4 September 1997

THE SCHOOLS HEALTH EDUCATION UNIT

An Exeter academic whose work has added greatly to our knowledge of children's behaviour and attitudes is leaving the University to set up his own company.

The Schools Health Education Unit, led by John Balding, has been set up as a limited company after 14 years as part of the University's School of Education. During that time it has established a national reputation working for health and education authorities in the UK, and is also well known overseas. For the Unit to continue building on this success it needs to move to a new business footing, and has therefore been formed into a limited company. The Unit will continue at its present address, with the same resources, on the St Luke's campus for another year. Its staff will continue working for the Unit.

Professor Charles Desforges, Director of the School of Education, said today: 'This is the best option if the Unit is to continue to grow. It is not uncommon for academics to leave pure research for the commercial world. This is a healthy situation and reflects the fact that much university research has direct relevance to the world at large. We wish the Unit every success in its new form.'

John Balding, the Unit's Director, said: 'This is an exciting new opportunity for the Unit to move forward. The high quality of the services we provide will continue to improve as we continue to interact with health care teams in communities throughout the UK and beyond. Recent progress in our health needs assessment programmes now effectively supports education and intervention programmes not only through schools and identified communities, but also through GP practices. The demand for our reports on longitudinal studies continues to grow.'

Note to News Editors: For further information please contact John Balding on 01392 264721 or Professor Charles Desforges on 01392 264835.

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER PRESS RELEASE CAN BE VIEWED ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB http://www.ex.ac.uk/TAU/ExeterPressRelease.html

John Balding
Young people in 1986 and 1996: spot the difference

This year saw the 11th consecutive appearance of our annual Young People report, which began in 1986. Years 8, 9 and 10 are represented within the sample of 22,067 pupils from 130 schools surveyed during 1996. We also took the opportunity of comparing the Year 10 data with data from the equivalent Year 4 (secondary) pupils that completed the much earlier version of the Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire in 1986, some of whom will now have their own children at school!

Young People in 1995 also includes, for the first time, extensive information about young people's involvement with, and expenditure on, arcade machines and scratch cards. The report is divided into ten sections, each of which concentrates on a particular aspect of the young people's lifestyle. A new section examines the use of gaming machines and Lottery scratch cards. A sample table from each section is presented here.

DIET: Weight and worry

To explore the connection between a young person's attitude to their own weight and their concern for how they appear to others, we analysed the data from 3756 Year 10 girls. Table 1 shows the result.

First of all, the bottom line of the right-hand column reveals that more than half of the whole sample would like to lose some weight (2295/3756). The upper line shows that fewer girls fall into the never worry about their looks category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude of Year 10 girls</th>
<th>Like to put on weight</th>
<th>Happy with weight</th>
<th>Like to lose weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not worried about looks</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardly worry</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worry a little</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worry quite a lot</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>30.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worry a lot</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number in category</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>1225</td>
<td>2298</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 1
Figure 1. Scattergrams showing the weight and height measurements for over 2500 15-year-old boys and girls in the 1996 survey.

TABLE 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yr 8 (12-13)</th>
<th>Yr 9 (13-14)</th>
<th>Yr 10 (14-15)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boys</strong></td>
<td><strong>Girls</strong></td>
<td><strong>Boys</strong></td>
<td><strong>Girls</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence with GP</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very uneasy</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite uneasy</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little uneasy</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At ease</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>58.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid responses</td>
<td>5190</td>
<td>5160</td>
<td>1371</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. DOCTOR & DENTIST: Talking to the doctor

The figures in Table 2 show that far fewer girls than boys are at ease when visiting the doctor. About 20% are quite uneasy or very uneasy.

The degree of ease is likely to depend upon the reason for the consultation, as well as on the ability of the GP to create a relaxed atmosphere. Data from earlier surveys showed that both boys and girls were more likely to feel at ease when the doctor was female (only likely, as only a quarter of GPs are women).

Further analysis shows that the percentage of Year 10 respondents that remember being at ease tends to be highest for those who made the most recent visit.

**Other doctor & dentist findings**

- **Going to the doctor** About 25% of the boys and 30% of the girls reported visiting their GP within the previous month, and about 50% of all the young people had done so within the previous three months.

- **Toothbrushing** About 70% of the boys and more than 80% of the girls brush their teeth at least twice a day.

**Books for £10!**

We are having to make space to accommodate the continuing flow of new publications. To help purge our shelves we have put together the most incredible offer in a long history of excellent value for money. For just £10 (including carriage) you will receive:

- Bully Off: Young people that fear going to school, by John Balding et al. (1996).
- Cash and Carry: Young people, their friends, and offensive weapons, by John Balding et al. (1996).
- Young People Into the Nineties, Book 1 (Doctor and Denst), by John Balding (1993).

Send a cheque for £10, payable to the Schools Health Education Unit, and your bargain package, containing about 600 pages in all, will be on its way to you.

- **T etal hygiene** More than a quarter of the boys and about 15% of the girls do not always wash their hands after using the lavatory, even if the facilities are available.

- **Baths & showers** More than 40% of the 14-15 year-old girls and a quarter of the boys had at least seven baths or showers during the week before the survey, 30% of the 12-13 year-old girls also achieved this number of 'cleansings'.

- **Disturbed nights** About a third of the boys and almost half the girls wake up with coughing at least occasionally.

- **Medication** Almost half the older girls had taken painkillers on at least one day during the previous week, and during the same period one quarter of the boys and a third of the girls had taken something for colds, throat infections, or flu.
Table 4 shows that half of the young people travelled by bike to school or were transported to school by car. Travelling by bike is the most popular method of transport, with over 60% of the students doing so. More than one method of transport can be re-used, with many students choosing a combination of bus or train and another, popular option being by bicycle.

Table 5 provides a breakdown of the time spent on transport to school, showing that boys spend more time travelling to school than girls. The average time spent on transport to school is 24 minutes for boys and 22 minutes for girls.

Table 6 highlights the percentage of boys and girls who travel to school by bus, tram, or train, with 15% of boys and 10% of girls using public transport. Boys are more likely to travel by car, with 45% of boys and 30% of girls using a car as their mode of transport to school.

Table 7 presents the percentage of boys and girls who walk to school, with 30% of boys and 25% of girls walking to school daily. Boys are more likely to walk to school than girls, with 5% of boys and 2% of girls walking to school less than once a week.

Table 8 shows the percentage of boys and girls who travel to school by bike, with 60% of boys and 50% of girls cycling to school. Boys are more likely to cycle to school than girls, with 15% of boys and 5% of girls cycling to school less than once a week.

Table 9 provides a breakdown of the percentage of boys and girls who travel to school by other means, with 5% of boys and 10% of girls using a skateboard, scooter, or other means of transport to school.

Table 10 shows the percentage of boys and girls who travel to school by bus, tram, or train, with 15% of boys and 10% of girls using public transport. Boys are more likely to travel by car, with 45% of boys and 30% of girls using a car as their mode of transport to school.

Table 11 highlights the percentage of boys and girls who walk to school, with 30% of boys and 25% of girls walking to school daily. Boys are more likely to walk to school than girls, with 5% of boys and 2% of girls walking to school less than once a week.

Table 12 shows the percentage of boys and girls who travel to school by bike, with 60% of boys and 50% of girls cycling to school. Boys are more likely to cycle to school than girls, with 15% of boys and 5% of girls cycling to school less than once a week.

Table 13 presents the percentage of boys and girls who travel to school by other means, with 5% of boys and 10% of girls using a skateboard, scooter, or other means of transport to school.

Table 14 shows the percentage of boys and girls who travel to school by bus, tram, or train, with 15% of boys and 10% of girls using public transport. Boys are more likely to travel by car, with 45% of boys and 30% of girls using a car as their mode of transport to school.

Table 15 highlights the percentage of boys and girls who walk to school, with 30% of boys and 25% of girls walking to school daily. Boys are more likely to walk to school than girls, with 5% of boys and 2% of girls walking to school less than once a week.

Table 16 shows the percentage of boys and girls who travel to school by bike, with 60% of boys and 50% of girls cycling to school. Boys are more likely to cycle to school than girls, with 15% of boys and 5% of girls cycling to school less than once a week.

Table 17 presents the percentage of boys and girls who travel to school by other means, with 5% of boys and 10% of girls using a skateboard, scooter, or other means of transport to school.

Table 18 shows the percentage of boys and girls who travel to school by bus, tram, or train, with 15% of boys and 10% of girls using public transport. Boys are more likely to travel by car, with 45% of boys and 30% of girls using a car as their mode of transport to school.

Table 19 highlights the percentage of boys and girls who walk to school, with 30% of boys and 25% of girls walking to school daily. Boys are more likely to walk to school than girls, with 5% of boys and 2% of girls walking to school less than once a week.

Table 20 shows the percentage of boys and girls who travel to school by bike, with 60% of boys and 50% of girls cycling to school. Boys are more likely to cycle to school than girls, with 15% of boys and 5% of girls cycling to school less than once a week.

Table 21 presents the percentage of boys and girls who travel to school by other means, with 5% of boys and 10% of girls using a skateboard, scooter, or other means of transport to school.
SPORT: Hard exercise

Table 7 presents the young people's report on their recent experience of strenuous exercise. About 40% of the boys, and a smaller percentage of girls, exercised vigorously three or more times during the previous week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 7</th>
<th>Yr 8 (12-13)</th>
<th>Yr 9 (13-14)</th>
<th>Yr 10 (14-15)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard exercise in past week</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three times or more</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid responses</td>
<td>4464</td>
<td>4005</td>
<td>1290</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 8</th>
<th>Yr 8 (12-13)</th>
<th>Yr 9 (13-14)</th>
<th>Yr 10 (14-15)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worry a lot or a lot</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way you look</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambling</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worry about at least one</td>
<td>623</td>
<td>764</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available sample</td>
<td>5288</td>
<td>5240</td>
<td>1386</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOCIAL & PERSONAL: Worries

The bottom percentage line in Table 8 shows that more girls than boys are 'worriers'.

Overall, the boys' highest percentages are discovered under none of these, whereas the girls' are for the way you look.

Family problems are also an important source of concern, as in money for the Year 10 group. Drugs cause more concern than smoking, drinking, or AIDS.

Other 'social & personal' findings

- Boyfriends and girlfriends 76% and 68% of the 16-17 year old boys and girls respectively did not have a current partner.
- Information about sex Parents become less important, and friends become more important, with increasing age, but the majority of teenagers of all ages feel that their parents should be the main source of information.
- Worries 'How you look' is the principal worry for girls, but career, family, and HIV/AIDS are also high on the list of the older teenagers.
- Self-esteem In the scoring method used in the surveys, 'boys' self-esteem tends to be higher than girls'.
- Control of personal health At least a third of the young people feel that their health is dominated by external factors that they can do nothing about. Among the rest, more boys than girls feel that they are, in fact, able to do something positive about their health.
- Getting on with adults About 40% of the 12-13 year olds give 'mother and father' as the adults with whom they get on best. For the 14-15 age group, 'another' alone is also nominated by a substantial percentage.
- Life satisfaction More than 15% of the boys and 20% of the girls record a depressed outlook, while about the same proportion are not sure how they feel. About 20% of the boys and 12% of the girls, however, are very satisfied with their lives.

Transmitting HIV More than a third of the young people surveyed think that blood transfusions in the UK are potentially dangerous.

PERSONAL SAFETY: Carrying personal protection

Girls are less likely than boys to carry protection. Their form of security is likely to be a sound alarm or spray. A weapon with a blade is by far the most popular protection for the boys. The percentage that never carry anything is almost unchanged from year to year, which suggests that the need to carry personal protection is perceived at a very early age, perhaps even in primary school.

Sound alarms and sprays have a more defensive function than the other items, and their provision may be accepted, even funded, by parents.

Other 'personal safety' findings

- Neighbourhood safety Up to a quarter of the young people think that safety outside after dark is poor or very poor.
- Bullying About a third of the 12-13 year old girls and a quarter of the boys sometimes, often, or very often fear going to school because of bullying.
- Fear of physical attack About 12% of the 14-15 year old girls fear physical attack often or very often, while over half the girls and more than one-third of the boys fear it at least some times.
- Carrying personal protection A third of the 14-15 year old boys, and 20% of the girls, report that they may carry some kind of protection when they go out.
10. SCRATCH CARDS & GAMBLING MACHINES: Frequency of playing

This section developed out of collaborative work with Dr Sue Fisher. Her work is funded by Office, and she describes her findings in reports available from that organisation (2 Monck Street, London SW1 Y2Q, 0171 227 2000). About 30% of the Year 8 respondents had tried scratch cards during the past year. Almost half the Year 10 boys, and 40% of the girls, had done so. About 14% of the Year 10 boys and 8% of the girls appear to play at least once a week. More than 60% of the Year 8 boys had played on gambling machines during the previous year. This is more than the percentage of Year 10 boys. About a third of all the girls had played. The level of gambling does not change very much between Years 8 and 10, but there is a noticeable increase in the number of older respondents trying their luck with scratch cards. This suggests that the arcade-game habit has already been formed by Year 8, whereas scratch cards become more tempting (or accessible) with increasing age.

Other 'gambling' findings

- **Amount spent**: On average, the 14-15 year old male players spent £3.66 on arcade machines during the previous month. The girl players spent £1.58.
- **Getting addicted**: At least a quarter of the players reported having spent more money than they originally intended to on at least one occasion during the previous year.
- **Stealing to play**: During the previous year, about 10% of the older boys and 5% of the girls had taken, or obtained, playing money without permission.

### 1986–1996

**A comparison for 14–15 year olds**

**DIET**

**Compared with what they recorded in 1986...**

- More are having something for **BREAKFAST**
- More are having **PACKED LUNCH** at school
- Fewer go **HOME** for lunch
- More girls are having **SOMETHING** for lunch
- Fewer are eating **CHIPS** frequently
- Fewer are eating **CRISPS** frequently

**DOCTOR & DENTIST**

**Compared with what they recorded in 1986...**

- They are going to the **DOCTOR** slightly more frequently
- More are **BRUSHING** their teeth twice daily instead of only once
- The frequency of visits to the **DENTIST** has not changed
- Fewer record having had **FILLINGS** on their last visit to the dentist

**HEALTH & SAFETY**

**Compared with what they recorded in 1986...**

- Fewer seem to have gone on a **CYCLING COURSE**
- More are **WASHING** their **HANDS** whenever possible after using the toilet
- Similar high numbers take **PAINKILLERS**

**FAMILY, HOME & NEIGHBOURHOOD**

**Compared with what they recorded doing in 1986...**

- Fewer (especially boys) are going to school by **BICYCLE**
- Fewer are watching **TELEVISION** for 3 hours or more
- More are watching **NO TELEVISION** at all
- More play **COMPUTER GAMES**
- Fewer are reading **BOOKS** for enjoyment

**DRUGS**

**Compared with what they recorded doing in 1986...**

- More are smoking **CIGARETTES**
- BEER AND LAGER drinking patterns are **similar**
- CIDER consumption has fallen slightly
- Consumption of **WINE** may have increased slightly
- Consumption of **FORTIFIED WINE** by girls has dropped considerably
- **SPIRITS** appear to have become more popular with girls
- Overall, fewer young people are **DRINKING** more per head
- Fewer are buying **alcoholic drink** in a pub or bar, but more are purchasing it from an off-licence and possibly from a supermarket
- More are drinking at **friends’ and relations’ **HOMES**
- [Questions about illegal drugs were not asked in 1986.]

**MONEY**

**Compared with what they recorded doing in 1986...**

- Fewer, especially boys, report having a regular paid **JOB**
- More girls work as **BABYSITTERS**
- Fewer girls work in a **SHOP** or have a **PAPER ROUND**
- The ‘workers’ are not working such long **HOURS**
- More are putting money into **SAVINGS** schemes

**SPORT**

**Compared with what they recorded doing in 1986...**

- FEWER GIRLS are participating in the listed sports

**SOCIAL & PERSONAL**

**Compared with what they recorded doing in 1986...**

- A similar percentage have a **BOYFRIEND** or **GIRLFRIEND**
- Fewer use their parents as their main source of information about **SEX**, more turn to their **friends**
- Teachers are much less likely to be approached about **SCHOOL PROBLEMS**
- More would share problems to do with money, **health**, and career with **MOTHER AND FATHER** together
- Their selection of their FAVOURITE ADULT was very similar

[THe groups of questions about personal safety and gambling did not appear in the 1986 questionnaire.]

Towards the half-million...

The total number of young people that have completed the HBBQ is fast approaching the 400,000 mark. Adding our other questionnaires (Primary HBBQ, Just-a-Tick, and those used in special studies) means that the SHEU 'machine' has processed data from about half a million young people since the first organised surveys in the early 80s.