

## **Somerset Children's Fund**

SASP report – How the activity project can improve educational performance

### Background

SASP the Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership is the county agency funded by Sport England and other partners whose remit is to deliver the SW Regional Plan for Sport 2004-08 entitled Life's out there – be active in the South West. The main aim of the plan is to raise activity levels from the current 32% to 50% by 2020.

The SASP children's activity project, part funded by the Children's Fund, aims to specifically target primary school children in raising activity levels and promote well being, especially, in children who may be underachieving physically through having co-ordination problems, weight issues or behaviour problems.

The Children's Fund funding also enabled the 'buying in' for 1 day per week of an Occupational Therapist from Musgrove Park Hospital to advise on corrective measures on referrals where appropriate..

The project was primarily aimed at children in Key Stage 1 (5-7 years old), but included in smaller schools Key Stage 2 (8-11 years old).

This project planned to make early interventions to break the non activity cycle which affects some children doing primary school education and may lead to more long term problems.

### Project Development

10 schools were identified across the county, 2 in each Local authority in Somerset. The schools were:

West Somerset	- Dunster 1 <sup>st</sup> , Knights Templar
Taunton	- Priorswood, Wellsprings
Sedgemoor	- Bawdrip, St Josephs
Mendip	- Vallis, St John's
South Somerset	- Avishayes, Manor Court

Pre visits were organised with headteachers and relevant staff in June/July 2003 and each school was allocated a multi skill coach for 1 day per week as from September 2003.

### Project Delivery

The coach worked alongside the PE Co-ordinator or class teacher in each school developing core co-ordination skills in the whole class and specifically with children who initially appeared to lack physical confidence or movement difficulties.

After October half term co-ordination groups were established in some schools which were extra activity sessions for specific children – a similar approach taken by schools for both literacy and numeracy.

The three targets which the activity project proposed to address through sub-objective 2 were:

- 2.1 Physical activity has a positive effect on listening and concentrations skills, leading to enhanced learning
- 2.2 Improve self esteem and confidence of children with movement difficulties or poor body image
- 2.3 Take up of more session in an outside school

The SASP PE and Sport in Schools Manager, Joy Morton, was responsible for organising the delivery of project in schools, liaising with the School Sports Co-ordinator scheme (funded through DCMS) in several areas.

Joy's summary of the effect of the project after 12 months is as follows:

'The Project supported by the Children's Fund has been very well received in all of the 10 selected schools and many are looking at ways of self – funding the project in the future. The raising of self-esteem, confidence and overall activity levels of the children involved has been particularly noticeable as all children were encouraged to achieve their full potential. The youngsters identified with core co-ordination problems have benefited from attending the Co-ordination group set up with support from the Occupational Therapist and the effect this has had on their handwriting, finer motor skills, and confidence has been particularly noticeable.'

Martin Papworth the Partnership Development Manager for the Sedgemoor Sports Alliance (King Alfred's School Sports Co-ordination Scheme) has reported;

'the work of the Children's Fund activity project within the school sport partnership has contributed heavily to the primary school liaison and out of hours objectives which were set. Most significantly however is the impact on raising standards, both in Physical Education and in children's whole school lives. The multi skill coaches have contributed to regular and consistent delivery of high quality Physical Education and have left a positive and sustainable legacy within the schools with skills they have been working.

It is now essential that we find ways of implementing this in many more schools in the future!'

Jon Oliver PE Co-ordinator from Vallis School Frome said

'All the staff have commented that the physical performance and in particular the childrens' confidence has improved enormously as a result of the regular coaching sessions. It has been a totally satisfying and wholly worthwhile experience for the children. The staff have also been able to boost their professional knowledge and indeed their own confidence through observation and practical hands on teaching as well'

Quotes from Vallis School:

'Fantastic! The children are so confident now!' - Reception

'The children are all so much better. They listen, respond well and they are so much more confident now' - Years 1 & 2