

The Health Related Survey in Secondary Schools

Some Questions Answered

Why does the survey ask for our postcode and does this mean we can be identified?

The postcode can not identify individual homes and is only used to look at the information about children's health in local communities. This is very useful for the health authority (NHS Cambridgeshire) who need information to help them target their resources and support most effectively.

Schools, too, can work with their Locality Teams to identify parts of their communities which may need extra support and care.

Why is my child asked if they have free school meals?

The government has set Cambridgeshire tough targets to reduce inequalities in health and achievement for children and young people. We know that, generally speaking, children from homes with lower than average incomes may achieve less well and have more problems in terms of their health and wellbeing, although, clearly, this is not always the case. The government's chosen indicator for this group of children/ young people is those who have free school meals and there are plans and programmes to give them and their families additional support.

Being able to look at the survey information for this group of children/young people in our communities can help us see if these programmes are really helping and judge what more could and should be done.

Won't some questions upset and worry my child?

Young people are always told that they do not have to answer any questions with which they are uncomfortable and most of the more sensitive questions have a "Rather not say" option.

Pupils are reassured that, although important, the survey is not an "exam" or "test" of them. Our experience is that young people find the survey and the areas it covers interesting and stimulating for discussion.

Why are children asked for their height and weight?

There is a government led programme in place to reduce obesity in children and encourage healthy eating and exercise. This is a sensitive issue for individual children and their families.

This information will help health professionals see if there are links between young people who are over or under weight for their age and other health issues and behaviour: for example, the number of young people who eat breakfast before coming to school in the morning. This will help them judge what approaches might make a difference in providing sensitive support for young people and families.

Is the survey reliable? Surely some young people will lie?

Yes some probably will. But we take a lot of trouble to stress the importance of honest answers and this is reinforced by emphasising that the survey is genuinely anonymous. Even if some do lie, the size of the sample means that it would take a lot of young people to lie in one way to change the results.

Is this just more information that will end up in a computer somewhere never to be seen again?

We are a busy and fully committed school and we would not give our staff and pupils any more work to do if we didn't feel it was of real benefit to us and what we do. We know this information will help us meet the needs of our young people and their families better. Also we are committed to sharing it with you to support our partnership of care for children and young people.