

# Wiltshire Healthy Schools



## Case study focus: Dental Health

Core theme: Healthy Weight

## Woodlands Primary and Harnham Infants School

### School context

Both schools are situated in the Salisbury area. Woodlands is a smaller than average sized primary school, while Harnham Infants is of average size. There is an above average proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium at Woodlands, while the numbers at Harnham Infants are below average. Pupils in both schools are almost exclusively White British.

### Why choose this project?

Local data from the Health Related Behaviour Survey and from the Salisbury Area Board showed that dental health is a particular concern in the area. Staff at both schools had noticed that some children did not have good dental health and oral hygiene. Support was available from the local Oral Health Team to deliver a school based programme and advise families on accessing local NHS dental services.

### What did the schools want to achieve?

- To increase the number of children that clean their teeth twice a day
- To increase the number of children that can explain how to keep teeth healthy
- To raise awareness of the importance of oral health and personal hygiene in general

### What did the schools do to achieve these aims?

At both schools the Oral Health Team delivered input to all age groups, through a series of classroom presentations. Activities were provided so that children could follow up at school and at home. Children were encouraged to clean their teeth regularly using the Happy Little Teeth reward scheme. At Woodlands all Key Stage 1 children received a free reward star chart to encourage participation. Children were encouraged to complete a two week teeth brushing chart, which was monitored by the Healthy Schools Coordinator. Teachers and TAs encouraged children who may not benefit from a high level of encouragement from home. All children at both schools received workbooks, a free toothbrush and toothpaste.

At Harnham, child friendly data was displayed in the school hall and celebrated during assembly. Year 1 teachers planned dental health as a focus for a non-fiction writing activity to reinforce key messages. Mixed ability pairs and adult support ensured everybody was able to participate. Pupils took the lead for some aspects of the work, with year 1 leading an assembly. Children made posters and the School Council performed a play that linked dental health with the contents of lunch boxes, a previous Healthy Schools focus for the school.

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Data was collected for each year group throughout the period to monitor whether the intervention was having an effect and to ensure that progress was maintained.

### Measuring success

At Woodlands school the percentage of children brushing their teeth twice a day had increased from 48% to 59% 27 months later. Since the initial survey the number of children never brushing had decreased overall. The largest impact was seen among the youngest pupils where 16% never brushed before the intervention, but this was 0% by the end of the project. At Harnham the percentage of children (year 5 & 6 only) brushing twice a day also increased, following a very similar intervention, from 81% to 95% the next year.

At Woodlands, the school successfully raised awareness among children about the importance of regular tooth brushing and have embedded the support of the Oral Health Team as part of a two year rolling programme. Other benefits included: an increased awareness of self hygiene across all year groups, an increased awareness of the importance of looking after adult teeth which do not get replaced. The school felt that the impact of talking about oral hygiene has had a positive impact on the awareness of general personal hygiene including washing, hair, clothes and general cleanliness.

### Lessons learned

The schools felt that keeping the project going over a longer period was tricky, but more valuable than a one off session or campaign.

Collection of data from home was sometimes challenging. Even though staff knew that some children were cleaning their teeth regularly, they were not always supported to fill in and bring back their forms so that the data could be recorded at school.

There had also been an impact on parental awareness, with an increase in parental support during the project and some parents at Harnham School began to send in toothbrushes to be used after Breakfast Club.