5 Approaches to Tackling Childhood Obesity

striver
Fit, Healthy, Happy Kids
www.striver-challenge.com
Five Approaches to Tackling Childhood Obesity

What can schools do to reverse the trend?

World Health Organisation research shows an alarming global increase in Childhood Obesity. Obese children are less likely to achieve well in school, hindering them from reaching their full potential when moving into the job market in later life. They are also more likely to have health problems later in life with increased chance of premature death. The resulting rising healthcare costs are a huge drain on the economy.

“Overweight and obesity impact on a child’s quality of life, and pose major health and economic consequences for them, their families and societies as a whole.”

DR SANIA NISHTAR, WHO COMMISSION CO-CHAIR

The message is clear; active children do better. Exercise, as well as being beneficial to physical health, improves learning outcomes and leads to improved mental health.

“Physical activity has multiple, far reaching effects that last into adulthood. For example, the physical training in a typical soccer practice helps reduce the risk for depression while the strength training in that same practice will increase long-term skeletal health. A commitment to physical activity is an investment in the future

DESIGNED TO MOVE REPORT

Schools are uniquely placed to tackle the childhood obesity crisis head on and in many countries, governments are realising this and making funds available. If schools are to have an impact however, they need to prioritise the fitness and health of their pupils.

Here are 5 approaches that we believe are key to schools successfully shaping the fit, happy and healthy adults of the future.

1. Delivering High Quality PE

Fantastic PE led by knowledgeable and confident teachers inspires pupils to grow a love for sport and physical activity. To deliver high quality PE, schools need confident and able teachers with access to quality resources.

Research by the University of Bedfordshire in the UK has shown that as much as 32% of primary school teachers are not confident teaching PE. Over a quarter say they don’t feel adequately qualified to teach the program and over half wanted more professional development opportunities for PE. Schools must support teachers by supplying quality PE CPD where it is needed if these figures are to be improved.

Striver will provide all the resources a school needs to deliver outstanding PE. Schemes of work for every year group will ensure progressive coverage across the school. Clear and concise lesson plans supported by a wealth of video resources will demonstrate best practice to teachers,
fulfilling their CPD need. Assessment will be made easy with teachers making judgements against a selection of key skills for each year group. These combine to make Striver’s 100 Key Skills which all pupils should aim to achieve by the end of their time at primary school.

While the idea of providing quality lesson plans to teachers might seem obvious, research by the Youth Sport Trust in the UK shows that most 5-7 year olds are getting an average of only 102 minutes of PE lessons each week. And of that, most PE lessons include approximately 7 minutes of physical activity. Striver’s suite of resources will ensure that pupils get the most out of lesson time and schools have the best possible foundations to build a real sporting culture.

PE experts create our planning so that it is accessible for all, whether teachers are PE specialists or not. The plans aim to engage and motivate all pupils through high levels of physical activity, whatever the ability. So many people are not active in their adult lives as a result of negative sporting experiences as a child but Striver’s planning aims to reward individual improvement from whatever the starting point, making each pupil feel empowered as they are succeeding.

2. Providing opportunities for pupils to be active and grow a love for physical activity

Once a school is confident that they are delivering effectively in lesson time, they can move on to considering what other opportunities they can make available to inspire a love of physical activity.

Children, by their nature, are competitive. Any element of competition raises engagement. The highlight of the year for many pupils is Sports Day. But are schools doing enough to create this sort of competitive buzz throughout the year? It is probably a yes for pupils who manage to get onto school teams but for many, the chance to get rewarded and really measure how their skills are developing comes only once a year.

Striver can provide a competitive buzz throughout the year by rewarding pupils for personal improvement in fitness and skills, as well as putting them in competition with other house teams, classes and even schools. It gives the historically non-sporty pupils the opportunity to feel a sense of achievement in PE lessons for the first time, with lots of virtual medals and Striver certificates up for grabs based on personal improvement. Its unique software allows schools from all over the world to compete without ever leaving the playground.

It is also a great solution for keeping pupils active at break times. Our simple activities can be run by play leaders and require little space or equipment.

Striver works to develop attitudes to learning which do not just have value in PE lessons but which help to develop the child as a whole. We provide a collection of assemblies aimed at developing a growth mindset in pupils through the stories of sporting heroes from the past. Eric ‘the Eel’ Moussambani teaches the children about perseverance, Derek Redmond about determination, Jesse Owens about respect, David Weir about Equality and Usain Bolt about excellence. We show pupils that with effort, comes reward.

After school clubs provide pupils with another opportunity to be active and also sample a range of different sports. Schools with a thriving sporting culture make sure they have a range of activities for pupils to choose from and also form strong links with clubs in the community so pupils and parents are aware of how to get involved with their favourite sports outside of the school setting. ‘Striver’ after school clubs are another way that our resources can add value to a school.
3. Leading by example

Schools should aim to create a culture of physical activity for all but are the adults always leading by example?

‘Get fit to live a healthy and happy life’. ‘You are what you eat’. ‘Join a sports club and feel the benefits of being part of a team’. These are all great messages and ones the majority of teachers are telling their pupils but what percentage of teachers are practising what they preach? How are we showing our commitment to keeping fit? We are trying to persuade pupils to keep active at break, lunch times and after the school day is over. Do they see us doing that?

Here’s what we can do:

- A large number of teachers keep in shape and it is important that they share this lifestyle choice with the pupils at every available opportunity, whether it be dropping into conversation that they went for a run the previous evening or that they are going to a Zumba session after school. It is important that they hear about how exercise can positively affect our lives, especially if they are not receiving this message at home.

- As great as hearing about the efforts of adults to keep fit can be, they are no match for pupils hearing about the wonderful experiences of their peers at sports clubs. We need to make time for pupils to inspire their classmates with stories of how their team came from behind to snatch a much-needed draw at the weekend, how they swam in front of a huge crowd at their first swimming gala or how they met their new best friend when they bumped heads playing tag rugby. It is these stories which show that there is more to a sports club than simply practising a sport and it is these which will have pupils going home asking to join in the fun.

- Some schools take the health and fitness of their staff just as seriously as their pupils and have walking/running clubs at lunchtime, many of which allow pupils to join in. What a fantastic way to bring pupils and adults in the school together working towards a common goal.

- Make sure staff room indulgences are confined to this sanctuary, away from the gaze of impressionable pupils. Better still, encourage staff to make healthy eating choices as much as we are encouraging our pupils.

- When teaching PE the adults should always aim to get involved as much as possible. Striver tasks and challenges provide the opportunity for teachers and parents to actively take part. What better motivation for a pupil to get practising than the prospect of beating their teacher at something!

A commitment to changes like these can really add to the sporting culture at a school and if a pupil is attending a school which really values the importance of this, then a healthy lifestyle will be a natural and enjoyable path to follow.

4. Making links between home and school

Of all the approaches discussed this may be the one which has had the least attention given to it by schools. If an impact is to be made, it is of vital importance that a consistent approach is being taken at home and at school.

Schools should aim to keep parents up to date with what’s being covered in lessons, challenges going on in the school and any wider competitions which pupils can get involved in. A schedule of
after school clubs should be available to parents. Some schools go one step further in this respect and set themselves the goal of ensuring that every pupil attends at least one sporting after school club.

Striver will make the link between school and home easy. Pupils have their own personal log-in and can share their achievements and virtual medal tally at home. They can also show parents exactly what skills they are learning through our video collection. With access to the full collection of activities and videos at home, parents and pupils can go out and practise these together.

Parents will be able to log in separately and see how pupils are doing in relation to their end of year expectations. They also have access to the full range of resources and can see what activities and games they could do with their child to help them meet the end of year expectations.

5. Creating a legacy

Schools provide the perfect platform to tackle Childhood Obesity and this message is beginning to reach the upper echelons of governments. In the UK for example, they continue to support this agenda in schools through the Sport Premium funding. What is important for schools to keep in mind, as they consider how best to spend available resources, is the long term effect of their spend. Are they plugging a hole temporarily with quick fix solutions or are they creating a legacy which is sustainable and can hold strong for many years to come?

The first step in making positive changes in a school is to assess the current situation. Every school should do a thorough audit of what’s currently on offer in school and try to prioritise any gaps that may become evident.

There are so many different ways to put money into PE in a school and schools must aim to make sure that whatever is introduced adds value and makes a difference to pupils over the long term. It is this element of sustainability that is key. When speaking at a conference on funding in the UK, Clare Fowler, Senior Policy Advisor within the PE and Sport Team of the DfE in the UK, proposed a key question for schools to consider when choosing how best to spend their funding, ‘If the funding went tomorrow, what would the legacy impact of it be?’ It is easy for schools to go down a road of using the money to hire sports coaches to teach lessons but if the funding went, schools would be back where they started.

Schools who are choosing Striver as a solution know that the increased motivation and competition it brings will help create a sporting ethos at their school, a vital component if the legacy of the funding is to be felt for many years to come. The regular stream of new content such as videos, planning resources and blog posts means that teachers are continually being upskilled and kept up to date with best practice.

With its depth of content and skilled expertise behind it, Striver can not only make an immediate impact in the PE provision at a school but also has the capability to ensure that this is sustained.

Conclusion

Our children are depending on us – all of us; parents, teachers, Head Teachers, governors, government, suppliers – to help them grow into healthy, productive adults.

*Let’s join together to help them!*
If you would like help in taking these ideas further...

Contact us to discuss your bespoke requirements. Such as videos localized for your curriculum, language and culture, and for your region’s favorite sports.

Contact Striver
Maria Brosnan – Managing Director
P: +44 (0)207 586 6198
E: maria@striver-challenge.com
T: MariaBrosnan
W: www.striver-challenge.com