

EPHING FOREST TRAMPOLINING PROJECT

*Run by the Sports Development Team, by Fabrizio Luca Ferrari & James Warwick
at Epping Sports Centre*

Background

Although the District Council has no statutory obligation to provide sports activities for children and young people, it is generally accepted as being a good thing to do for a number of reasons. The introduction of the National Curriculum and an increased emphasis on testing, results and league tables has meant that state schools, which cater for 93% of the child population, have often less time to devote to sport than previously. Research has shown that young people's participation in sport & physical activities in the UK has declined, particularly among teenage girls. The UK's figures are much less than, for example, New Zealand's or Australia's. Childhood obesity is now recognized nationally as a serious health problem. Children who exercise regularly are much more likely to do this as adults, so contributing to a healthier adult population in future, which will cost the state less!

Aims

The aim of the trampolining programme is to help children who have been identified as having special educational needs, emotional needs or social needs, develop confidence and self-esteem.

Project Delivery

(i) The project was identified following consultation with local primary head teachers who recognised that a trampolining activity would help improve self-esteem and educational attainment of many special needs pupils within mainstream education. Twenty years ago many schools, including primary schools would have had their own trampolines. As health & safety regulations have tightened many schools can no longer offer an activity like trampolining.

Pupils perceive trampolining as 'fun'. Whilst offering a good aerobic activity it also helps with coordination, suppleness and poise. These skills then benefit the children, particularly those with autism, in the classroom.

(ii) The project has been run at central locations e.g. Epping and Ongar Sports Centres, and the children have been brought in by coach from their schools accompanied by learning support assistants. Originally the project was run for ten weeks at a time. The Sports Development Team successfully applied for funding from the Performance Reward Grants offered by Essex County Council, but this funding was stopped in the summer term as part of the 'cuts' made following the change of Government in May. However, local head teachers felt it to be so valuable that the Rural Local Delivery Group has decided to fund the project itself for its thirteen member schools. The courses have been shortened to five weeks, and activities and games provided by a Tottenham Hotspur Foundation have been added to the programme.

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Evaluation

Outcomes are assessed by structured questioning of teachers (who are monitoring the children's progress) and of the children themselves. This is done before, during and after participation in the project. The attached case study notes refer. As well as improved confidence and self-esteem, the assessments show increased concentration in the classroom and improvements in reading and spelling.

Recommendations to the Task & Finish Panel

The primary schools Trampolining Project is an excellent scheme and EFDC should continue to enable the Sports Development Team to provide this programme.

The project delivers benefits which most primary schools on their own can no longer hope to do.

It successfully promotes physical and mental health in a group of children identified as having special educational, emotional and social needs.

The Sports Development Team has been very successful in attracting outside funding for the project.

Case studies - see appendix attached.