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Healthy Lifestyles, Changing Lives

PSHE in a London borough: Healthy Lifestyle week at an infant and nursery school.

Edgware Infant and Nursery School, in North West London, has a broad socio-ethnic and cultural mix reflecting the diverse nature of the local community.

I was appointed to take on the role of Personal, Social, Health and Emotional (PSHE) co-ordinator three years ago and have recently been appointed a Leading Teacher for PSHE in the borough. I believe the role of PSHE co-ordinator is a huge and crucial role as it underpins the ethos and culture of the School.

Research has shown that a child's personal, social and emotional development, has a strong correlation with his/her self-esteem and confidence, thus impacting on them as learners.

The School in which I work is very enthusiastic about the Barnet Healthy Schools Scheme. The modules cover a wide range of issues and we have gained awards for a range of modules including: Emotional Health and Well-being, The Environment, Food and Nutrition, Physical Activity, Safety and most recently Substance Use and Drug Education.

Themed Weeks

Themed weeks are high profile events in the School calendar as we don't follow a normal routine. The children enjoy becoming engrossed in work on a particular theme for which all areas of the curriculum are linked. Several visitors are invited into school.

Healthy Lifestyle Week

We are committed to encouraging pupils to lead a healthy and active lifestyle and believe it is important to set these foundations early in children's education with the hope that they become a routine part of their lives.

As part of this work we held a Healthy Lifestyle week - during which pupils considered what contributes to a healthy lifestyle (including, getting enough sleep, drinking water, eating healthily, personal

hygiene and taking regular exercise).

During the Healthy Lifestyle week the School Nurse, a local dentist, a fitness instructor and a nutritionist worked with pupils across the School during a range of workshops.

Parental partnership

We consider parental partnership to be a particularly important element of the work we do. Parents/carers are invited to participate in workshops which address issues they are concerned about; e.g. as the School has several children who suffer from asthma, a parental workshop was based around this issue.

Working with the local hospital and School Nurse, parents/carers were advised how to reduce asthma triggers and discussed provision for children in school; e.g. ensuring an asthma pump is available in School. All adults working in the School are made aware of the children with asthma as well as the place where the inhalers are stored.

School meals

The School staff and parents/carers, along with the local authority, were also keen to improve the School meals: at Breakfast Club and for lunch. The lunch menu was consequently altered to include 'healthier options'. Parents/carers were also invited to sample the new menu with their children. Staff encouraged children to eat the new meals by eating lunch with the pupils.

In the future it is likely that healthy eating will become part of the Ofsted school inspection process, so it will be important for all schools to ensure healthy eating opportunities are promoted and become embedded into the school day.

'Fruit time'

Similarly, the School has incorporated a 'fruit time' into the School timetable. Pupils used to eat their fruit from the 5 a day scheme during playtime, but the introduction of 'fruit time' has allowed children to use

playtime as an opportunity to expend their 'extra energy' and engage in games such as football, skipping etc.

PSHE

The School's work on promoting the pupils personal, social, health and emotional development is deeply embedded in school practice. In order to motivate them to keep up this work, the children are often asked to complete tasks.

During Healthy Lifestyles week, the pupils were challenged by the gym instructor to complete 15 minutes of exercise each day over 21-days and to log this in a diary.

Some of the parents/carers were encouraged by their children to become involved with the challenge! In order to motivate and reward the children for their efforts, we organised a special certificate presentation ceremony for those who successfully completed the challenge.

One often hears the cliché that 'our children are our future', but this should not detract from the truth of these words. Schools, their staff, parents/carers and the children themselves need to be inspired to 'teach them well and let them lead the way.'

Top Tips for practitioners:

- ♦ Try to involve parents/carers in your work
- ♦ Reward the children/parents for their hard work!
- ♦ Work with outside agencies to help raise the profile of your work: children listen to a different voice!
- ♦ There are companies who can be approached to fund this work; e.g. sports voucher schemes run by supermarkets, British Heart Foundation
- ♦ Use the children's ideas: they will often also help you to gauge where bridges need to be built
- ♦ Build your work in to other national schemes; e.g. The Travel Plan