill ruth.hill@dudley.gov.uk 01384 816280.

[The high levels of child obesity in Dudley must be reduced and this offers one practicable way forward – and governors could easily get involved]