

## News Release

### **More choice and better facilities are key to persuading girls to be more active**

10 July 2007

Unfashionable sports kit and inadequate changing-rooms remain major barriers to persuading more girls to take part in physical education at school, says a report published by Estyn today.

The report to the Welsh Assembly Government looks at how secondary schools are using different initiatives to increase girls' participation in physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle.

It says that many school changing-rooms are open, uninviting, poorly-decorated and bleak. Teenage girls are embarrassed and reluctant to use showering facilities of the old-fashioned, open type because of the lack of privacy.

HM Chief Inspector for Education and Training in Wales, Susan Lewis, says: "It is clear that sports facilities must be brought into the 21<sup>st</sup> century if we want to make health and fitness activities more attractive to girls. Improvements often have a dramatic effect on participation, particularly the provision of high-quality

indoor facilities. But we also need to stimulate the interest of pupils by introducing new activities and finding out what appeals to them.”

The report recommends that physical education teachers make a wider range of activities available, including at lunch times and after school, and there should be more opportunities for girls to continue physical activities when they leave school.

Funding initiatives have enabled teachers to plan imaginative programmes with activities such as trampolining, yoga, rowing, aqua-aerobics, cheerleading and street-dance. These have created a new wave of enthusiasm, capturing the imagination of pupils and resulting in more girls taking part in physical activities than in the past.

There is particular praise for the Sports Council for Wales Girls First Initiative Wales, which has a straightforward application process and has led to the introduction of many valuable activities.

However all the teachers surveyed were concerned about the long-term success of new initiatives because activities and clubs often had to stop when funding ended.

The biggest influence on the choice of activities is the facilities available on-site. The use of physical education (PE) facilities for external examinations causes further difficulties and gives pupils the impression that PE is not as important to schools as other subjects. Where local authorities have built leisure centres on school sites, this has extended the range of indoor activities and increased participation.

The Estyn report recommends that the Welsh Assembly Government helps schools to invest substantially in improving PE and sporting facilities and that

schools ensure indoor facilities are available throughout the year as well as improving changing and shower facilities.

It also recommends that PE teachers should consult with girls to find out which activities and sports kit they preferred.

Coverage of sport in the media is still male dominated, with few woman sports personalities promoted as positive role models for girls. There is a need to show equal respect for girls' and boys' achievements in PE and sport. In some schools fewer female than male members of senior management teams turn up to support the school teams at weekends or after school and the results of boys' matches are traditionally announced in assemblies before those of the girls.

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**Notes to Editor:**

- Estyn is the office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales. Estyn aims to raise standards and quality of education and training in Wales through inspection and advice, in support of the vision and strategic direction set out by the Welsh Assembly Government.
- Estyn's report 'Girls' participation in physical activity in schools' was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government and is published at [www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk)
- The evidence base includes a questionnaire sent to every secondary school in Wales, interviews with physical education teachers in 19 secondary schools and interviews with girls from Year 10 and 11.

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