



Launch of Waterford Active Schools Programme Evaluation Report

Mr. John Treacy, Chief Executive of The Irish Sports Council recently launched a Report evaluating the Waterford Sports Partnership's Waterford Active Schools Programme (WASP). This piece of research, which was funded by the Irish Sports Council, was compiled by Waterford Sports Partnership and the Centre for Health Behaviour Research in Waterford Institute of Technology.



Background to the programme

In 2007 Waterford Sports Partnership designed and successfully piloted a 4 week physical activity initiative called the WASP Programme. The programme aims to increase awareness of the importance of being physically active and to encourage families to make activity a natural part of daily living. Children are encouraged to do at least 60 minutes and adults 30 minutes of daily exercise as per the guidelines set by The Irish Heart Foundation. Each child is given a record card and once they or their nominated adult have completed their daily exercise quota the child's teacher gives them Wizzy (the programme mascot) stickers.

Research

In late 2007/early 2008 the WASP research project, partly funded by the Irish Sports Council, was carried out in conjunction with WIT to evaluate the programme. The aim of the research was to assess if the programme resulted in an increase in physical activity levels and to identify if there was a change in attitudes towards physical activity because of the programme. Surveys were completed by the 4th class children and their nominated parent in 18 Waterford Schools.

Key Findings

The overall response to WASP was very positive. The programme resulted in an increase in the physical activity levels and confidence to be active of the least active children ie. the children most in need of intervention. The findings revealed very positive attitudes towards WASP; *'I think it was very good it made me realise more about keeping fit. My family realised that as well. I think that I did very well in it and so did other classes. I think it was fun and it stops me from turning in to a couch potato'*, (Student)

The level of physical activity of parents also increased during the four weeks of the programme. Another key finding was that parental support was found to have a positive effect on the level of activity of children.

'I thought WASP was a great programme. It is important for young people to be aware of the importance of exercise and by encouraging the parents to participate, it made the children see that exercise is for life and necessary for both young and older people. It was fun also. The cards were a good idea because you knew you had to complete your exercise to get a sticker so it made you get up and go!', (Parent).

Thank You

WSP would like to thank the pupils and their parents and the teachers and principals of the following schools that took part in the research: St Mary's NS, Grange; Our Lady of Mercy NS, Stradbally; Bunscoil Chill Mhic Thomaisin, Kilmacthomas; Kill NS; Knockmahon NS, Bunmahon; Mount Sion Primary School; Ballycurrane NS, Clashmore; Rathgormack NS; Scoil Gharbháin, Dungarvan; Passage East NS; Faithlegg National School; Glenbeg NS; Villerstown NS; Scoil na BhFíodh, Fewes; Our Lady of Mercy NS, Waterford; S.N. Baile Mhic Airt, An Sean Phobal; Whitechurch NS; Scoil An Bhaile Nua, Newtown.

We would also like to thank the Irish Sports Council and the Health Service Executive for their financial support in relation to the programme and the research project.

A special thanks to Research Co-ordinator, Maria Power and the staff and students in WIT for their time and effort in completing the research.