

I am a Physical Education teacher at the Kings of Wessex School in Cheddar. This is an upper school for 13-18 year old pupils, of which there are approximately 900.

I recently took on the role of Health & Fitness Co-ordinator within the school. My aim is to bring to the fore the importance of a healthy and active lifestyle for young people, which they will hopefully maintain and continue in later life.

Last year the Headmaster asked me if I would contribute to the monthly staff meeting, talk to staff on the health and fitness issue, and outline what issues the pupils covered.

I gave a 30-minute talk and explained the various ways the P.E. department attempt to test, measure and improve the fitness levels of the pupils, and how we try to enhance their knowledge on subjects such as nutrition, First Aid, alcohol and drugs, as well as the sensitive issue of sex education within the social studies programme.

Enthusiastic

I was pleasantly surprised at the staff's enthusiastic and interested response to my talk, and only too pleased to be able to answer some searching questions. It quickly became apparent that many of the staff were unaware of what health aspects were covered by the pupils and that a lot of them were quite naïve and knew limited amounts about their own health.

I had planned on organising a Health Week for the pupils, but decided after this meeting to design a programme for the staff. Not only did I believe that it would be a good exercise in lifting the morale of the staff and hopefully adding a little light-heartedness to the stress-filled life of the teacher but, more importantly, I felt that if the staff could be made more aware of the importance of their own health, this could only improve their personal portrayal of the subject within their lessons. After all, health education is now very

TERRY CLARK

A 'health fortnight' for school staff

much a cross-curricular issue in people's thinking.

I decided to run the programme over a two-week period. One wall of the staff room was set aside for the fortnight and was covered with posters, pamphlets and information on health issues. I also formed a small library of books on such topics as nutrition, stress, blood pressure, simple exercises, etc., and staff were free to borrow these if they wished.

Each day a particular section of the wall was devoted to the events taking place on the day, and details of future events were posted. I attempted to involve staff in the organisation as much as possible. For example, the domestic science teacher provided a large display on food and nutrition for the staff room, while the art department lent their expertise for certain tests carried out using their computer to monitor fitness levels and other factors. I must, at this stage, give a mention to the rest of the P.E. staff who gave me invaluable help and support throughout the programme.

Diverse

I attempted to make the two weeks as varied and diverse as possible so that, hopefully, there would be something to cater for all types. Therefore, something for the older and the younger, the energetic and the sedate, the fit and the not-so-fit! I wanted the emphasis to be on fun and enjoyment wherever this was possible.

Activities either took place at a lunchtime or during a free period. Staff were encouraged to use their valuable free periods for a little light relief and put the marking to one side for a change.

A member of the P.E. department was always available to organise equipment and also to supervise and instruct where necessary, for example with trampolining and weight-training.

Several volleyball matches against the pupils took place. There was a highly competitive netball match and there was a great demand for more aerobics. Golf equipment was provided and novices were introduced to the finer points of the game by our resident 'professionals' from the geography department. Archery was another very popular option which brought staff together in a relaxed environment and raised quite a few laughs too.

With the help of equipment from the science department, testing for cardio-vascular fitness was available and recovery rates were studied and discussed after some circuit training.

I estimated that over 75% of our staff of more than 60 members involved themselves in at least some of these activities. Some threw themselves in head-first and attempted virtually every activity on offer.

In order to give the health issue a suitably high profile and to stress the serious side of the subject, I invited the local GP and nurse to come in and lend their professional support.

Their response was tremendous and I am extremely grateful for the amount of energy and spare time they offered to the cause. With the help of Dr Lewis, 'personal health record cards' were devised. These were issued to staff who were then able to make lunchtime appointments to see the doctor and nurse at school on a private but informal basis. As can be seen from the card, each individual could discuss various aspects of their health with the doctor and receive free tests and professional advice. Many staff found this session most useful and reassuring.

Scurrying

In summing up the two weeks, I was very pleased with the outcome. The atmosphere in the staff room appeared to be lifted and it was great to see many teachers scurrying around the school in unaccustomed track-suits or shorts and carrying racquets and other sporting equipment. This stimulated the pupils' interest and they appeared genuinely interested in what their teachers were up to, and were amazed to see flushed and sometimes sweaty faces on those whom they only saw before behind classroom desks.

The profile of health and its fundamental importance seemed to be uplifted for a time with both staff and pupils. It was most encouraging to hear of teachers changing their lifestyle to a more healthy one. Some decided to cycle instead of drive to work, others went for a short jog at lunchtimes. I was even asked the location of the nearest fitness gym!

All in all, I feel the 'Fortnight' was a success, but with much room for improvement and development. Feedback of a positive nature and enthusiasm for more of the same have encouraged me to contemplate making 'Health Fortnight' an annual event.

Contact Terry Clark, The Kings of Wessex School, Station Road, Cheddar, Somerset BS27 3AQ (0934 742608).

HEALTH FORTNIGHT DIARY OF EVENTS — WEEK 1			
DATE	LUNCH TIME	AFTER SCHOOL	FREE PERIODS?
MON. 14th	Health check (Nurse)		Tennis 3 & 4/5, 6 & 7 Aerobics 3 & 4 Badminton 5, 6 & 7 Golf 5, 6 & 7
TUE. 15th	Trampolining Weight training Health check (Nurse)		Badminton 3 & 4 Tennis 3 & 4
WED. 16th	Fitness test (heart & lungs) Health check (Nurse)		
THUR. 17th	Volleyball Breast cancer screening & video (Nurse)	Archery 4.15 Cricket match v. Sedgemoor D.C. 6.30	Badminton 5 & 6 Tennis 5 & 6
FRI. 18th	'Coping with stress' at the King's Head		Basketball 3 & 4 Tennis 1-4

Above: This was the timetable for staff activities.

Right: This health record card was issued to staff. They could arrange for an informal meeting and examination with the nurse or GP.

NAME: _____

KINGS OF WESSEX STAFF HEALTH WEEK
Personal Health Record Card

TEST	RESULT	COMMENT
HEIGHT		
WEIGHT		
BLOOD PRESSURE		
URINALYSIS		
SMOKING		
FAMILY HISTORY OF HEART DISEASE		
FAMILY HISTORY OF DIABETES		
VISUAL ACUITY		
COLOUR VISION		
FITNESS TEST		

If this box is ticked it might be advisable for you to see your own GP in order to have your Cholesterol level measured.
However, he/she might well consider it a waste of time if you smoke cigarettes!

Are you up-to-date with your Tetanus Immunisation?

Ladies: when did you last have a Cervical Smear?
At least every five years is recommended.