

Being active helps students in school

- New data shows that students that are physically active report improvements to their schoolwork, behaviour and mental health, compared to inactive students

Helping children and young people get active during school can play a vital role in helping them catch up on missed schoolwork during the Covid-19 pandemic, and in supporting their mental health, new insight shows.

Today Sport England, Activity Alliance, Association for Physical Education and the Youth Sport Trust release new data that reveals staff (92%) believe that being physically active helps with school work and 91% of students report they feel that being physically active can improve their mental and physical health.

The research was collected by Sheffield Hallam University on student (76, 085) and teacher (5, 955) attitudes, as part of Sport England's [Secondary Teacher Training Programme](#) (STT),

It showed that:

- Active students are happier (70% v's 50%) and more confident to try sport (76% v's 38%) than inactive students.
- Young people report that being physically active improves their mood (71%), behaviour (55%) and school-work (49%).
- The vast majority of staff agree with this, with 93% reporting they feel that being active benefits pupil behaviour and 92% reporting they feel it has positive effects on school-work.
- Activity provides social opportunities and enables students to connect with one another, with 59% agreeing that it helps them to make friends.
- Physical activity has the potential to reduce stress and anxiety by providing routine and structure and increasing feelings of wellbeing: 71% of students and 99% of staff feel that being active has a positive effect on their mood.

- Students who are active report higher levels of happiness and self-worth
- 87% of staff feel that being physically active has a positive impact on the school environment (ethos, values, culture, identity)
- The majority of students surveyed (78%) enjoy being physically active.

The Secondary Teacher training programme provides funding and access to professional development opportunities for all PE teachers to support them to design and deliver PE, school sport and physical activity that best suits student's needs. It also helps teachers promote the importance of PE physical activity within their school.

Activity levels of many children and young people have reduced significantly from pre-lockdown with a third of children saying that the absence of school had a major impact on their ability to be active.¹

With schools now re-opened, the STT programme can help with simple measures, such as helping schools offer more choice in how to be active, and how to build in activity across the school day. This is important because active students are happier (70% vs 50%) and feel more confident (76% vs 38%) to take part in sport compared to inactive students.

The data also showed that schools with an active travel plan in place were also able to get more children active before they even reach the school gates. Next week many primary schools will be encouraging parents and students to take part in Walk to School week to help build in those essential active minutes, which can help set them up for a positive day in the classroom.

Tim Hollingsworth, CEO, Sport England said, "When schools were closed, we know that children found it harder to get active and did less activity than normal. Now that they are back open, we have a fantastic opportunity to help them reengage with both sport and exercise - and this new research tells us it's not only great for their physical health, it boosts their mental health, supports good behaviour, and academic achievement too.

¹ Sport England: Children's experience of physical activity in lockdown, July 2020.

“Teachers are under pressure right now and we hope we can relieve some of that by delivering with our partners free support for schools in how to engage students with physical activity. It’s based on our knowledge of what it takes to build physical literacy - that they are more likely to take part if activity is enjoyable, if there’s choice, and they are involved in the design of opportunities. It will also help staff to take a whole school approach to healthy lifestyles, creating opportunities before, after and throughout the school day.”

As more children return to school after such a long time away, the SST programme can help schools plan their PE, school sport and activity provision. There is free support to help schools include physical activity in lessons, adapt PE to make sure more students enjoy and build in active travel to and from school.

Imran Iqbal, Deputy Headteacher, Telford Priory School said, “At Telford Priory School we decided to involve students in establishing our priorities for our PE curriculum. The Secondary Teacher Training programme has helped to support our teachers deliver enjoyable sport for all abilities, which has helped create a monumental shift in reaching students who traditionally sat on the periphery of PE lessons.

“The benefits of keeping students safely active has never been more important than it is now. Our lessons include building communication skills, teamwork and resilience, as well as making sport and physical activity fun. This helps manage their mental and physical health, do better in school and develop positive habits for a lifetime.”

Schools can sign up to the programme and access the new range of resources available on the [Sport England website](#).

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Notes for Editors

For further information and interview opportunities please contact:
media.team@sportengland.org

About Sport England

Sport England is a public body and invests up to £300 million National Lottery and government money each year in projects and programmes that help people get active and play sport.

It wants everyone in England, regardless of age, background, or level of ability, to feel able to engage in sport and physical activity. That's why a lot of its work is specifically focused on helping people who do no, or very little, physical activity and groups who are typically less active - like women, disabled people and people on lower incomes.

About the Secondary Teacher Training programme

Sport England is investing up to £13.5 million of National Lottery funding into a Secondary Teacher Training programme, working in partnerships with the Activity Alliance, Association for Physical Education, and the Youth Sport Trust.

Sheffield Hallam University is evaluating the programme on behalf of all partners, surveying staff and students before and after their involvement in the programme.

The data published today is based on survey responses from 76, 085 secondary pupils and 5,955 staff between September 2019 and March 2020.

Over 2,000 secondary schools across England are currently benefitting from this funding. The final deadline for schools to sign up is 23 October 2020.