



Office for Health
Improvement
& Disparities



Date:

Dear

Dental examination of children in year 6 as part of the National Dental Epidemiology Programme

The National Dental Epidemiology Programme

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) and your local authority are undertaking the upcoming dental survey of children in year 6 in schools across England. The survey provides information on the oral health of children and aims to support actions to improve oral health, reduce health inequalities and improve the provision of treatment services. Schools are selected to participate at random and selected schools will be contacted in the coming weeks by the local survey provider to arrange a visit to the school to examine the children. Your participation in the survey is vital to its success and we thank you in advance for your support.

Your school may have been involved in the survey of 5-year-olds last year and, as the school selection is random, it may be selected to participate again this year for the survey of children in year 6. We thank you in advance for your continued support of this important programme.

Infection prevention and control

The survey provider in your area that will carry out the dental examinations in your school is following advice that aligns with national and local infection prevention and control and follows any local risk assessments.

Your local survey provider is

The importance of healthy mouths in children

Having a healthy mouth is important to overall health and wellbeing. Children who have tooth decay may have pain, infections, difficulties with eating, sleeping and socialising and may require time off school for dental treatment.

Oral health is therefore an important aspect of a child's overall health status and of their school readiness. Oral health is seen as a marker of wider health and social care issues including poor nutrition and obesity. Interventions that reduce sugar intake have the potential to impact tooth decay and obesity because high intakes of free-sugars are known risk factors for both.

Schools have a statutory duty to promote the wellbeing of pupils in carrying out their functions.¹ The new statutory health education curriculum² can support schools with teaching pupils how to make good decisions about their own health including oral health and wellbeing.^{3, 4}

Taking action

Oral health is included in the statutory relationships and sex education and health education curriculum. By the end of primary school, pupils should know the characteristics of a poor diet and risks associated with unhealthy eating (including, obesity and tooth decay). They should also know about oral health including the benefits of good oral hygiene and regular check-ups at the dentist.

Many schools are taking proactive steps to encourage whole school action, including through the curriculum, via school leadership practices and by improving the school ethos and environment. More information and resources on oral health for schools are listed at the end of this letter.

Support from schools

The dental survey is commissioned by

The survey will involve a dental examination of selected children in year 6. Delivery has been most successful in areas where schools have helped and we should be grateful for your cooperation and support as we undertake the survey over the coming months, for example by:

- providing class lists for all children in year 6, in order for random sampling to be undertaken, including their full name and date of birth
- sending letters to parents to inform them about the programme and requesting parental agreement to participation in the survey. We will provide you with a letter to give to parents
- collating names of any children who have agreement to participate in the survey and providing their home postcode, sex, ethnicity and multiple birth status (for example whether the child has a twin), for transfer via a secure e-mail
- identifying a room or area where the examination can be undertaken privately
- arranging for staff to help bring children to and from the measurement area

The National Dental Epidemiology Programme and the General Data Protection Regulation/Data Protection Act 2018: advice for schools

All local authorities in England are required to undertake oral health surveys. This legal duty means that parental consent is not needed for schools to lawfully use and share children's personal information for the National Dental Epidemiology Programme under the GDPR and DPA 2018. Schools can lawfully provide class lists to NHS dental teams and other providers undertaking the dental examinations on behalf of the local authority. All data processes for this survey have been designed in accordance with data protection principles, including those of data minimisation, fairness and transparency.

The dental service will support the school in contacting parents and persons with parental responsibility prior to their visit. We appreciate that the school day is busy and assure you that the service will do everything possible to minimise any disruption. They will also provide evidence of enhanced security clearance at the visit.

To show schools, parents, persons with parental responsibility and children what happens at the visit, a short video is available:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BzrjK8HRpD8>

A report on the 2022 dental survey of 5-year-olds in England will be available in winter 2022 to 2023.

Thank you in advance for your continued support for this programme and for recognising the importance of children's oral health.

Yours sincerely

Dental Epidemiology Coordinator

Local Authority Director of Public Health

1 Education and Inspections Act 2006 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/contents>

2 Department for Education (2019). Relationships education, relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education: www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education

3 Department for Education. Schools Statutory Guidance: www.gov.uk/government/collections/statutory-guidance-schools#safeguarding-children-and-young-people

4 Ofsted. The education inspection framework (2019): www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework

List of resources

School specific

Tilly the Tooth Science lesson plans for Years 1 to 6 are the first national dental resources for schools. View at: <https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/schools/resources/keeping-our-teeth-healthy-lesson-plans>

e-Bug lesson plans on oral hygiene (for 5 to 7 year olds) Prevention of infection: oral hygiene. Key Stage 1. View at: <https://e-bug.eu/ks1-oral-hygiene>

e-Bug lesson plans on oral hygiene (for 7 to 11 year olds) Prevention of infection: oral hygiene. Key Stage 2. View at: <https://e-bug.eu/ks2-oral-hygiene>

Resources for additional information

Delivering Better Oral Health: A quick guide to a healthy mouth in children. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/delivering-better-oral-health-an-evidence-based-toolkit-for-prevention>

Child Oral Health – Applying All Our Health. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-oral-health-applying-all-our-health/child-oral-health-applying-all-our-health>

e-Learning – child oral health. https://portal.e-lfh.org.uk/Catalogue/Index?HierarchyId=0_41737_42670&programmeld=41737

Health Matters – child dental health. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-child-dental-health/health-matters-child-dental-health>

Toolkit to support supervised tooth brushing programmes in early years and school settings. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-oral-health-supervised-tooth-brushing-programme-toolkit>