

Healthy schools rating scheme.

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts England

For information: Main Contact Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

Key Points

On 8 July 2019, the Department for Education published guidance on the healthy schools rating scheme. The aim of the guidance is to recognise and encourage schools' contributions to pupil's health and well-being.

1.0. Background

The Department for Education (DfE) state that the healthy schools rating scheme has been designed to recognise and encourage schools' contributions to pupils' health and wellbeing. It celebrates the positive actions that schools are delivering in terms of healthy eating and physical activity and aims to help schools identify useful next steps in their provision.

The scheme is part of a wider series of government actions to support pupils' health and wellbeing and is a commitment from the government's Childhood Obesity Plan. The scheme is voluntary and is available for both primary and secondary schools.

The healthy schools rating scheme was developed based on testing with schools in summer 2018 and has now been launched by the DfE as a Beta phase for schools for its first year. The Department advise that they would welcome any feedback on the scheme during this phase and will use this to inform future improvements to our scheme

This briefing provides an overview of the scheme and of the details outlined in the guidance.

2.0. Scheme Criteria

The DfE is asking schools to complete a survey including questions around the school food standards, food education, physical activity, and active travel. The survey will then be used to provide a rating based on the school's responses when measured against key criteria.

Food education, including in the curriculum and teacher training

For a school to be rated as high performing schools in this area they will need to demonstrate that they are supporting their pupils to build their understanding around healthy eating and to develop knowledge and skills that will enable them to lead healthy lives.

Schools can deliver this in a variety of ways, including embedding healthy eating in the curriculum, cooking clubs, growing food at the school premises, teachers' professional development and encouraging pupils to assist catering staff in preparing school meals.

The DfE acknowledges that many schools are taking creative steps to promote healthy eating and to establish a whole school approach to healthy living. Therefore, to support this, Public Health England has published guidance on whole-school approaches to food and a range of nutrition resources across subject areas, designed to encourage pupils to build healthier habits for life.

Compliance with the school food standards

The school food standards ensure that the food served throughout the day in schools is healthy and nutritious. The standards restrict foods that are high in fat, salt, and sugar. Compliance with the school food standards is mandatory for all maintained schools. It is also expected that all academies and free schools comply, and since 2014 the DfE state that they have made this an explicit requirement in their funding agreements.

This section of the rating scheme, therefore, asks schools whether they are complying with the standards, and assesses the steps they are taking to achieve this. This can include seeking formal assurances from caterers or the local authority, appointing a nominated school governor, gaining external accreditation for school meals and arranging training on the school food standards for catering staff.

The amount of time children spend on physical education each week

It is important for children's physical and mental wellbeing that they are active throughout the school day. Physical education (PE) is compulsory at all four key stages and provides pupils with the opportunity to excel in a broad range of physical activities, to be active for sustained periods of time and to lead healthy, active lives. This section of the rating scheme measures the number of minutes spent in PE in school by each year group, as reported through the survey.

Participation in active travel schemes

Walking and cycling are good for our physical and mental health. Switching more journeys to active travel, including journeys to and from school, can improve physical activity levels, quality of life and the environment. This section of the scheme therefore considers the steps schools are taking to encourage active travel among their pupils. This includes Walk to School and Bikeability initiatives and promoting other types of active travel.

3.0. How to participate

The healthy schools rating scheme is available to all schools participating in the Active Lives Children and Young People survey. The survey was established to report on the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's Sporting Future outcomes and key performance indicators for children from the ages of 5 (where possible) to 15. Designed and delivered by Sport England and Ipsos MORI, the Active Lives Children and Young People survey provides a world-leading approach to gathering data on how young people engage with sport and physical activity. More information can be found on Sport England's website.

Schools are encouraged to take part in the survey, both to access the healthy schools rating scheme and to gain insight into how their pupils engage with sport and physical activity. To participate in the survey, schools should contact their local Active Partnerships representative, who coordinates the survey for schools in their local area.

Each participating school receives a bespoke report summarising their results from the survey. This is sent to school leaders only and is not shared more widely, although schools can share it if they wish. This report covers measures of children's activity levels, physical literacy, swimming proficiency, wellbeing, self-efficacy, and levels of social trust, as well as their healthy schools' rating. The rating will indicate whether the school has achieved a Gold, Silver or Bronze award (or in some cases, no award), and will contain a link for the school to download the relevant certificate.

4.0. How to use your school's rating

The DfE is encouraging schools gaining Gold, Silver or Bronze certificates to display these at their schools and share their success with parents. They also want schools to celebrate the achievements and use it to help start conversations among staff and parents about how the school might build on its positive work in future years.

The Department state that they encourage all schools to consider their responses in relation to the four key criteria listed in the guidance. Schools that achieve Gold or Silver will be delivering well against all aspects, although there may, of course, be further areas in which they want to consider additional future actions. Schools scoring Bronze will be performing well in some areas and these schools are invited to consider their survey responses across all four areas.

It is recognised that some respondents may not achieve a Gold, Silver or Bronze award. In these cases, it is likely that the school is not delivering against a key aspect of healthy provision for pupils – for example, not complying with the statutory school food standards or providing an insufficient amount of PE time each week for some year groups.

Schools can notify Ofsted school inspectors about the rating they have achieved in the healthy schools rating scheme. They will be able to draw attention to the scheme as evidence of their provision to pupils. Where relevant, Ofsted inspectors may wish to consider the scheme as evidence when reaching the judgement on 'personal development'. The DfE has given the assurance that a schools rating will not be shared publicly and advise that the information will be treated in confidence.

5.0. Feedback on the scheme

The healthy schools rating scheme was launched by the Department for Education as a Beta phase for schools in July 2019. They report that any feedback on the scheme during the first year, will be used to inform future improvements to the scheme.

Feedback and suggestions on the scheme can be emailed to: -
healthy.pupils@education.gov.uk

6.0. Scoring methodology

As already outlined, schools completing the survey will be assessed against Gold, Silver and Bronze criteria for the healthy schools rating scheme, based on the following methodology.

These questions appear in the teacher survey and were tested with schools in the summer term 2018. The DfE advise that they will keep the methodology under review during the first year of the scheme. The methodology takes into account best practice among the higher performing schools, as established during our initial test phase, and sets a high bar for achieving a Gold award.

It is not expected that all schools will achieve Gold, Silver or Bronze awards in the first year. However, the aim of the scheme is to help schools to reflect on their provision and consider areas for future action.

a) Food education (25 points)

The survey includes five questions on food education that will be assessed for the healthy schools rating scheme.

Question	Points
Healthy eating is a curriculum priority	5
School provides extra-curricula cooking clubs	5
Pupils assist catering staff in preparing food	5
School grows food on-site for school meals	5
Professional development for teachers on food	5

10 points are required from this section to score Silver or Gold overall. This is because it is important that schools are taking some action in this area.

b) School food standards (25 points)

The survey includes six questions on compliance with the school food standards that will be assessed for the healthy schools rating scheme.

Question	Points
Complies with the school food standards throughout the day	0*
School food standards are specified in school catering contracts or there is an annual assurance from caterers or local authorities	5**

The school is part of a school food award or accreditation scheme	5
Training for catering staff on school food standards	5
Oversight from nominated school governor on school food standards	5
Unhealthy items are banned from packed lunches	5

Compliance with the school food standards is mandatory for all maintained schools. The DfE expects all academies and free schools to comply, and since 2014 state they have made this an explicit requirement in their funding agreements. Therefore, strict criteria have been applied to this section.

* The first question in this section reflects a statutory requirement and therefore does not attract points. Schools must answer 'yes' to this question to be eligible for Gold or Silver on their overall rating.

** If schools answer 'no' to the first question above, they must answer 'yes' to the second question in this section in order to be eligible for Bronze. This will show that the school is taking concrete steps to ensure compliance with the school food standards, but the school will not be able to achieve a higher award.

c) Time spent on physical education in school (35 points)

The survey includes two questions about PE provision in the school, covering the amount of time and number of sessions allocated. We are applying the following scoring system for the rating scheme.

Fewer than 1.5 hours a week offered to any year group	0 points
All year groups offered at least 1.5 hours a week	15 points Required for Bronze
All year groups offered 2+ hours	25 points Required for Silver/Gold
All year groups offered 2.5+ hours a week	35 points

This scoring scheme has been set to reflect the responses from higher performing schools that were part of our scheme's test phase in summer 2018. The requirements on this section mean that schools offering fewer than two hours of PE to all year groups cannot be eligible for Gold or Silver awards overall.

d) Active travel (15 points)

The survey asks three questions on this topic:

	Primary	Secondary
Travel to school is monitored	5	-
School participates in Walk to School week (primary schools)	10	-
School promotes active travel (secondary schools)	-	15

This section holds 15 points and a school would need to score 10 points or above here to be eligible for Gold overall. The scoring system reflects the fact that the survey asks different questions to primary and secondary schools.

Overall Score

The DfE will use the following scoring system to allocate Gold, Silver, and Bronze.

Schools will need to score a minimum number of points for each award and meet the minimum requirements in each section, as stated above.

Award	Points
Gold	70+
Silver	55+
Bronze	40+
No award	<40

APSE Comment

APSE supports, in principle the publication of the guidance on the 'Healthy schools rating scheme as childhood obesity currently costs the NHS more than £5 billion a year, and one in three children leave primary school either overweight or obese. With the issue being more prevalent in deprived areas where children are more than twice as likely to be an unhealthy weight.

Through the ASPE Catering Advisory Groups and the APSE Service Awards, local authorities share best practice examples of how the catering service are serving children healthy nutritious meals; providing cookery education and working with the wider school community to highlight the importance of a healthy meal. APSE welcomes a section in the criteria that requires the school to demonstrate the steps that they are taking to demonstrate that they are complying with standards. This highlights to schools the importance that needs to be attributed to compliance with school food standards. The expectation that all schools including academies and free schools should demonstrate how they comply is also welcomed and in the absence of legislation provides a means of encouraging the school to comply with the standards.

On a final point, for schools to make a contribution to pupil's health and well-being, there needs to be strong leadership and a whole school approach. As the scheme is voluntary in nature, it could be argued that schools which are not currently engaged in developing clear strategies for health and well-being will not participate in the Healthy rating scheme.

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