

Written evidence submitted by Oak Cottage Primary School (BYC056)

1. Are particular groups of young people particularly prone to poor body image, or less likely to be offered or seek help with poor body image? What causes these trends?

At Oak Cottage Primary School our journey to improve pupils' positive body image was an initiated response to a questionnaire in which results revealed half of the girls in Year Six felt 'They would like to lose weight'. These results were taken from a biannual review completed by Year Four and Year Six pupils. At this stage, the responses indicated girls were more prone to suffer from body image insecurities. Although our work towards promoting positive body image has improved the overall level of self-esteem of pupils in Year Four and Six, recent data suggests boys are equally as likely to suffer from body image insecurities.

2. In relation to young men and boys, minority ethnic groups, and those who self-identify as transgender: what are the specific challenges facing young people in these groups? How effective is existing support?

All pupils within school are able to access body image lessons and they are tailored appropriately for each year group. Our curriculum is fully inclusive and we ensure all groups are able to relate to individual activities. Pupils across the school are given the opportunity to share their own viewpoints with regards to body image. We feel it is important that all groups are represented and ensure all pupils are able to relate to the unit through the resources that we use.

3. Do existing campaigns and initiatives to promote positive body image sufficiently take into account the different challenges faced by young people with particular characteristics?

The internet, social media and messaging

Our body image units focus heavily on the impact of media on young people. We refer to the 'Real beauty' Dove campaign in Key Stage Two and focus on the effect of air brushing. The E-safety aspect of our computing curriculum is embedded within each year group and unit. Progression throughout the year groups is clear and pupils are able to confidently talk about some of the dangers that social media may present.

4. Has the growing use of social media and communications platforms amongst young people encouraged practices and attitudes that entrench poor body image? What is the link between "sexting" and body dissatisfaction?

N/A

5. Can the internet and social media be used as a tool to promote positive self-image? What examples are there of this happening?

A significant proportion of our body image scheme of work focuses on the importance of positive role-models. Pupils talk openly about celebrities they would like to look/be like. This has enabled us to investigate positive role-models that are promoted by social media. Pupils are offered the opportunity to investigate role-models in all walks of life. They are then given the chance to share their findings with other pupils.

6. Do internet companies, social media platforms or other platforms have a responsibility to tackle trends which entrench poor body image? What are they already doing in this area? What more should they be doing?

Many forms of social media will celebrate positive role-models and share their experiences. As part of our year three body image unit pupils are asked to discuss why Kate Winslet and Kelly Clarkson have chosen to refuse digital enhancement and air-brushing. Pupils investigate internet platforms that have praised these celebrities for doing so.

7. Does the Government have a responsibility to discourage the use of social media, the internet and communications platforms in ways which promote poor body image? What should it be doing in this regard?

Currently, there are aspects of the PSHE curriculum that are non-statutory within primary and secondary schools. Pupils with poor body image and negative self-esteem can begin to develop these traits whilst in primary school. Although many schools choose to include body image (and with this the use of social media and the internet) there is the possibility that many pupils wait until secondary school to learn about body image in a school environment. This may have already had a damaging effect on their own perception of body image. There is the danger of leaving it too late. It is compulsory for schools to include e-safety within their curriculum. Through this, negative and positive use of social media and the internet is covered but the body image units allow pupils to further develop their understanding of body image. There is a responsibility to ensure all pupils are given this opportunity.

Education

8. What examples are there of schools integrating the promotion of positive body image into school subjects across the curriculum, particularly physical education? How successful have these been? How can success best be measured?

A significant proportion of our PSHE curriculum was developed as a response to pupils' views. Questionnaires have provided us with the opportunity to discover what our pupils feel they know enough about, what they would like to know more about and how they perceive themselves and their peers. Our body image units were implemented to ensure our pupils establish positive self-esteem and are able to recognise their own self-worth. It provides them with the opportunity to celebrate similarities and differences and a realistic understanding of beauty. These messages are key to ensuring our pupils progress into happy and healthy adults.

Alongside our PSHE lessons other areas of the curriculum have been adapted in order to suit the needs of our individual children. For example, the response from girls which indicated 50% would like to lose weight signalled there was an issue with the way in which these particular girls viewed themselves. In order to support them further we explored other options within our extra-curricular opportunities that would encourage girls to increase their level of physical activity. Pupils were asked to discuss the types of sports that they were interested in and we endeavoured to arrange these.

Other aspects of physical education have been important to increasing our pupils' understanding of the benefits of exercise and enjoyment. Lunchtime clubs, lunchtime sports coaches, team games and competitions have all helped to increase the pupils' level of physical activity.

9. What examples are there of youth organisations and peer education programmes outside of schools promoting positive body image? Are there examples of programmes focusing on different groups of young people? Are they focusing on different aspects of body image? How effective are these? How should they be evaluated?

N/A

Health implications

10. To what extent is dissatisfaction with body image contributing to the increase in mental health problems amongst children and young people?

11. Does the NHS have sufficient resources and expertise to manage mental health issues associated with poor body image? How have changes in education funding impacted on the ability of schools to provide in house mental health services?

12. Are schools sufficiently linked with health professionals? What more could be done in this regard?"

Our school works extremely closely with outside professionals and will contact these for support whenever necessary. The local authority PSHE team provide valuable advice and have delivered support programmes, workshops alongside various other resources for our school. These outside agencies provide schools with a variety of CPD training.

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