



National Foundation for Educational Research

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# **Evaluation of the PhunkyFoods Programme**

**Final report**

**Executive summary**

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# Executive summary

## Background

According to the Health Survey for England 2002, at the time over half the population in England were overweight or obese. Interest in, and concern about, obesity and the general health of young people has also been raised in a number of other publications, such as the government White Paper *Choosing Health: Making Healthy Choices Easier* (2004). Although the solutions to issues such as obesity need to be multi-faceted, schools can play a crucial role by helping to promote healthy eating and physical activity.

The PhunkyFoods Programme (PFP) is an initiative intended to support schools in fulfilling this role. The PFP, launched in 2005 by Purely Nutrition, teaches primary children key messages related to healthy eating and physical exercise in a light hearted and fun manner through art, drama, music, play and practical experience with food. It aims to enhance pupil performance, increase concentration, and improve behaviour, motivation and self-esteem. Lesson plans are available to teach a one-hour lesson of healthy eating and a one-hour lesson of physical activity every week to every primary year group, although schools can deliver the PFP in a variety of ways (in different curriculum contexts and/or during out of hours school clubs) and for varying lengths of time. In addition to training for teachers and classroom assistants when they embark on the PFP (supplemented by extensive online resources), support is provided through various resources such as DVDs, books and games, which schools receive when they join the PFP. NFER was commissioned by Purely Nutrition to evaluate the PFP; the summary that follows presents findings from a second round of school visits and represents the final report of the evaluation.

The overarching aims of the research were to evaluate the effectiveness of the PFP in terms firstly of its **implementation** in schools, and secondly of its **impact** on pupil outcomes.

## Methods

In order to achieve the aim set out above, the research employed a combined but primarily qualitative methodology. The main elements of this methodology were an exploratory telephone survey, attempted with all of the schools who had registered with the PFP (n=108), followed by two rounds of visits to 20 schools (selected from those who had responded to the telephone survey). Findings from the telephone survey and first round of school visits were presented in an interim report in July 2008 (Teeman *et al.*, 2008).

The second round of follow-up visits to case-study schools took place in the summer term of 2008 and findings from these are summarised below:

- **17** schools agreed to second round visits
- **two** schools agreed to second round telephone interviews with the PFP coordinator in each school (one school had not implemented the PFP and the other had implemented the PFP, but was unable to host a visit due to other time pressures)
- **one** school, which had not implemented PFP, declined further participation.

Across the **19** schools **37** staff were interviewed, **18** of whom were PFP coordinators. The remaining staff comprised:

- **8** headteachers and one deputy headteacher
- **5** class teachers
- **6** teaching assistants (TAs).

Across the **17** schools visited, **117** pupils (**53** boys and **64** girls) were interviewed; no pupil interviews were possible in the two schools which took part in telephone interviews. In total, **28** parent/carer interviews were completed. From **seven** schools, **18** parents/carers were interviewed, comprising **17** women and **one** man; in addition a larger group of **ten** parents/carers was interviewed in another school.

## Key Findings

### Implementation of PFP

- The 18 case-study schools which were implementing the PFP were doing so through a variety of means, according to school circumstances and to the role of the PFP coordinator within school:
  - in schools where the coordinator was a class teacher, the PFP was most likely to be delivered in class through the curriculum, or via an after-school club, or both
  - where coordinators also had a senior role, such as healthy schools coordinator, they were more likely to have cascaded information about the PFP to other teaching staff, to have promoted its use throughout the school, and to be planning to embed the programme more fully into next year's curriculum
  - in schools where the coordinator was a teaching assistant, the PFP was most likely to be delivered as a discrete unit, with little or no involvement of other teaching staff.

- Whatever the means of delivery, or by whom, schools varied as to how much of the PFP they were using, from picking out particular topics for use in one-off sessions to following the lesson plans systematically and in sequence week by week.
- All of the case-study schools were using the healthy eating element of the PFP. Approximately half of them had also started to use the physical activity element, mainly during the summer term. One reason for the greater use of the healthy eating element was that this was perceived to be an area hitherto neglected in terms of being embedded within and across the curriculum; another was that competing demands for the school hall meant that physical activity lessons were limited to when the weather allowed them to take place out of doors. Nevertheless, the schools who were using the physical activity element of the PFP valued the ideas it contained, especially in relation to warm-up exercises.
- Approximately half of the case-study schools were delivering the PFP to pupils from just one year group, whilst half were attempting to include all or most age groups within school. Where the PFP was delivered to a mixed age group, schools were using lesson plans appropriate for the youngest members of the group and were differentiating to meet the needs of older pupils.
- Purely Nutrition's plans to extend the programme to the Foundation Stage were welcomed and eagerly anticipated.
- With few exceptions, schools found the PFP easy to use and sufficiently flexible to allow delivery in different ways and by staff with varying levels of experience. The level of detail provided in the lesson plans meant that preparation time could be kept to a minimum, but was described as slightly overwhelming by a small minority of schools.
- Pupils, teachers and parents/carers all commented that the PFP was enjoyable and fun. The most valued and frequently mentioned aspects were the practical hands-on activities such as cooking, and the interactive activities using the whiteboard. The box of resources was welcomed as a useful source of new materials.

### **Impacts on the staff and school**

The case-study schools found the PFP complemented existing health-related initiatives and helped to raise the profile of health-related activities. The schools were:

- Evaluating the programme informally at this stage. However, some of the schools were collecting evidence to record pupils' progress or for National Healthy School Standard (NHSS) applications.
- Already engaged in a range of initiatives and activities to promote healthier lifestyles and the PFP complemented these activities and helped schools to promote the key messages.

- Using the PFP to achieve whole-school aims such as achieving or maintaining NHSS.
- Using the programme to reinforce whole-school messages about healthier eating and the importance of physical activity. The programme supported drives to encourage pupils to make healthier choices.
- Finding the programme had enhanced and developed the knowledge and confidence of those delivering the programme and contributed to professional development.
- Experiencing benefits of using the programme such as gaining inspiration and ideas for new activities to do with the pupils. They found the programme and its resources easy and straightforward to use.

### Impacts on pupils

- Awareness and knowledge levels about the importance of healthy eating and physical activity had in some cases increased, but it is not possible to attribute this to the PFP alone.
- Where pupils were aware of the PFP in particular they were very positive about it, especially the practical activities and the interactive elements.
- Teachers and some parents/carers reported increased awareness and knowledge of healthy eating amongst pupils; while in some cases this was explicitly linked with the PFP, interviewees could rarely attribute this to the PFP alone.
- There was some evidence that where the PFP was delivered regularly, whether through the curriculum, in PPA time or in after-school clubs, there was more likely to be positive impact on pupils.
- Staff, parents/carers and pupils all reported that children had generally 'loved' the PFP.
- Most pupils reported eating more healthily compared to when they were first visited.
- Most pupils reported doing more physical activity, since they were first visited, although this might in part be attributed to the time of year.

### Challenges

According to staff in a minority of schools visited, there had been some key challenges when implementing the PFP:

- Although the majority of the schools viewed the PFP as sufficiently flexible to allow them to implement it in a variety of ways, one or two schools found the prospect of delivering the full programme overwhelming and had been unable to see how it could be used in a way more suited to the realities at their school.

- Full implementation of the PFP was likely to be most challenging in those schools which were in more challenging circumstances/localities and therefore, who would be most likely to benefit from comprehensive implementation. In these cases, aside from 'health' there were other more pressing whole-school priorities, such as raising attainment.
- Generally, schools that might benefit most from comprehensively implementing PFP perhaps find it difficult to allot a fully qualified teacher/member of their senior management team to coordinate initial planning, development and implementation.
- Where TAs had been tasked to take on the PFP coordinating role, it was more often the case that they had not been able to drive a fully inclusive and comprehensive PFP implementation.
- Some schools, especially those in challenging circumstances, said they may need a longer period if they were to plan to incorporate the full PFP into their curriculum.
- In some schools which had only been able to send one person to the training day, implementation was more challenging, especially where that person was not a qualified teacher.
- Limitations in terms of a number of staff at any school being able easily to access online PFP training/resources were mentioned by staff in several schools.

## Conclusions

The PFP was popular with school staff, parents/carers and pupils. The PFP's lesson plans and resources were viewed as well designed, fit for purpose, and easy to use, and fitted well into schools' existing health-related activity. The vast majority of schools intended to continue using the PFP.

Given the timescale and scope of this project, together with the number of other health-related initiatives in schools, it is not possible to attribute positive changes in the knowledge and behaviour of pupils to the PFP alone. However, teachers indicated that the PFP had improved knowledge and awareness amongst pupils, and most pupils reported positive changes in their eating behaviour and physical activity. There was also some evidence from parents/carers who commented that the issue of healthy eating was being raised proactively and more noticeably by their children, since they had been involved in the PFP.

Furthermore, staff said that the PFP had supported the teaching of health-related issues. It had also enhanced and developed the knowledge and confidence of those delivering the programme and contributed to professional development.

The schools visited reported that the PFP fitted well with whole-school initiatives to promote healthier lifestyles, such as the 5-A-DAY campaign and achieving and maintaining NHSS.

Popular with the whole school community, PFP clearly helps expand, embed and enhance health-related teaching, through increasing school staff competence and confidence, complementing other initiatives and positively impacting on pupil knowledge, attitudes and behaviour.

## **Further information**

The full report is available from the NFER and can be downloaded from the internet free of charge at the following link:

<http://www.nfer.ac.uk/research-areas/pims-data/summaries/evaluation-of-the-phunkyfoods-programme.cfm>

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