#activitychallenge



challenging children's inactivity



Activity Challenge
powered by fit for sport

foreword:



I am delighted to support the launch of Fit For Sport's Activity Challenge, which seeks to engage children in new and innovative means of physical activity, and brings a new sense of fun to the monitoring of children's physical literacy, fitness and motor skills.

This is an area that ukactive feels equally passionate about, as we prepare to publish our own report into children's physical activity later this year.

The UK is currently facing an inactivity epidemic, with a staggering 29 per cent of people in England classed as physically inactive. This seems only set to rise as we see a continued growth of sedentary lifestyles, nowhere is this more apparent than in the case of children.

Children today are less fit and active than the generations before them. Previous research suggests that the average 10-year-old in 1998 could beat 95% of youngsters in 2008 in running tests, and further statistics show that children's activity levels are continuing to fall. Inactivity is the fourth largest cause of disease and disability, and directly contributes to one in every six deaths in the UK. As well as protecting against these dangers, being physically active every day is vital for the healthy growth and development of school-age children.

Children's activity is an area of huge priority to ukactive, as part of our long-standing goal to get more people, more active, more often. This is why I wholeheartedly support the work of Fit For Sport in developing the Activity Challenge, and the publication of this important report.

Fit For Sport work tirelessly to promote children's physical activity but it will require further support and collaboration from a wide range of stakeholders including government, teachers and parents, in order to ensure that all children are encouraged to be active enough to be both healthy and happy.

David Stalker
Chief Executive Officer, ukactive



I am confident that with the continued combined effort from ukactive, Fit For Sport, and other like-minded organisations we will be able to turn the tide of inactivity, and ensure a better, healthier and more active future for the next generation.



introduction:

Ask any parent or carer what they want for their children and the vast majority just want them to be healthy and happy, but how many parents and carers know how healthy, fit and active their children really are?

In 2014, Fit For Sport conducted a simple physical activity test to assess key indicators of health and physical literacy of primary age children in 80 schools across the UK. The Activity Challenge requires a combination of skill and aspects of physical fitness, including stamina, agility and coordination.

67% of children did not meet the fitness level to be considered sufficiently active and physically literate by Fit For Sport – based upon data collected from over 10,000 children and work completed with teachers, children's activity professionals and experts to calculate the recommended fitness levels for particular age ranges.

Physical inactivity is the ticking time bomb for UK health - one in three children in the UK is overweight and only 21% of boys and 16% of girls achieve the recommended levels of physical activity each week.*

Increases in obesity and rising numbers of children with health problems such as type 2 diabetes mean that healthy eating is at the forefront of many parents' minds. However, to focus on nutrition without addressing low activity levels is to miss half of the story.

Children are spending more time in front of screens and on mobile devices than ever before. Whilst the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) guidelines suggest that children should be getting 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity each day, the reality is that many will only participate in physical exercise during school. However, in 2014, Key Stage 1 pupils were offered an average of 102 minutes of PE each week, rising to just 114 minutes for pupils in Key Stage 2.**

CMO guidelines clearly state that the recommended daily level of activity should be 'moderate to vigorous', yet a report into school PE in 2013 commented that often there is not enough physical, strenuous activity in primary PE lessons.***

* Outstanding Physical Education for All, 2013.
** Youth Sport Trust, 2014.
*** Physical Activity for Children and Young People, BHF Physical Activity + Health, February 2014.

It is difficult for parents to know what their child's activity or fitness levels really are. Although they are regularly updated by schools on academic progress and are encouraged to monitor homework tasks to ensure children hit literacy and numeracy targets, when it comes to making sure their children are active enough, has anybody really been keeping track?

Physical activity is essential for a child's health and wellbeing. The health benefits stretch from healthier lungs and hearts, stronger muscles, better bone growth, more flexibility and better motor skills and coordination. Additionally, a recent report by Public Health England suggests that physical activity improves academic performance, concentration, sleep levels and good mental health.[1] It's easy to track a child's academic performance, but how do you measure how fit and active a child is – and how can you track their improvement?

Fit For Sport are experts in engaging and educating children, young people and families through activity, and have been assessing and improving children's activity levels for over 20 years.

Their Activity Challenge – a simple test that can be done in homes and schools – provides an opportunity for parents to take the first step towards helping their children lead a healthier life, by finding out how fit and active they actually are and whether they are getting enough exercise each week.

Fit For Sport have demonstrated that meeting physical activity guidelines each day makes a big difference to children's fitness levels. In 2014, Fit For Sport worked with 10,000 children through the Sport England-funded 'Engage to Compete' programme. They found that when children were engaged in the recommended 60 minutes of daily break-time and lunch time physical activities each day, their health-related fitness levels improved by up to 15% over the academic year.



measuring fitness:

Common children's fitness tests have not appropriately measured relevant physical activities to ensure aspects of overall health and fitness. Many primary school-age children are measured using the Body Mass Index (BMI) test, which merely offers a measure of size based on the mass and height of an individual. Tests such as the multi-stage fitness test (known as the 'bleep test') measures cardiovascular endurance, or stamina, but do not look at other aspects of fitness such as agility, flexibility or endurance.

Health-related physical fitness can be defined as the ability of a person to perform daily activities without fatigue or undue physiological stress, and by traits and capacities that are associated with a low risk for the development of chronic diseases and premature death. Therefore, a fitness test needs to encapsulate a much more holistic and 'real life' approach.

The Activity Challenge developed by Fit For Sport tests children's muscular strength, muscular endurance, cardiovascular fitness, flexibility and speed – components of health-related fitness that are vital to everyday tasks at school, at home and in the park.

[1] How healthy behaviour supports children's wellbeing, Public Health England, 2013.

PRIMARY

FIT FOR SPORT COLLECTED DATA FROM 10,000 CHILDREN…

…FROM 80 DIFFERENT SCHOOLS…

…AND FOUND THAT 2/3 CHILDREN WERE BELOW RECOMMENDED FITNESS LEVELS

102

114

IN 2014, KS1 CHILDREN GOT JUST 102 MINUTES OF PE EACH WEEK KS2 CHILDREN GOT 114 MINUTES

GUIDELINES RECOMMEND CHILDREN SHOULD GET 60 MINUTES OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY EACH DAY…

60

…INCLUDING MODERATE INTENSITY ACTIVITY (LIKE RIDING A BIKE) AND VIGOROUS INTENSITY ACTIVITY (LIKE RUNNING) – ACTIVITY THAT GETS THE HEART RATE UP AND BREATHING BECOMES FASTER



67%

OF CHILDREN DID NOT MEET THE RECOMMENDED FITNESS LEVEL FOR THEIR AGE GROUP

24%

OF CHILDREN FELL WELL BELOW RECOMMENDED LEVELS

1/5

LESS THAN A FIFTH OF CHILDREN ACHIEVED TARGETS IN STAMINA AND ENDURANCE

40%

OF 5 TO 7 YEAR OLDS STRUGGLED TO DO 60 STAR JUMPS A MINUTE

21%

OF BOYS AND

16%

OF GIRLS GET THE RECOMMENDED LEVELS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY EACH WEEK

research findings:

Fit For Sport has been collecting data on children's activity for a decade, working in partnership with the ukactive Research Institute and the University of Aberystwyth to develop better methodologies and ensure greater accuracy of data on activity and fitness levels.

In 2014, Fit For Sport collected Activity Challenge data from over 10,000 primary school-aged children in 80 different schools. This data was sampled and analysed across three different age groups: 5-7, 8-9, and 10-11 year olds. Fit For Sport then created ranges to set a benchmark of recommended fitness and activity levels.

The benchmark was established by working with teachers, children's activity professionals and experts to calculate the recommended fitness levels for their age range.

The results were placed into three categories - Bronze, Silver, and Gold - to represent the levels expected of their age group. Those children falling into the Gold category met recommended levels of fitness as determined by Fit For Sport's children's activity experts. Those children in the Silver category were not able to meet the required levels in at least two of the three challenges. Those children in the Bronze category were significantly below recommended levels of physical fitness in at least two of the challenges, meaning Fit For Sport deemed their overall level of physical literacy and fitness to be a cause for concern.



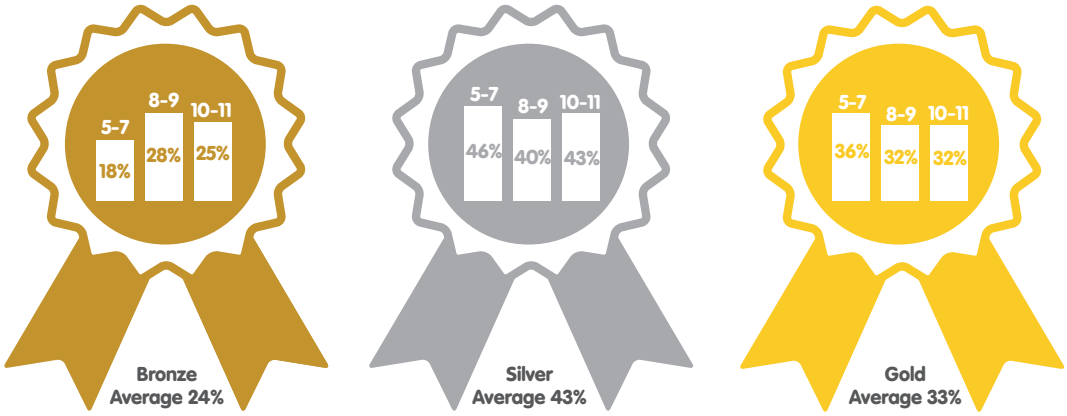
key findings:

Each child completed three timed physical activity challenges (which vary in difficulty, dependent on the age range). The Activity Challenge assessed their hand-eye/physical co-ordination, muscular endurance, power and cardio-vascular endurance through simple catching, jumping and running activities. The challenge tests key attributes of physical literacy and movement and requires a combination of skill and aspects of physical fitness – providing a good indication of their overall fitness and activity levels.

Only **36%** of children aged 5-7yrs assessed using the Activity Challenge benchmarks fell into the 'Gold' category, indicating that they were at an adequate level of fitness.
The lowest results were recorded in stamina and co-ordination activities.

32% of the children aged 8-11yrs were at an adequate level of fitness for their age group, with higher percentages in the Bronze category. The lowest results were recorded in challenges that test stamina and agility.

OVERALL ACTIVITY CHALLENGE RESULT



BREAKDOWN OF ASSESSMENTS

% of children in ranges: 5-7yrs

Physical Activity	Bronze	Silver	Gold
Throw & Catch	22%	51%	27%
Jumping Challenge	11%	29%	60%
Running	19%	59%	22%

% of children in ranges: 8-9yrs

Physical Activity	Bronze	Silver	Gold
Throw & Catch	11%	42%	47%
Jumping Challenge	24%	39%	37%
Running	50%	38%	12%

% of children in range: 10-11yrs

Physical Activity	Bronze	Silver	Gold
Throw & Catch	27%	29%	44%
Jumping Challenge	15%	47%	38%
Running	33%	53%	14%

67% of primary-school aged children **fell below** the recommended **fitness levels** set by the challenge for their age group



The activities were adapted according to age group, and pre-determined ranges used to assess the children completing the Activity Challenge.

RANGES

Age 5-7yrs

Physical Activity	Bronze	Silver	Gold
Throw & Catch*	0-29	30-59	60+
Jumping Challenge**	0-29	30-59	60+
Running***	0-8	9-14	15+

* Number of times a ball can be bounced and caught in 60 seconds
** Number of star jumps completed in 60 seconds
*** Number of shuttle runs (6m) completed in 60 seconds

Age 8-9yrs

Physical Activity	Bronze	Silver	Gold
Throw & Catch*	0-29	30-49	50+
Jumping Challenge**	0-16	17-29	30+
Running***	0-12	13-21	22+

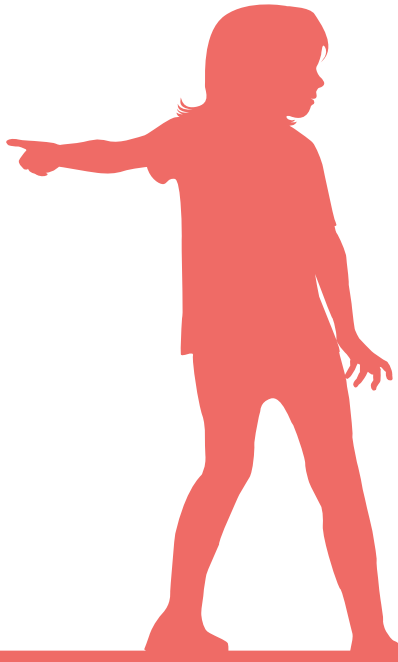
* Number of times a ball can be thrown and caught against a wall in 90 seconds
** Number of two-footed jumps completed in 90 seconds
*** Number of shuttle runs (slalom over 6m) completed in 90 seconds

Age 10-11yrs

Physical Activity	Bronze	Silver	Gold
Throw & Catch*	0-29	30-54	55+
Jumping Challenge**	0-59	50-84	85+
Running***	0-5	6-10	11+

* Number of times a ball can be thrown from one hand and caught with the other against a wall in 120 seconds
** Number of two-footed jumps over a bench completed in 120 seconds
*** Number of shuttle runs (to a centre point and back, in sequence) completed in 120 seconds

32% of the children aged 8-11yrs were at an **adequate** level of fitness for their age group





conclusions:

The research findings suggest that, using the ranges created for the Activity Challenge, the majority of primary school-aged children have inadequate levels of physical fitness to ensure health and physical literacy. Only around one in every three children achieved recommended levels for their age group.

A concerning outcome of the research was that levels of stamina in primary-school aged children are worryingly low. For example, only 22% of 5-7 year olds fell into the 'gold' category for the running challenge, which assesses stamina and cardio-vascular endurance. This fell to 12% and 14% for children aged 8–9 and 10-11 respectively. This could suggest that children are not achieving the recommended levels of moderate to vigorous activity each day that is needed to help build up stamina levels in young children.

In addition, while there are incremental improvements in agility and muscular endurance as the children develop from key stage 1 to 2, this doesn't relate to improvements in cardiovascular endurance. This may suggest that when delivering children's activity in and out of school there is too much focus on technique opposed to physical activity.

Fit For Sport work with thousands of young children each year and have over two decades of experience and expertise working at the 'coal face' of children's physical activity. The Activity Challenge research has been created using their extensive experience, and the findings confirm the concern that not only are children not getting their recommended 60 minutes of physical activity each day – they aren't spending enough time doing activity at vigorous intensity where they are out of breath, their heart rates increase, and they are improving their fitness levels.

Fit For Sport will continue to work closely with the wider community of academics, researchers and professionals in the children's fitness community, including the University of Aberystwyth and the ukactive Research Institute, to continue to explore the way children's fitness is measured and reported, and to drive forward the need to get more children physically active.



take The Activity Challenge!



Fit For Sport's activity experts have adapted the Activity Challenge and developed three simple tests that are easy to participate in and can be carried out in a home, a garden, a park or playground. Each individual child's results can be entered online on the Activity Challenge portal to find out their score, and improvements can be tracked over time.

Register

To take part in the Activity Challenge, log on to the online portal: **www.activitychallenge.co.uk**

Take the challenge

The Activity Challenge is split into three different tests, which differ slightly depending on age groups:

Throwing & catching:
This is designed to test eye to hand co-ordination.

Jumping:
This challenge tests rhythm, co-ordination and power.

Running:
This challenge tests agility and cardio-vascular endurance.

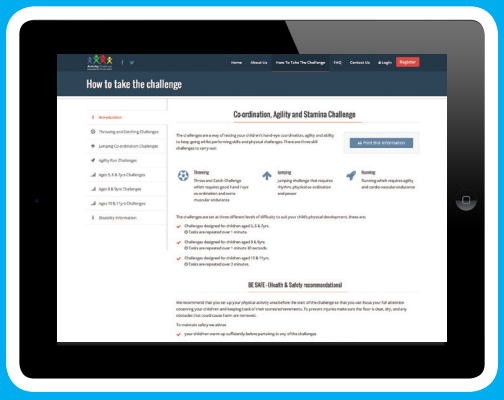
Submit your scores

Each challenge has a set of simple instructions and lets parents know how to record points for their child (eg. every time a child bounces the ball and catches it, they score 1 point.)

Points recorded for each activity can be entered into the Activity Challenge portal and given a score of Bronze, Silver, or Gold. Parents will then be able to compare their child's scores with the levels of health-related fitness recommended by Fit For Sport, giving them a good indication of their children's activity and fitness levels.

Track progress

Once parents have an idea of their children's fitness levels, they may choose to implement some of the healthy lifestyle advice and tips for keeping active that are available through the Activity Challenge portal. They can then return to the portal to let their child retake the challenges as many times as they like over time, allowing them to track improvements in their child's fitness levels once lifestyle changes are made.



Take the Activity Challenge!
www.activitychallenge.co.uk

a journey to an active life:

Fit For Sport know that active, healthy children have a much greater chance of becoming active, healthy adults. Habits started young can last a lifetime.

That's why they are committed to educating and engaging children and young people through in-school, after school and school holiday activities. Being active doesn't have to mean playing competitive sport: Fit For Sport believe the most important aspect of improving activity levels is making sure that young children find being active a fun thing to do. Enjoying activity early in life will set them off on a journey towards an active, healthy life.

Fit For Sport have been educating and engaging children in physical activity for over 20 years. They encourage everyone to adopt their "SAS" approach to activity: Simple, Achievable, and Sustainable.

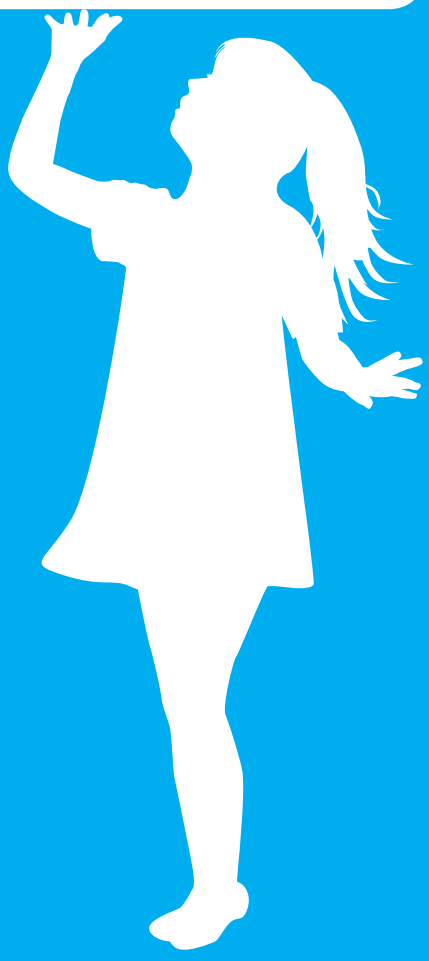
Fit For Sport work to train activity leaders, support activity settings through resources and management systems and deliver their own activity programs across all sectors and throughout the UK.

habits started

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www.activitychallenge.co.uk

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fit for sport

"a journey to an active life"