

# ACTIVE FOR LIFE



# PARENT NEWSLETTER

## The story so far

Your year 5 child, along with their classmates, is taking part in a very exciting project called the Active for Life Year 5 study. Your child's school is one of 60 primary schools in Bristol and North Somerset taking part in the project, with approximately 2150 year 5 children taking part in total.

Between May and November 2011 our fieldworkers visited all 60 schools and carried out initial measurements on the children; these included height, weight and waist measurements. Children also answered a questionnaire and were given an activity monitor (called an accelerometer) to wear for 6 days.



## What happens next

It is now time to return to schools. This year all schools will be visited between **April and July 2012**, and the measurements will be repeated as before. Children will fill out a questionnaire, have their measurements taken and wear an activity belt for 6 days.

If you opted your child out of any measurements last year, this will still be honoured; we will not take any measurements that you have opted your child out of. As before, your child will be given the choice on the day whether to take part in the measurements or not. Last year we found nearly all children wanted to take part, and really enjoyed



Your child will be thanked for their participation with an Active for Life certificate, and a 'stretchy man'!



## What happens in the future

Our final visit to schools will take place between April and July 2013, when the children are in year 6. The same measurements will be repeated as before.

In between now and then we will be contacting parents from some schools and asking if they would be happy to take part in parent interviews. We will ask parents to give their view on how healthy eating and exercise is taught to children in schools. If your child's school is one of those involved in this aspect of the study, you will hear from us in the near future.

In some schools, we will also be inviting small groups of children to take part in discussion groups, so we can find out what children think about learning about healthy lifestyles. If your child attends one of the schools involved in the discussion groups we will write to you to let you know.



Check out our website, it's packed with information for parents and children

[www.bris.ac.uk/social-community-medicine/projects/afl](http://www.bris.ac.uk/social-community-medicine/projects/afl)



## Accelerometers (Activity belts)

If your child chose to wear an activity belt during the 2011 measurements, you will probably recognise this picture. The accelerometer is a small red box worn on a black elastic belt and it is used to measure activity levels.

We ask the children to wear the belts all day every day for 6 days. There are 3 times when they should take their belts off:

- When they are sleeping
- When they get wet (swimming, bath, shower etc)
- When playing **very rough** contact sport (e.g. rugby, karate etc).

It is really important that the children wear the belts as much as they can the rest of the time, both during school, and at home during evenings and weekends. The belts should be worn both when the child is active (e.g. playing football, cycling, doing gymnastics etc), as well as when they are inactive (e.g. watching TV, eating dinner etc).

### How should the belt be worn

The belt should be worn around your child's hips, with the red box sat on their right hip bone. There is a small black bump (looks like a button) on one side of the box, this black bump should always be facing upwards when the belt is in the correct position.

Button facing up



### When to return the belt

The belt is returned 6 days after it is handed out, e.g. if your child was given their belt on a Tuesday it will be collected on the following Monday. Your child's teacher will remind your child the day (or Friday) before collection. You should also receive a note on the 1st day, reminding you when the accelerometer is due to be collected. Your child should wear their belt in to school as normal on the final day, and the teacher will collect it in class.

If your child forgets to wear their belt on the collection day, please help them to remember to bring it in the next day. We need belts to be returned on time, or children in other schools miss out on the opportunity to wear them.

The accelerometers themselves are very expensive to buy, but are worthless without the special computer programme we use. If your child leaves it somewhere (e.g. at a friend's house), or thinks they've mislaid it, we would be grateful if you could make every effort to help them find it and return it to school.

### Children's Prize Draw

This year, to encourage children to wear the belts as much as possible, we are adding a prize draw. Children will be entered into the draw if they return their belt and they have worn it as instructed for the 6 days. There will be 3 prizes:

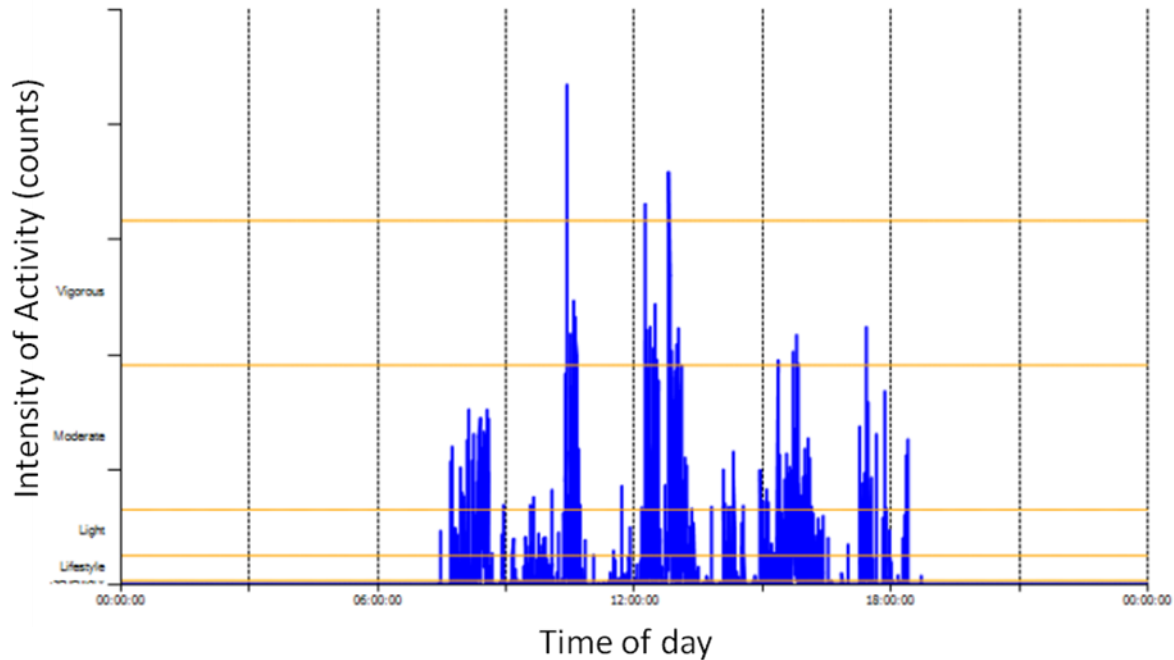


## What information can we get from the activity belts

The accelerometers (activity belts) measure activity. The accelerometers can also measure time, which means they can tell us, not only how much activity has been done, but also at what time of day it occurred and the intensity of the activity.



Below is an example of a graph produced from an accelerometer, showing intensity of activity at different times of day. As you can see, the highest peaks of activity occurred at approximately 10.30am and 12.30pm, probably coinciding with break time and lunch time.



## Parent Logs and Questionnaires

With this newsletter, you will have been sent a parent questionnaire. This questionnaire is being sent to the parents of all the children in the study (nearly 2150!).



The information that you give us in the questionnaire will not be looked at individually, instead it will be grouped with information from other parents from your school, and from other schools. This means that your individual answers are kept confidential and will not be quoted in any future publications and there will be no way of identifying the answers that you gave. Therefore please answer as honestly as you can.

This questionnaire forms an important part of our research, called an 'economic evaluation'. This looks at how much 'Active for Life' costs, in terms of time and money, to parents, schools and the NHS. The information we are collecting includes how much time parents spend helping their children with health related homeworks, how much money parents spend on their weekly shop, how much time and money parents spend taking children to out of school activities, and how much children use the NHS due to exercise related injuries.

We will be very grateful if you could please complete the questionnaire as fully as you can, remove the front page (cover letter), and then post the completed questionnaire to us in the envelope provided. There is no need to write your name or your child's name on the questionnaire.

**Thank you in advance for your help!**

# ACTIVE FOR LIFE

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