Smile for a Mile
Creating active schools and children in Cheshire West and Chester
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What is Smile for a Mile

The principle of Smile for a Mile is simple. Every child will run, walk or do a combination of both for 15 minutes in the school day, every day. The distance children run will vary from year group to year group and from child to child, but importantly, all children can participate. All children should be encouraged to achieve new goals and will benefit from improved health.

The mile provides the consistent focus to achieve an extra 15 minutes of daily physical activity. It gives a purpose that children can identify with and become used to, helping to create a healthy habit for life. It is also the tool that teachers can use to weave the curriculum in and out of as appropriate across the school year, as they know best.

The aim of Smile for a Mile is to improve the physical, social and mental health and wellbeing of children regardless of age, ability or personal circumstances.

The facts

- Currently, just 23 per cent of boys and 20 per cent of girls meet the national recommended level of activity (Public Health England July 2017)
- 1 in 5 children start primary school overweight or obese, rising to more than a third by the time they leave (Public Health England July 2017)
- The number of children meeting the recommended amount of physical activity for healthy development and to maintain a healthy weight, which is 60 minutes a day, drops by 40 per cent as they move through primary school (Public Health England July 2017)
- 91 per cent of children aged two to four years do not meet the Chief Medical Officers’ physical activity guidelines for their age group (The British Heart Foundation National Centre for Physical Activity and Health, The Best Start in Life)
- Children in reception year who were overweight and obese in Cheshire West and Chester - 20.6 per cent (National Child Measurement Programme 2016/17)
- Children in year six who were overweight and obese in Cheshire West and Chester – 32.7 per cent (National Child Measurement Programme 2016/17)
- Being active made the majority of 5 to 11 year olds feel happier (79 per cent), more confident (72 per cent), and more sociable (74 per cent), according to their parents (Public Health England July 2017)
- Nearly all children said they liked being active (93 per cent) (Public Health England July 2017)
- The main motivations for kids to be more active was having friends to join in (53 per cent) and having more activities they liked to choose from (48 per cent) (Public Health England July 2017).
Why Smile for a Mile

Active children do better

Childhood obesity and excess weight are significant health issues for individuals, their families, and public health. It can have serious implications for the physical and mental health of a child, which can then follow on into adulthood.

There is significant and growing evidence to demonstrate that physical activity makes children healthier, happier, perform better at school and in life. Eustace de Sousa, National Lead for Children, Young People and Families, Public Health England says:

Active children are healthier

It has long been a known fact that physical activity is an important feature of healthy development and inactivity is a risk factor for a range of serious conditions that can develop during childhood. Physically active children have lower blood pressure levels, more favourable levels of fats in their blood, higher bone density and decreased body fat.

Active children are emotionally and socially better off. There is compelling evidence that regular physical activity can have a positive effect on emotional and social wellbeing. Twenty minutes of physical activity a day has been shown to:

- Increase self esteem
- Reduce anxiety
- Reduce social isolation
- Develop stronger and more varied friendships
- Enhance mood
- Help self-regulate emotions
- Develop interpersonal skills.

“Children’s physical activity levels in England are alarmingly low, and the drop in activity from the ages of five to 12 is concerning. Children who get enough physical activity are mentally and physically healthier, and have all round better development into adulthood - getting into the habit of doing short bursts of activity early can deliver lifelong benefits. This programme is part of our work to help children get the right amount of physical activity, both in school and out, as set out in the Childhood Obesity Plan.”
Active children's brains work better

Recent advances in brain science leave little doubt that physical activity helps brains work more effectively.

“We now know that physical activity improves concentration, attention, memory, planning and a host of abilities that are fundamental to educational success. We also know that activity is particularly valuable in fuelling brain processes that underlie maths and reading.”

Active Kids Do Better - Dr Richard Bailey, International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education

Active children develop positive life skills

Physical activity can contribute to the development of positive core values, attitudes and skills like trust, perseverance, empathy, leadership and cooperation.

“These teachers have not only helped to make these kids fit today, they have bought them another seventy years of better health”

Maureen Bisognano, CEO Institute for Healthcare Improvement

And finally...

Contrary to what many believe, evidence suggests that children perform better when physical activity is used as a break from classroom learning. Children return with better attention, concentration and motivation and, with this in mind, physical activity breaks throughout the day are beneficial to children's learning.

“If you said that every child had to be out and walk or run a mile every day, it would cost nothing. This is an inexpensive, sensible, common sense way to promote activity and being healthy. We would like all schools to do this... It also makes children more chirpy, more inclined to learn, and more confident. It is a win-win solution.”

Shirley Cramner, CEO Royal Society for Public Health
Why is Smile for a Mile so successful and sustainable

It’s simple - All staff can implement it without the need for any specific, technical training

It’s inclusive - Every child regardless of age, ability or circumstances can do it and achieve

It’s essentially free - The only requirement is this understanding and some outside space which is not muddy

It’s safe - The children participate in a safe space and under supervision

It’s outside in the fresh air - An indoor activity is just not the same, the freedom of being outside is important

It’s non-competitive - Everyone succeeds, goals can be personal to every child

It is sociable - The children communicate well with their peers and their teacher during the mile

The weather is seen as a benefit, not a barrier - The children go out in almost all weathers, it builds resilience

There is no need for children to change into kit - No time is wasted changing and kit can’t be forgotten

No equipment is required - No resources needed, no setting up, no tidy away

It’s quick - Fifteen minute turnaround from door to door, no warm up, no cool down

No timetable is needed - Teachers choose when to go out and this makes it manageable, flexible and sustainable

Belongs to the children and staff - Every class has ownership of their mile and takes responsibility for making it their own.

Keep It Simple
Remember that the whole point of Smile for a Mile is to improve the children’s physical and mental health and wellbeing - there is no need to over-complicate it. The main thing is that the children go out each day and run/walk, with their friends, in the fresh air.
Creating active schools and children in Cheshire West and Chester

What teachers have told us about their Smile for a Mile

“They cannot wait to go outside and complete the mile. It also gives the children and staff the time to talk and socialise whilst keeping healthy... you often find yourself walking along with a small group having a chat in a positive environment”
Deputy Headteacher, Rossmore Primary School

“Although many of the staff had lots of ‘what if’ questions when we first introduced it, they soon realised that it is a simple concept that has motivated their pupils to keep fit and have an active break from learning”
Deputy Headteacher, Rossmore Primary School

“Smile for a mile has had a positive impact on wider aspects such as behaviour, social engagement and development, improved confidence and self-esteem”
PE Lead, Horn’s Mill Primary School

“The biggest impact we have seen has been the increase in enthusiasm from the children and class teachers to get involved. Enjoyment has been a big part of the success of smile for a mile in our school. Staff wellbeing and social interaction with other teachers and pupils in an informal environment has also been a positive impact”
PE Lead, Horn’s Mill Primary School
General Feedback

- No equipment or kit required, no need to change their clothes
- A time for some children to talk to their teacher about a problem they would not discuss in class
- Fresh air brightens their mood
- Children get a chance to be equal
- ASL children able to join in on equal footing and show enjoyment
- Can easily include other topics such as maths – e.g. data handling
- Easy to implement
- Stimulates the brain for learning
- Runs off energy and allows children to settle better in class
- Improves concentration
- Helps with motivation on return to class
- Children look forward to it, have a focus
- It’s an afternoon break with a purpose
- It makes children more determined to succeed
- Improves teacher’s concentration so children benefit
- Mental alertness is improved
- Embeds resilience in children.

Hints and tips from Staff that have implemented Smile for a Mile

- Use a variety of ways to run the mile, e.g. counters to keep a check on how many laps, count class total daily, do personal marathons, how many laps in a certain time etc.
- Buddy up! Reception year children benefit from running with their year six buddies and vice versa
- Run in teams with defined roles – e.g. each member is a pacemaker for one lap
- Personal best time to encourage individual achievement
- Loyalty points! Provide stamp cards when running laps for the marathon
- Don’t go out when it’s really pouring with rain – the timing is flexible, so use it
- On the days when you can’t be bothered or you are unmotivated DO IT! You will feel better for it
- Vary it / provide further challenge to keep children engaged throughout the year
- Enjoy it, you can benefit too! And the children will be motivated by seeing you moving too
- Be flexible with timings and vary when you go out
- Slagger times between classes to make sure it is manageable – and avoid traffic jams!
- Link to the curriculum sometimes but not always – it can be as beneficial to have an active break
- Run for a reason, such as:
  - to a place you are visiting on an upcoming school trip
  - run a river or across a continent
  - follow the journey of someone famous or studied in the curriculum
- Have some of your own class rules and involve the children in making them
- Don’t worry too much about the transition - it becomes very smooth and slick as children get used to it
- Talk about the health and wellbeing benefits of Smile for a Mile so children understand why they are doing it – both emotional and physical benefits
- Doing it every day is key – normalise it and make it fun, it soon becomes a habit for everyone!
What do parents think of the Smile for a Mile?

“We are fully on board with the Smile for a Mile. Healthy lifestyles are so important to our children and we’ve only ever heard positive things from them about Smile for a Mile!”

*Parent*, Horn’s Mill Primary School

*And some other comments from a range of parents in Cheshire West and Chester:*

“... is extremely beneficial to all children’s knowledge and understanding of health and wellbeing. ... I feel this is essential learning which can be carried into later life.”

“... it is such a quick turnaround it doesn’t take much time away from learning and probably helps health and wellbeing, as well as concentration, etc..”

“... loves doing it. He always tells us how many laps he has managed - brings in a wee bit of his competitive side that we don’t see much of!”

“... it impacts on healthy choices and lifestyle at home.”

“... allows them to socialise with friends and not just view exercise as competitive sport but something to enjoy.”

*Any concerns from parents?*

“Just that the initiative will continue from term to term and year to year!”
What do children like about Smile for a Mile

“Smile for a Mile is fun! It’s good for our health and encourages us to exercise more. Getting fresh air in the middle of the day is a great way to relax!” Yr6 Pupil

“It’s nice to get out of the classroom for a bit” Yr5 Pupil

“I think it is important to keep fit and Smile for a Mile helps me do this.” Yr6 Pupil

Generally, children taking part in Smile for a Mile have said:

- It wakes you up and keeps you happy
- It wakes you up and gets you ready for learning
- It makes you physically and mentally stimulated and keeps you healthy and fitter and it’s fun!
- After coming in from the mile we always feel really good about it
- It releases a feeling into your head which makes you feel happy.
Time to Move!

Support and advice is available, but use these simple steps to start your mile with ease:

1. Set a date for when you want to start (why not tie in to a key date or event at the school?)
2. Send out communication to parents (making sure everyone knows what is happening and why is essential)
3. Discuss in assemblies and meetings (the more you can talk about it, the better prepared all involved will be)
4. Raise awareness of why you are doing Smile for a Mile (the health benefits are undisputed, so make sure people know there’s a sensible reason for doing this)
5. Invite parents in for a one off parent mile (this can be a great way of showing your parents that there is nothing to worry about, and gaining their support!)

And don’t forget to bear in mind feedback from those that are already doing it!

- It works best if it happens at a time of the class teacher’s choosing (don’t impose it!)
- The children and staff must have ownership of their mile
- If it’s cold or raining lightly, they wear a jacket. If it’s warm they take their sweatshirt off. Trainers are usually worn but not essential
- There is no need for the children to warm up or warm down - they just start moving at their own pace
- The children are encouraged to run where appropriate but many of them do a combination of walk and run - this is fine
- It’s very slick - it should last only fifteen minutes maximum from the children leaving their desk to returning to their seat. This means that they may actually only be on the mile for, say, ten to twelve minutes, but this is enough time every day
- It needs to be daily or the children will find it hard to do and won’t get the full benefits, it soon becomes normal and a healthy habit
- Make links to learning across the curriculum where appropriate, helping to keep it fresh and motivating
- Social and informal, a positive experience. The children need to enjoy how they participate and this may be by chatting to friends as they go
- It must be additional physical activity and form part of a healthy, active school culture. It is not sport, it is not PE or an optional break activity (although for those who want even more, why not).
Interested in joining up?

If you like the sound of having Smile for a Mile in your school, why not let us know and we would be happy to talk to you in more detail. Simply fill in the form below, return by post or email, and wait for one of our team to be in touch.

Please return to: Active Cheshire, c/o Team West, Wyvern House, The Drumber, Winsford, CW7 1AH
Email: TeamWest@ActiveCheshire.org

Reply Form

School name:

Address:

Postcode:

Head teacher/lead contact name:

Lead contact role if not head teacher:

Email address:

Telephone number:

No. of pupils at the school:    No. of classes at the school:    No. of teaching staff at the school:
By working together, collaborating on shared aims and objectives we can achieve more for the residents of Cheshire West and Chester. Together, we proudly bring a range of expertise, knowledge and resources to the Smile for a Mile initiative that will support schools to transform their physical activity offer, improving the health and wellbeing of their pupils for the rest of their lives.

Acknowledgements
Sincere thanks to all of the schools that have been involved in the Smile for a Mile initiative so far . . .

Websites
Cheshire West and Chester Council
www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

West Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group
www.westcheshireccg.nhs.uk

Vale Royal Clinical Commissioning Group
www.valeroyalccg.nhs.uk

Active Cheshire
www.activecheshire.org

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