

# The Daily Mile

Daily Mile: Findings from the Foundation Phase, where creativity and partnership define the direction.

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# What is the Daily Mile?

- Daily Mile established by Elaine Wylie at St Ninians Primary School in Stirling.
- ‘The aim of the daily mile is to improve the physical, social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing of our children’ (Daily Mile Foundation 2018).
- The initiative sees primary school children run, walk or jog for 15 minutes every day. It is inclusive, simple and free, with no equipment or set up required.

# Strong Messages from the Welsh Government.

- In January 2017 the Welsh Government Ministers for Education and Public Health wrote a joint letter to all head teachers of Primary schools in Wales to encourage them to consider the Daily Mile
- “Engaging with The Daily Mile will support primary schools to implement the new curriculum, which puts a focus on making physical activity a more routine part of the school day.” (Kirsty Williams AM 2017)

# Our Study

- A year long exploration of the implementation of the daily mile by the foundation phase in a Swansea Primary School.
- 89 children took part in the study.
- Children's Experiences (Focus Groups)
- Teachers Experiences (Diaries and Focus Group)
- Baseline and follow up BMI measurements and fitness tests.
- Parental questionnaire exploring activity levels outside of school.

# Engagement with physical activity outside of school.

- Parents detailed the amount of time children engaged in physical activity.
- Time spent engaging in sedentary activities.
- A disproportionately large amount of time spent in front of screens.
- This increased with age.
- Less than 5 children engaged in organised clubs or activities.

# Body mass index (BMI)

- The children's height and weight were measured by the school nursing service.
- This data was combined to calculate the BMI.
- The BMI results were linked to centiles.
- The baseline observations revealed that 46% of the children were very overweight or obese.
- This compares to a Welsh National Average of 26% (Child measurement programme, 2017)

# Body mass index (BMI)

- Following the study children's BMI were unchanged across the cohorts.
- This was not what we expected!

# Fitness Test

- A fitness test was undertaken by all children.
- Star Jumps
- Throwing and catching a ball
- Shuttle runs
- Bronze, Silver, Gold
- Across all cohorts the children scored at the lowest level of fitness.
- 67% Of children 5-7 did not meet expected fitness for their age group.  
(Fit for sport, 2014)

# Fitness Test

- All children achieved the highest level in jumping and shuttle runs following the study.
- The achievements in throwing and catching remained unchanged.

# Teachers Experiences

- “I agree with the purpose of the daily mile, but I feel that there are more enjoyable activities for children of this age”
- “It’s so difficult to measure the outcomes of this activity as there are so many other factors that influence their health and wellbeing”
- “It almost became robotic, it just became something that we do in school... the majority just get on with it with no real expression of feelings”

# The children's voice

**When asked “Do you like the Daily Mile”**

**Children from the purple group stated that “they enjoyed the song and that running was fun”.**

**Four children from the Green group also commented on liking music but one little boy explained that “no, they may fall over and hurt themselves”.**

**The use of music is a strong recurring theme throughout both the children's and their teacher's responses and suggests that a creative approach was taken at times to ensure the daily mile was attractive to the children and importantly enabled them to enjoy and have fun completing it. This supports the foundation Phase philosophy of enabling children to engage with creative imaginative activities whilst having fun.**

# Positive Experiences

- “One boy really challenges himself during the daily mile. You can see him waiting to go and he wants to go faster every time”
- “I have seen a big difference in one of the children in my class. He had real difficulty in sitting and was not engaged in class. Since starting the daily mile he is noticeably calmer and more engaged after the activity”
- “There have been some surprises, some children that you wouldn’t have thought would like it have done really well”

# The children's voice.

When asked, I like to do the daily mile best when it's with:  
My Teacher. With friends. On my own.

A little boy stated that "I like to run on my own because I can run like a train" (Green group)  
Three children from the yellow group liked to do it all the time with a mixture of the options.  
One little one from the purple group liked to run with a friend so they were not alone.

Since you have done the Daily Mile do you feel  
Normal. A little bit calm and relaxed. Really calm and relaxed.

The green group commented that they ran to music which helped them feel calm.  
10 of the children felt really relaxed and calm with 4 feeling normal

# Suggestions for future activities

- “I notice a difference in the children when we do other activities such as just dance, busy feet or cosmic yoga”
- “I think a range of activities is needed to increase the motivation of teachers and the children, the children will ask for cosmic yoga or busy feet, but they don’t ask for the daily mile”
- “We can see the children’s faces changing and observe their feelings when they are dancing or doing yoga, they are engaged calm and happy, you can see their mood changing”

# Summary

- The teachers generally showed an excellent level of insight into the children's preferences and needs.
- There was a general feeling that a greater emphasis on choice and creativity linked to physical activity is required for foundation phase children.
- The majority of children do not do any activity outside of school, so this an opportunity to really engage them and offer a range of experience.
- BMI was not impacted
- Mixed results from the fitness tests

# Last words, from the children.

- “It’s fun”
- “Makes me laugh”
- “Makes me tired like sleeping” (green group)
- Happy because it “Keeps me fit”. “My shoes get faster”. “It’s fun” (green group).
- “Happy because I like running”, “sad because I don’t like running” (yellow group)
- “Happy because it makes my heart pump” (purple group).