



Creating active schools and children in Cheshire West and Chester

What is Smile for a Mile?

The principle of Smile for a Mile is simple, every child will travel an agreed route in the school grounds (e.g. run, walk, wheel, scoot) for 15 minutes during the school day, every day.

The distance children complete will vary from year group to year group and from child to child, but importantly, all children can participate.

Smile for a Mile provides the consistent focus to achieve an extra 15 minutes of daily physical activity.

All children should be encouraged to achieve new goals and will benefit from improved health and wellbeing.

It gives a purpose that children can identify with, and become used to, helping to create a healthy habit for life.

It is also a tool that teachers can use to weave the curriculum in and out of as appropriate across the school year, as they know best.

The aim of Smile for a Mile is to improve the physical, social and mental health and wellbeing of children regardless of age, ability or personal circumstances.

THE FACTS

- The Chief Medical Officer's guidelines state that children should take part in an average of 60 active minutes a day (it is recommended that 30 minutes take place whilst at school and a further 30 minutes outside of school).
- Across Cheshire West and Chester 35.7% of children are either not active or are semi active (1).
- Physical activity levels within Cheshire West and Chester drop as children move from primary school and through their teenage years. With 44.9% of primary age children reporting that they are very active, compared to 25.9% of secondary age children (1).
- 42.6% of girls are not active, compared to 29.2% of boys (1).

- Over one fifth of our Reception age children are either overweight or living with obesity (21.1%) (2), with 8.3% of our children aged 4-5 years living with obesity (3).
- Over a third of our Year Six children are measured as either overweight or living with obesity (34.7%) (2), with 20% of our children aged 10-11 living with obesity (3).

Sources

1. Cheshire West and Chester Physical Activity and Well Being Survey 2023
2. National Child Measurement Programme, 2022-23
3. National Child Measurement Programme, 2020/21-2022/23, 3 years combined data



Why Smile for a Mile?

Physical activity is crucial for children and young people. It promotes healthy growth and development, improves cardiovascular health, strengthens bones and muscles, helps maintain a healthy weight, and boosts overall mental well-being. Regular physical activity also enhances cognitive function, concentration, and academic performance. It teaches important life skills like teamwork, communication, and discipline while reducing the risk of chronic disease in later life. There is compelling evidence that physical activity can have a positive effect on emotional and social wellbeing.

Taking part in physical activity has been shown to:

- Increase self esteem
- Reduce anxiety
- Reduce social isolation
- Develop stronger and more varied friendships
- Enhance mood
- Help self-regulate emotions
- Develop interpersonal skills

Evidence suggests that children perform better when physical activity is used as a break from classroom learning. Following active breaks, children work with better attention, experience better retention and recall of information, and improved concentration and motivation. Active breaks throughout the day are therefore beneficial to children's learning.



Why is Smile for a Mile so successful and sustainable?

It is simple

All staff can implement it without the need for any specific, technical training

It is inclusive

Every child regardless of age, ability or circumstances can do it and achieve

It is essentially free

The only requirement is the commitment to take part and a suitable active route

It is safe

The children participate in a safe space and under supervision

It is outside in the fresh air

An indoor activity is just not the same, the freedom of being outside is important

It doesn't have to be competitive

Everyone succeeds, goals can be personal to every child

It is sociable

The children communicate well with their peers and their teacher during the mile

The weather is seen as a benefit, not a barrier

The children go out in almost all weathers, it builds resilience

There is no need for children to change into kit

No time is wasted changing and kit can't be forgotten and lack of kit can't be a barrier

No equipment is required

No resources needed, no setting up, no tidying away

It is quick

Fifteen minute turnaround from door to door

No timetable is needed

Teachers choose when to go out and this makes it manageable, flexible and sustainable

Belongs to the children and staff

Every class has ownership of their mile and can take responsibility for making it their own.



Developing your Smile for a Mile

- COMPETITION, FESTIVALS, THEMES etc

Once you've established your **Smile for a Mile**, keeping everyone enthusiastic will be key to realising the long-term benefits that being active together will bring.

Here we'll look at a number of ways to maintain engagement by creating a **Smile for a Mile** tailored to your children's needs.

Competition

Making your Smile for a Mile competitive won't work for every child but for those who are ready to compete, adding a challenge like this can really help their enjoyment develop. Remember there are various levels of competition depending on their readiness (personal challenge/intra-school/inter-school) and these can be matched to the categories used in the School Games (Celebrate, Aspire and Inspire). Below are examples of the types of competition/activity with an indication of the children's characteristics that might be best suited to each.

- Children choose their own milestone and research how far it is: this could be a grandparent's home, their favourite holiday destination, a place they're learning about at school etc (Celebrate)
- A simple time versus distance/laps challenge for those wanting to check their progress (Celebrate, Aspire, Inspire)
- For those who want to build up their ability to run/walk for longer they could set themselves a personal challenge. Your school could create challenges to see how long children can run without stopping. For example, 1 minute through to 15 minutes. Use a Smile for a Mile loyalty card that children get stamped when they complete so many laps. The challenges created should be appropriate for those undertaking the activity - challenging but achievable (Celebrate, Aspire, Inspire)
- Run an intra-school competition to find out which class can complete the most laps. This could then progress to school vs school events (possibly in a league format - similar to a local football league) (Inspire)
- Consider taking part in an inter-school event, such as those run round major sporting events across your School Sport Partnership (Celebrate, Aspire, Inspire)
- Your membership of Koboca provides a great opportunity to take part in a virtual competition - give the 'Smile for a Mile Running' a go (Aspire or Inspire).

Themes

Using what's going on in your curriculum at a particular point of the year can be really helpful in embedding Smile for a Mile into school life. Select relevant parts of your curriculum and choose to walk/run to a specific place you are studying in a certain subject.

- **Maths** - focus on addition by recording the number of laps in total over one week/month, calculate the average number of laps per day/child, plot progress towards a target on graphs, create problems to be solved (e.g. if we complete XX kilometres every day, how long will it take us to get to XXX), track children's activity against the 30/60 active minutes recommendation etc
- **English** - ask children to commentate on a Smile for a Mile competition, write an instructional text for a pupil new to the school or for parents to follow at a community event
- **Science** - measure and record resting and post-activity heart rates, design a poster about what exercising through Smile for a Mile does for the body etc
- **Physical Education** - consider building a theme around a major sporting event such as the London Marathon. Where a class could be challenged to break the record, as a group (walking/running 26.2 miles), walk/run to the next venue of a world cup, create photo trails in support of developing orienteering skills, problem solving along the route (depending on the subject) and taking part in quizzes
- **Citizenship** - The Smile for a Mile could be used as a fundraiser where parents and family members get involved. You can choose your charity or fundraise for new school resources
- **Active schools** - beyond the most obvious benefits of helping children to achieve the 30/60 active minutes, your Smile for a Mile could feature as part of your range of different 'activity alarms' - a nominated child would choose when they undertake Smile for a Mile during a lesson or throughout the school day.

Engaging families

A great way to create a healthy habit is to engage both children and their families in an activity. Whilst travelling to and from school is an active pursuit for some, for many it's a challenge! Why not run a Smile for a Mile 'Park and Stride' day once a week? Ask families who drive to school to park up and join their children in walking/running your Smile for a Mile before school on a specific day. This way both the child and the family will benefit from being active at the start of their day.



Leadership

Smile for a Mile offers a great opportunity to utilise young leaders by managing any data you collect, helping to organise younger groups and buddy up with them. The young leaders can also help organise an intra-school event. Leaders can create challenges relevant to their class or school – participants could collect challenge cards to complete the set (age dependent/appropriate).

What Schools, teachers and children have told us about their **Smile for a Mile**

"It is great for pupils mental and physical health. We've noticed that children are happier and more focused on their return"
Teacher at Rossmore School

"I love taking my class out to do The Smile for a Mile as a movement break between lessons, they also enjoy the social aspect of it too."

Teacher at Horn's Mill Primary School

"Parents are very supportive of the initiative"
Head at Rossmore School

"Doing The Smile for a Mile has helped progress their ability to move with great coordination & improve their balance"
Head at Horn's Mill Primary School

"It gives us a break from our maths and I can think better when I go back in"
Pupil at Rossmore School

"Smile for a Mile has had a positive impact on wider aspects such as behaviour, social engagement and development, improved confidence and self-esteem"
PE Lead, Horn's Mill Primary School

"It is good for my mental health and it is fun!"
Year 6 Pupil

"Since starting Smile for a Mile, I have seen a huge impact on my classes behaviour and concentration."
Y6 pupil

"It makes me fit and healthy. My heart beats really fast"
Reception child

For support with getting **Smile for a Mile** set up at your school contact your local School Sport Partnership:



Chester School Sport Partnership

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