

Embracing Activity Breaks at Michael Syddall Primary School in Catterick

What we did

Michael Syddall Primary School in Catterick have been embracing physical activity and the benefits it can have on children's lives/learning and have made several changes to the school day over the last few years.

At the start of last academic year 2018/2019 we took the decision that no child should sit for longer than 20 minutes at a time throughout the school day. This was partly based on the direction the school had taken around the importance of physical activity and exercise, looking at research and evidence that backed up the assertion that Physical activity improves concentration and engagement and the benefits to children's well-being and enjoyment. Also, contextual information around some of the year groups, including year 6, supported the school's need to act to try to impact on children's learning and progress in a different way.



“Physical Activity improves concentration and engagement”



How we did it

We removed items from our classrooms to give the teachers and children more space to be active, utilised a number of resources and supported teachers to embrace activity breaks. This includes the North Yorkshire Sport resource, 30 things for 30 minutes.

Due to the rapid impact that this step had on the school, ahead of last year's SATS, through conversations with senior leaders, they took the decision to implement a physical activity break during the tests. The school ensured that, as it was normal classroom practice and met the requirements of the access arrangements document, the integrity of the tests was not compromised.

What was the outcome?

The school have never been above national average for results whilst the current Curriculum lead of PE has been in post (4 years) however the last SATs results bucked that trend and resulted in:

- **Percentage of children achieving the expected standard in Reading = 78% (National 73%)**
- **Percentage of children achieving the expected standard in Writing = 89% (National 78%)**
- **Percentage of children achieving the expected standard in Maths = 94% (National 79%)**
- **Percentage of children achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths = 78% (National 65%)**

In addition to the health benefits and apparent improvement in SATS scores (not that all of this improvement is down to the physical activity, we all acknowledge that) the children also benefit from unintended and unmeasured consequences, for example:

- They felt trusted that they could maintain exam conditions before, during and after the break.
- Their management of the test improved as they knew when the break was coming and how to manage questions around it.
- They got the message that whilst the exams were important, they were not the be all and end all and they did not over-ride the school's ethos, of no more than 20 minutes sitting at a time throughout the school day.



“Children got the message that whilst exams are important...they did not over-ride the school's ethos of no more than 20 minutes sitting at a time throughout the school day”

