National Child Measurement Programme 2018
Information for schools

For head teachers and school staff
About Public Health England

Public Health England (PHE) exists to protect and improve the nation’s health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. We do this through world-leading science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. We are an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care, and a distinct delivery organisation with operational autonomy. We provide government, local government, the NHS, Parliament, industry and the public with evidence-based professional, scientific and delivery expertise and support.

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The National Child Measurement Programme is focused on tackling childhood obesity in England. Local authorities have a statutory responsibility for delivering the programme, and school participation is voluntary. This advice is primarily for school leaders, school staff and governing bodies in state-maintained schools and academies. It may also be useful for local authorities and parents. It explains the purpose of the programme and what schools can do to support delivery of the programme locally.

If you have queries about the National Child Measurement Programme, you can email Public Health England at ncmp@phe.gov.uk.

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1. Executive summary

1.1. The National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP), also known as the School Height and Weight Checks, is a mandated annual programme delivered by local authorities, which involves measuring the height and weight of all school children in reception and year 6. Over 99% (17,000) of eligible state-maintained schools across England, including academies, participate in the NCMP.

1.2. Support from schools is crucial to delivering the NCMP. This guidance provides information for school leaders, staff and governing bodies on key tasks that schools can help with to ensure the programme runs smoothly.

1.3. Delivering the NCMP provides vital information that enables local authorities and their partners to plan for and invest in key services to tackle obesity and its wider determinants. It also provides the opportunity to raise parents’ awareness of overweight and obesity, its consequences and healthy lifestyle choices.

1.4. Although most children in reception and year 6 are a healthy weight, the NCMP data show the prevalence of obesity doubles between reception and year 6 (from around 9% to around 20% in 2016/17); that over one fifth of reception and over a third of year 6 children are overweight or very overweight.¹ Very overweight children are more likely to be ill, be absent from school due to illness, experience health-related limitations and require more medical care than healthy weight children. Children who are overweight or very overweight are more likely to develop illnesses such as high blood pressure and increased risk of type 2 diabetes (pre-diabetes), and go on to experience associated weight and health problems in adolescence and later life. Overweight and very overweight children are also more likely to become obese adults, and have a higher risk of morbidity, disability and premature mortality in adulthood.²

1.5. A child’s weight status affects their health and wellbeing. Growing healthily and maintaining a healthy weight is important not only for a child’s physical, social and mental wellbeing but also for their capacity to do well at school.³⁻⁴ Schools are judged on how successful they proactively assist pupils with increasing their knowledge of how to keep themselves emotionally and physically healthy: a statutory duty that Ofsted inspectors evaluate.⁵⁻⁶

¹ The term ‘very overweight’ refers to the clinical weight status ‘obese’. Whilst the use of the word ‘obese is a clinical classification, the sensitivity around using this term is acknowledged. PHE encourage all conversations and correspondence with parents in relation to their child’s weight status to use the more acceptable term ‘very overweight’ instead.
2. Overview of the NCMP

Background

2.1. The NCMP, also known as school height and weight checks, was established in 2006. Over 99% (approx. 17,000) of eligible state-maintained schools, including academies, participate in the programme. Every year, over one million children in reception and year 6, have their height and weight measured in schools as part of the programme.

2.2. Public Health England (PHE) has responsibility for the national oversight of the NCMP. The surveillance components of the programme are a mandated public health function of local authorities.

2.3. Data collected through the NCMP is returned to NHS Digital, where it is analysed. A report summarising local and national data is then published. Local areas use this high-quality data to inform the development and delivery of services to tackle child obesity. Nationally it is used to track trends in child obesity levels over time, to inform policy and is key to monitoring progress of the government’s Childhood Obesity Plan. Chapter 2.

Weight status in primary school

2.4. National data from the NCMP shows that obesity prevalence doubles from around 9% of children at the start of primary school to around 20% at the end of primary school. Additionally, year-on-year, the data has shown that obesity prevalence in the most deprived 10% of areas in England is more than twice that in the least deprived 10%.

2.5. A small sample of 4 local authorities was analysed longitudinally to examine how weight status tracks between reception and year 6. The findings suggest that excess weight is likely to persist or worsen during primary school. Those children living in the most deprived areas and certain black and minority ethnic communities may be at higher risk of retaining or gaining an unhealthy weight. An infographic of the findings to show changes in the weight status of children between the first and final years of primary school is shown in figure 1.
Achieving a healthy weight is important

2.6. When children are a healthy weight, they feel better about themselves. They find it easier to play and learn and they are more likely to grow up healthy too. Helping them to be a healthier weight when they are a child can set up their health and wellbeing for life.

Facts about childhood obesity

2.7. Children who are overweight or very overweight are more likely to develop a variety of illnesses in childhood and later life, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, increased risk of type 2 diabetes (pre-diabetes), breathing difficulties and bone and joint problems. But health is not the only issue. Overweight children can also be affected by:

- low self-esteem
- teasing or bullying
- behavioural problems stemming from anxiety or depression
- avoidance of active play or learning opportunities in school sport and PE
Figure 2: Facts about childhood obesity

This can have an impact on:

- a child’s attendance, as they may need to miss school for medical appointments or treatment
- a child’s learning and academic achievement
- a child’s sleep: sleep deprived children are less likely to perform well academically
- staff training and expertise, because staff will need to provide extra support to children with health problems arising from overweight and obesity to ensure they manage their condition effectively during the school day

The importance of school participation

2.8. Supporting the delivery of the NCMP in your school ensures that vital information is available to help local authorities and their partners plan, target and deliver services to promote children’s healthy weight and growth; manage both underweight and excess weight (overweight and obesity) and in turn address the issues set out above.

2.9. Local authorities may also share individual height and weight measurements and calculated weight status with each child’s parent, by sending a letter typically via post from the NCMP provider directly to the parent. PHE have produced a template letter
(also known as a ‘specimen result letter to parents’) for local authorities which can be used and adapted locally. This letter contains web links to the NHS Choices Healthy Weight Calculator and the Change4Life website; both of which can support and encourage parents to monitor their child’s growth and to adopt healthier lifestyle behaviours.

2.10. Because many children in England are now carrying excess weight, parents and health professionals often cannot tell, just by looking at a child, whether he or she falls within a healthy weight range. This is why taking an objective measurement by trained health professionals through the NCMP and sharing that information with parents is important.

2.11. Information on the prevalence of school overweight and obesity, over a three year average, compared with local and national averages, can be shared with schools via a bespoke NCMP School Feedback Letter. Local authorities can send these letters in the spring or summer term. The letter also includes details of resources to encourage whole school action to increase health and wellbeing, including healthy eating and increasing physical activity (see resources section). In conjunction with action taken by local authorities, this can make a real difference in preventing the continued increase of excess weight in children from reception to year 6, benefiting not only the health and wellbeing of pupils but also their learning and achievement in school.

2.12. 8 principles for practice have been drawn from an appraisal of the evidence about what works in schools to increase levels of physical activity among children and young people. Figure 3 provides a summary of these principles.

Figure 3: Promising principles for practice: what works in schools to increase physical activity\textsuperscript{xi}
3. The role and responsibilities of local authorities

3.1. Delivery of the programme, including the height and weight measurements and returning relevant data to NHS Digital; is a statutory function of local authorities set out in legislation. Local authorities, or the provider organisations they commission, will follow the process shown in The Delivery Elements of NCMP when implementing the programme and in doing so will be responsible for:

Ensuring that, either, a registered medical practitioner, registered nurse or registered dietitian oversees the implementation of the programme.

Securing the class-list information on children in reception and year 6, including school name and unique reference number, pupil name, sex, date of birth, ethnicity code, home address and postcode, by liaising either directly with schools or with their local authority education officer. It is lawful under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) for schools to continue to provide class lists to NCMP providers for the purposes of the NCMP. See section: NCMP and the General Data Protection Regulation: advice for schools below for more information.

Developing and disseminating a pre-measurement letter to parents
The legislation relating to the NCMP means that parental consent is not needed for schools to lawfully use and share children’s personal data for the NCMP under the GDPR. However, local authorities are required to take steps to ensure parents understand the value of having their child measured, and are provided with a reasonable opportunity to withdraw their child from participating in the programme. PHE has developed a specimen pre-measurement letter for parents, which ensures that the information provided to parents on the processing of their children’s height and weight data meets the requirements of the GDPR. The letter also acts as the privacy notice and must be sent to all children eligible to take part in the NCMP. Parents must be sent this letter at least 2 weeks before the measurements are scheduled to take place. Where possible, it is recommended that the pre-measurement letter is sent to parents via email.

Raising awareness of the programme among parents, school leaders and staff, children and governors
Many NCMP leads will seek to include short articles in school newsletters, provide governors with information and deliver assemblies to ensure parents, children and teachers understand what the programme involves and why it is done.
Planning the logistics of measuring children’s height and weight and liaising with schools to arrange appropriate days and times to take measurements.

Taking the height and weight measurements of children in reception and year 6 returning the data collected to NHS Digital.

Optional feedback: [Check with your local NCMP lead2]:

- providing parents with feedback, within 6 weeks of measurement, either in the form of a result letter and/or through a telephone call. The feedback provides parents with individually tailored information on their child’s height, weight and weight status (either underweight, healthy weight, overweight, or very overweight), together with signposting to sources of local support and advice as well as national support such as a link to the ‘Your Child’s Weight’ page on the Change4Life website

- providing schools with feedback on how overweight and obesity prevalence at their school compares with the local or national average by sending the NCMP School Feedback Letter

2 The local NCMP lead is your first point of contact and could be your local authority public health team or an NCMP provider such as a school nursing service or commissioned service that delivers the height and weight measures.
4. Supporting delivery of the NCMP in your school

4.1. Your local authority is responsible for delivering the NCMP. However, the programme has been most successful in areas where schools have provided support. Therefore, local NCMP leads may contact your school to ask for your help by:

Providing them with a class list for all children in reception and year 6
Containing the school name and unique reference number, and the name, sex, date of birth, ethnicity code, home postcode, home address and home telephone number of each pupil. It is lawful under the GDPR for schools to continue to provide class lists to NCMP providers for the purposes of the NCMP. See section: NCMP and the General Data Protection Regulation: advice for schools for more information.

Check there are no new starters missing from the class list
Some local authorities request the class list electronically to move towards a paperless way of working.

Letting them know if there are any children on the class list who are not eligible to participate in the height and weight checks because they are unable to stand unaided. The NCMP lead can make alternative arrangements for these children (a specimen letter to parents of children unable to be measured unaided can be sent to parents).

Letting them know that there are children with Down syndrome
Children with Down syndrome should be included in the NCMP activity on measurement day as appropriate. However the NCMP provider will need to use a specialist growth chart and provide parents with an adapted result letter.

Facilitating the dissemination of the pre-measurement letter to parents. The local authority is responsible for ensuring that parents are informed about the NCMP, including how their child’s data will be stored and processed. The pre-measurement letter also gives parents the opportunity to withdraw their child from the programme. Your local NCMP lead may seek your support to send pre-measurement letters electronically or through the pupil post. Local authorities may also ask for the pre-measurement leaflet for parents to be disseminated along with the pre-measurement letter for parents. This leaflet helps parents understand the NCMP process and why healthy weight is important for a child’s health and wellbeing.
Letting the local authority know if any parents have withdrawn their child
Although parents will be asked via the pre-measurement letter to let the local authority know if they have chosen to withdraw their child, some parents may respond directly to the school. Relaying this information to the NCMP lead will ensure that parents’ wishes are respected.

Confirming a convenient day and time for NCMP staff to come into the school to measure the height and weight of children in reception and year 6.

Providing a room where children’s height and weight can be measured and a member of staff to help with supervising children’s movement to and from the room. It is important that each child’s height and weight is measured in privacy, without being seen or heard by other pupils. Schools will need to identify a private area, with adequate space and appropriate flooring (ie level, non-carpeted flooring to ensure that scales give an accurate reading). If a separate room is not available, a screened-off area can be used.

Raising awareness of the NCMP
The NCMP has been successful in areas where governors, parents and children have a good understanding and awareness of the programme and its importance. The local NCMP lead may liaise with you to arrange engagement sessions such as plan an assembly where the NCMP lead can talk to children about the programme, include an article on the NCMP in the school newsletter, or share information on the programme with governors.

Make full use of the ‘Our Healthy Year’ resources
A pack of Change4Life resources called ‘Our Healthy Year’ is available for head teachers, reception and year 6 teachers, to help them teach pupils about leading healthy lifestyles in the years in which they are weighed and measured as part of the NCMP. There are ideas for whole school activities and suggestions for engaging parents.

Provide parents with contact details if they have any questions
Some parents wish to discuss their child’s result with someone. So providing the parent with the correct details that the NCMP lead has provided to you will help parents receive support quickly.
5. Supporting NCMP and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR): advice for schools

5.1 Under the GDPR all processing of personal data must have a lawful basis. The legal foundation for the NCMP is provided in local authority regulations. This statutory authority means that the lawful basis for the NCMP is provided by the Articles of the GDPR covering:

- compliance with a legal obligation
- exercise of official authority
- provision of health or social care
- public interest in the area of public health

Consent is not the lawful basis for the processing of NCMP data.

5.2 Schools have a legal obligation to release pupil’s personal information

Schools do not require parental consent to share a pupils’ personal information for the purposes of participating in the NCMP.

It is lawful under the GDPR to continue to provide the school class lists to the school nursing/health teams and local NCMP providers. All parties involved should be following information governance guidance regarding the secure transfer of personal data. A local Information Sharing Agreement (ISA) between the schools (the local authority can act on behalf of state maintained schools) and school nursing team/providers will need to be in place to ensure sensitive data is transferred securely.

5.3 The local authority regulations covering the NCMP state that parents must be given an opportunity to withdraw their child from the programme. This requirement is covered by sending them a pre-measurement letter at least 2 weeks prior to being measured. PHE has developed a specimen pre-measurement letter (to parents) for local authorities, which complies with the strengthened requirements of the GDPR, including detailed information on what happens to the child’s data and information on how to withdraw. Schools may be asked to support dissemination of this letter to parents (see section ‘Supporting Delivery of the NCMP in your School’).

5.4 Further guidance on schools sharing information with the school nursing team/providers for the NCMP is provided in the NCMP Operational Guidance.
Key point

5.5 **No change** is required to the way in which the NCMP data is collected and processed for this to continue to be lawful under the GDPR.
## 6. Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) Collection</strong></th>
<th><strong>Description</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Operational Guidance</td>
<td>Guidance for local commissioners, providers and schools on running the NCMP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliverable Elements of NCMP</td>
<td>A table showing an overview of the programme with web links to relevant documents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specimen letters to parents:</td>
<td>Specimen letters for local authorities to adapt based on local arrangements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- specimen pre-measurement letter to parents (mandatory to send to parents)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- specimen letter to parents of children unable to be measured unaided</td>
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<tr>
<td>- specimen result letters to parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information for schools and specimen pre-measurement letter for head teachers</td>
<td>To be sent to head teachers in advance of starting the height and weight checks every school year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-measurement leaflet for parents:</td>
<td>This leaflet helps parents understand the NCMP process and why healthy weight is important for a child’s health and wellbeing. Available for download only from the PHE Campaign Resource Centre:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school height and weight measurements</td>
<td>Please note: an account will need to be set up on the Campaign Resource Centre to download this resource.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To send with the pre-measurement letter.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-measurement leaflet for parents:</td>
<td>This leaflet provides simple tips to help families eat well and move more and highlights the additional ideas available on the Change4Life website. These are available from the PHE Campaign Resource Centre:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change4Life top tips to keep your family healthy and happy</td>
<td>Please note: an account will need to be set up on the Campaign Resource Centre to order copies of this resource.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To send with the result letters.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NCMP School Feedback Letters</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School feedback cover letter template</td>
<td>Letter templates for local authorities to send to schools participating in the NCMP. Intended to be edited, to include details of any local primary care providers, weight management and support services.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School feedback example letter

An example of a letter sent to schools by their local authority which includes non-identifiable average 3-year NCMP data.

### Change4Life: Our Healthy Year resources

A downloadable pack of Change4Life resources called Our Healthy Year is available on the School Zone.

These include resources for: Head teachers, reception and year 6 teachers to help them teach their pupils about healthy lifestyles. Includes ideas for whole school activities to encourage eating well and moving more, as well as suggestions for engaging parents. Teachers can subscribe to Change4Life School Zone keep up-to-date with new materials and campaigns.

### Change4Life: ‘Your child’s weight’ page

A web link for parents.

Information for parents providing more support and advice on receiving their child’s feedback letter, following their child’s school height and weight check.

### Resources to encourage physical activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What works in schools and colleges to increase physical activity?</th>
<th>Briefing providing an overview of the evidence about what works in schools to increase levels of physical activity in children and young people.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active School Planner</td>
<td>A free-to-use interactive tool for schools to review and improve the physical activity offer to their pupils.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change4Life Sports Clubs</td>
<td>Can help contribute to all children getting at least 30 minutes of physical activity in every school day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE and sport premium for primary schools</td>
<td>How to invest in sport premium funding to increase physical activity levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School capital funding allocations</td>
<td>Guidance on direct allocations of the Healthy Pupils Capital Fund to local authorities and multi-academy trusts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical activity guidelines for 5 to 18-year-olds</td>
<td>Chief Medical Officer’s physical activity guidelines fact sheet for 5 to 18-year-olds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Daily Mile</td>
<td>A simple and free initiative to encourage children to run/walk/jog for 15 minutes every day.</td>
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</table>
### Resources to encourage healthy eating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Food Plan training resource</td>
<td>A resource to help all school staff understand the importance of a good school food culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Eatwell Guide</td>
<td>A tool used to define government recommendations on eating healthily and achieving a balanced diet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let’s Get Cooking and the Learning Network</td>
<td>An e-learning platform with 15 courses for schools and caterers related to improving food for children.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Resources to encourage emotional health and wellbeing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promoting children and young people’s emotional health and wellbeing</td>
<td>Guidance on the 8 principles for promoting emotional health and wellbeing in schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSHE Association</td>
<td>Resource library including lesson plans and assessment tools to help develop the PSHE curriculum.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. References


xi The Local Authorities (Public Health Functions and Entry to Premises by Local Healthwatch Representatives) Regulations 2013 (351). Available from: www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/351/contents/made