

# A Summary of the Primary School Health and Wellbeing Survey in York 2023-24

## INTRODUCTION

The School Health and Wellbeing Survey was commissioned by City of York Council Public Health team. This is the second large scale survey on the health and wellbeing of children and young people in the city carried out between 2021 - 2024. The aim of the survey is to inform and support policy and decision making across the local authority, in schools, and among other key stakeholders in the City.

**Thank you, to all staff and pupils who took part!**

## THE SURVEY

The survey was carried out between November 2023 and January 2024. York University assisted with co-production and the development of the questionnaires to include validated measures and scales. The City of York Council Business Intelligence team carried out the data analysis. Five year groups across all publicly funded schools in York were invited to participate: years 4 and 6 in primary schools and years 8, 10 and 12 in secondary/sixth form schools.

New questions on internet use, online gambling-style games, smoking and vaping, alcohol and school attendance were added to the primary school survey this year.

This report is based on the responses from 1033 children from a total of 15 primary schools in York. Due to the low response rate from primary schools, we recognise that the results may be subject to chance and bias.

## TOPICS

ORAL HEALTH  
DIET AND NUTRITION  
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY  
INTERNET USE  
SLEEP  
GAMBLING  
VAPING  
CIGARETTE SMOKING  
ALCOHOL  
EMOTIONAL HEALTH  
AND WELLBEING  
BULLYING  
SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

## Sample size

**1033 young people aged 8-11 years took part in the survey.**

Gender	Primary school pupils (Yr 4 & 6)
Male	48.5%
Female	48.3%
Nonbinary or prefer not to say	3.2%
Total	100%

## HEADLINE FINDINGS

Positive Findings	
<b>Emotional Health and Wellbeing</b>	Majority (93%) of primary pupils said that they have someone they can talk to if they have a problem or were worried about something.
<b>Emotional Health and Wellbeing</b>	Overall primary school pupils in York have a positive emotional state, scoring 21.2 out of 30. This is similar to the findings from the 2021 survey (20.9/30).
<b>Happiness/Life satisfaction</b>	Overall primary pupils are happy with their lives, rating their life satisfaction at 3 on a scale of 0 (extremely happy) -10 (extremely unhappy).

Persisting Trends	
<b>Oral Health</b>	Just over a quarter of pupils reported that they don't brush their teeth more than once a day. This is an increase from the 2021 survey (20%). Half said that they can't remember visiting a dentist in the last year which is similar to the 2021 survey.
<b>Diet</b>	Around 37% reported having their '5 a day'. This is a decrease from the 2021 survey when around half of primary school pupils reported having their '5 a day'.
<b>Diet</b>	10% said that they drink energy drinks most or every day.
<b>Physical Activity</b>	33% of primary pupils are meeting the recommendation for physical activity, reporting that they were active for 1 hour every day during the week before the survey.
<b>Sleep and Sleep Hygiene</b>	40% of primary school pupils go to bed after 9pm on a school night and 1 in 5 said that the amount of sleep they get is not usually enough to make them feel awake and focus on school. 38% report that they do things which make them feel very awake a lot of the time or every day in the hour before they go to bed

	such as watching TV, playing video games, or talking on the phone.
<b>Bullying</b>	36% said that they had been bullied online and 16% said that it was by someone that they knew. This has increased since the 2021 survey when a quarter of primary school pupils reported that they had been bullied online.

<b>Emerging Trends</b>	
<b>Oral Health</b>	7% stated that they had missed school in the last month because of tooth pain. This was more common amongst year 4 pupils
<b>Diet</b>	A quarter of primary school pupils report that they don't eat breakfast every day before school.
<b>Internet use</b>	Nearly half of primary school pupils said that they had a social media account despite most social media platforms having an age limit of 13 years +. 36% reported that an adult doesn't normally check what they are doing online. 32% stated that they had received messages from people online that they didn't know and 19% said that they have been asked to do things online that they didn't want to do.
<b>Gambling</b>	35% said that they had played online gambling-style games and 10% reported using them in the week before the survey.
<b>Smoking and Vaping</b>	10% of primary school pupils reported that they have used e-cigarettes and 6% said that they have smoked cigarettes. Around a quarter stated that an adult in their home smokes.
<b>Alcohol</b>	33% said that they drink or have tried alcohol once or twice. When asked where they usually drink alcohol, just over half responded, 'at home'.

## PRIMARY SCHOOL SURVEY SUMMARY

### Oral Health

Children aged 7 and over should brush their teeth twice a day for about 2 minutes using a pea sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. Tooth decay is the main reason for hospital admissions for primary school children. Dental caries can impact on health and social wellbeing including school attendance, sleep, speaking, eating and socialising. Children should be able to brush their own teeth at this age, but it is recommended that they are supervised to make sure that they brush properly and for 2 minutes.

**73% of primary school children said that they brush their teeth more than once a day and just over half remembered visiting a dentist in the last year.**

- 'I forget' was the top reason given for not brushing their teeth (28%)
- Year 4 pupils were less likely to say that they brush their teeth twice a day.
- 4% said that they don't have a toothbrush/toothpaste.
- 53% have visited a dentist in the last year.
- 7% said that they had missed school in the last month because of tooth pain.

## **Diet and Nutrition**

Children and young people require lots of energy and nutrients to support their growth and development. It is therefore important that they don't skip meals, especially breakfast. They should aim to eat a balanced diet which includes at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day and not fill up on foods and drinks which are high in fat, salt, and sugar as these contain higher calories and fewer nutrients.

**A quarter of primary school children reported that they don't eat breakfast every day during a normal school week.**

- 39% said that 'not being hungry' was the reason that stops them eating breakfast and 32% stated that they 'don't have enough time' to eat breakfast.
- 46% responded that they have a packed lunch whilst 42% said that they have school dinners.
- Girls (12%) were much less likely to say that they have a school meal compared to boys (44%).
- Year 4 (47.2%) pupils were more likely to say that they have a school meal compared to year 6 pupils (60%) who were more likely to say that they have a packed lunch.
- Half said that they have a packed lunch because they 'don't like school food' and 13% reported that 'school food is too expensive'.
- 36% responded that they eat at least 2 portions of fruit every day. 7% report eating none.
- 38% said that they eat at least 2 portions of vegetables every day. 6% report eating none.
- 36% stated that they consume sugary drinks most days or every day. Boys were more likely to say that they drink sugary drinks compared to girls.

- 10% responded that they drink energy drinks most days or every day. 37% buy them from the supermarket and 33% said that they ‘buy them from the corner shop’.

## Physical Activity

It is recommended that children and young people aged 5-18 years should aim to be active for at least 1 hour a day across the week for their health and wellbeing.

### **33% of primary school pupils reported that they were active for 1 hour every day during the week before the survey.**

- Boys (38%) were more likely to say that they were active for 1 hour every day in the week before the survey compared to girls (28%).
- 3% responded that they weren’t active for 1 hour any day in the week before the survey.
- Nearly half said that they do most of their activity or exercise ‘equally outside of and at school’.
- 63% of primary school pupils actively travel to school (walk, bike or scooter). Girls (41%) were less likely to report that they actively travel to school compared to boys (64%). Year 4 (60%) pupils were more likely to actively travel to school compared to pupils in year 6 (41%).
- 35% reported that ‘nothing would help them be more active’ and that ‘things are fine the way they are’. 18% said that ‘having more time’ would help them be more active.

## Internet Use

Advice from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) suggest that children should have a two-hour limit on the time spent in front of screens and have some screen free days. Most social media platforms (e.g. TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram) have an age limit of 13+ years. The overuse of social media can impact on children’s mental health, self-esteem and wellbeing.

### **10% of pupils report using the internet for more than 6 hours on a normal school day. This rises to 22% on a normal weekend day.**

- Overall year 6 pupils report that they spend more time using the internet than year 4 pupils during a normal school day.
- Nearly half of all primary school pupils who took part in the survey said that they have a social media account. Boys (47%) were more likely to state that they have a social media account compared to girls (36%). There was no noticeable difference between year 4 and year 6 pupils.
- When asked what they use their social media account for the top three reasons given were sending messages to people (17%), playing games (17%) and listening to music (14%).
- 36% said that ‘an adult doesn’t normally check what they are doing online’. Girls were less likely to report that an adult normally checks what they are doing online. Year 4 pupils were more likely to say that an adult checks what they are doing online compared to year 6 pupils.
- 32% responded that they ‘had received messages online from people that they didn’t know’. Girls (57%) and year 6 pupils (57%) were more likely to say that this had happened to them compared to boys (36%) and year 4 pupils (28%).
- 28% have received unkind comments from people online.
- 19% said that they ‘have been asked online to do something that they didn’t want to do’.

## Sleep

A good night’s sleep is important for a child’s physical and mental wellbeing. Children aged 8-10 years should get around 10 hours sleep each night. The NHS recommend that young people should not use screens in the hour before they go to bed.

### **60% of primary school pupils usually go to bed before 9pm on a school night.**

- 28% said that they usually go to bed before 9pm on a night when they don’t have school the next day.
- 14% responded that ‘their parent or carer does not set their bedtime or tell them when to go to bed’.
- 38% stated that ‘in the hour before bedtime they do things which make them feel very awake a lot of the time or every day, such as watching TV, playing video games or talking on the telephone’.

- 19% report that when they go to bed they ‘do things in their bed which keep them awake, such as watching TV, a lot of the time or every day’.
- Overall girls and year 6 pupils reported poorer sleep hygiene.
- 1 in 5 report that ‘the amount of sleep they get is not usually enough to make them feel awake and focus on school’.

## Gambling

Problem gambling in early childhood is likely to impact on mental and emotional wellbeing and increase the risk of acquiring other additions. Since Covid-19 there has been growing concern about the number of children and young people playing online gambling-style games. Online gambling-style games look and play like normal gambling games – for example roulette, poker, slot machines, and bingo – but you cannot win real money (e.g. Zynga Poker, Slots Farm, Bingo Blitz).

**65% of primary school pupils reported that they had never played an online gambling-style game.**

- 10% reported using online gambling-style games in the week before the survey.
- Girls were more likely to report playing online gambling-style games.
- 39% reported that when playing video games (e.g. Fortnite, FIFA, Roblox, Candy Crush), they had ‘paid money or used in-game currency they had bought to buy in-game items such as skins, clothes, weapons and players’. This was more prevalent amongst year 6 (42%) pupils compared to year 4 pupils (30%)
- 4% stated that when playing video games, they had ‘bet with in-game items on websites outside of the game they are playing’.

There is growing concern about the number of children and young people vaping. Vaping is a way for adults to stop smoking and although it is less harmful than smoking cigarettes it is not harmless and is therefore not something for non-smokers or children and young people to try. Vapes contain some toxins and we do not yet know the long-term effects of these on the human body. They also contain nicotine. Children and young people's developing brains and lungs are more sensitive to the effects of vaping. This is why it is illegal in the UK to sell nicotine based vaping products to anyone under the age of 18 years or for an adult to buy them on behalf of under 18s.

**71% of primary school pupils said that they had never used an e-cigarette and 19% reported that they have never heard of e-cigarettes.**

- Girls were more likely to report that they have never heard of e-cigarettes.
- 5% of those who said they used e-cigarettes stated that they 'get them from their siblings' and 5% said that they 'buy them from the supermarket'.
- 42% don't know if e-cigarettes are more or less harmful to the person using them compared to cigarettes.

## Cigarette Smoking

Smoking during childhood causes serious risks to health in the long and short term. The earlier people become regular smokers the harder they find it to quit and are more likely to smoke as adults, increasing the risk of developing diseases, such as respiratory, cancer and heart disease.

Children are more at risk to the effects of passive smoking and parental smoking is the main determinant of exposure in non-smoking children. Bronchitis, asthma and pneumonia are more common in children with one or two parents who smoke.

**94% of primary school pupils have never smoked a cigarette.**

- 34% answered that they 'preferred not to say where they got cigarettes from' and 9% said that they 'buy them from the supermarket'.
- Nearly a quarter of all primary pupils said that an adult in their home smokes.



The NHS states that children and young people are advised not to drink alcohol under the age of 18. In the UK it is against the law for anyone under the age of 18 to buy alcohol, for someone to sell them alcohol, for an adult to buy them alcohol on their behalf or to consume alcohol in a licenced premises, such as a pub or restaurant (a limited exception applies for 16-17 year olds). Alcohol use in young people is associated with a range of health and social problems. It can affect the normal growth and functioning of vital organs including the brain.

### **67% of primary school pupils have never tried alcohol.**

- 30% have tried alcohol once or twice. Boys (32%) were more likely to say that they have tried alcohol one or twice compared to girls (21%). There was no noticeable difference between pupils in year 4 and pupils in year 6.
- 64% said 'that their parents or carers always know if they drink alcohol'.
- A quarter reported that when they had alcohol someone gave it to them and 8% said that they 'bought it in a shop'. Girls (44%) were more likely to state that someone gave them alcohol when asked where they get it from compared to boys (22%). 11% of primary pupils reported that they drink alcohol in restaurants.
- Just over half stated that they 'usually drink alcohol at home'. Girls (83%) were more likely to say that they drink alcohol at home compared to boys (55%).

### **Emotional Health and Wellbeing**

Children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing has an impact on many factors in their life, such as educational attainment, relationships and friendships and quality of sleep. It can also impact healthy behaviours, such as eating a healthy balanced diet or being physically active. Poor emotional health and wellbeing can also affect opportunities in later life.

### **93% of primary school pupils said that they have someone to talk to if they had a problem or were worried about something.**

- 68% said that they 'would be extremely likely to talk to a parent or carer if they had a problem or were worried about something'.

- Year 4 pupils (43%) were more likely to report that they would speak to a teacher or other staff member if they had a problem or were worried about something compared to year 6 pupils (23%)
- 9% reported that they ‘would be extremely likely not seek help from anyone’.
- Overall primary school pupils in York have a positive emotional state scoring 21.2 out of 30 on the Sterling Wellbeing subscale. This is similar to the findings from the 2021 survey (20.9/30) (*The full Sterling Wellbeing Scale score could not be generated due to a technical error*). There was no noticeable difference between boys and girls positive emotional state scores.
- Overall primary pupils are happy with their lives, rating their life satisfaction at 3 on a scale of 0 (Extremely happy) -10 (Extremely unhappy).
- The things that primary school pupils report worrying about the most are ‘what might happen to them in later life’ and ‘their appearance and how they look’.

## Bullying

Bullying can seriously impact on a young person’s physical and mental health. Children and young people who are bullied are more likely to experience depression, anxiety, feelings of sadness and loneliness, changes in sleep and eating patterns, and loss of interest in activity they used to enjoy. Bullying can also impact on learning and attainment and change how someone feels about themselves which can last well into adulthood.

**30% said that they had never been bullied and 64% reported that they have never been bullied online.**

- 6% of primary school pupils report being ‘hit, kicked or punched most days in the last month’.
- 36% reported that they ‘have been bullied online’.
- 16% of those bullied online said that ‘it was by someone that they knew’.
- 37% said that that ‘a parent or carer helped them deal with being bullied’.
- 9% Reported that a ‘teacher or other school staff member at their school helped them deal with being bullied’.
- 6% stated that ‘no one helped them deal with being bullied’.

## School Attendance

There are many reasons for children and young people missing school, including having a lack of routine, having a mental health condition, having family problems, having a negative attitude towards school and in some cases substance misuse. Children with mental health conditions are more likely to miss school and research has shown a clear link between school absence and attainment.

**21% said that they are late to school once or twice a week and 4% reported that they are late every day.**

- The top reasons for missing a full day of school were ‘sickness’ (55%), ‘having a doctor’s appointment’ (23%) and ‘someone else in my family is ill’ (5%).
- 4% reported that they miss a full school day or days because they ‘can’t wake up in time’.
- 27% stated that their ‘teachers’ notice if they miss school and 26% report that their ‘parent or carer’ notices.
- 39% said that ‘having an alarm clock’ would be most helpful to get to school on time.

## SUPPORT

Further supporting information and resources for professionals, families, children and young people in relation to the key areas covered in the survey.

Topic	Contact Info	Overview
<b>York Healthy Schools Programme</b>	Website: <a href="#">Healthy Schools Home - Healthy Schools North Yorkshire</a>  Email: <a href="mailto:healthyschools@northyorks.gov.uk">healthyschools@northyorks.gov.uk</a>	Free health and wellbeing award programme for all schools in York. Provides an evidence-based framework for health and wellbeing provision as well as termly training and events
<b>0-19 Healthy Child Service</b>	Website: <a href="https://www.raiseyork.co.uk/healthy-child-service">https://www.raiseyork.co.uk/healthy-child-service</a>  Email: <a href="mailto:HCS-Secure@york.gov.uk">HCS-Secure@york.gov.uk</a>	Information, advice and support for children and their families aged 0-19 years old. The service also delivers the National Child

		Measurement Programme (NCMP) and school vision and hearing screening
<b>Oral Health Promotion Service</b>	Website: <a href="#">Oral Health Promotion Team - Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (hdft.nhs.uk)</a>  Email: <a href="mailto:hdft.oralhealth@nhs.net">hdft.oralhealth@nhs.net</a>	Targeted evidence based supervised toothbrushing, oral health training and advice for schools
<b>York Holiday Activities with Food (HAF) Programme</b>	Website: <a href="#">Holiday activities with food – Raise York</a>	Children and young people in receipt of benefit-related free school meals can receive up to four sessions of free activities and nutritious food during the Easter and winter holidays and up to 16 sessions during the summer holidays
<b>Public Health Small Grant for Children’s Healthy Weight Promotion</b>	Website: <a href="#">Children's healthy weight promotion – City of York Council</a>  Email: <a href="mailto:enquiries.publichealth@york.gov.uk">enquiries.publichealth@york.gov.uk</a>	Funding available to support school-based initiatives which are aimed at maintaining a healthy weight and the prevention of unhealthy weight
<b>North Yorkshire Sport</b>	Website: <a href="#">Welcome to North Yorkshire Sport - North Yorkshire Sport</a>  Email: <a href="mailto:info@northyorkshiresport.co.uk">info@northyorkshiresport.co.uk</a>	Provide information and support to primary and secondary schools to help children and young people be more active
<b>CYC I-Travel Team</b>	Website: <a href="#">Travel to school – iTravel York</a>  Email: <a href="mailto:itravel@york.gov.uk">itravel@york.gov.uk</a>	Find out how to encourage active travel to school
<b>Sleep and Sleep Hygiene</b>	Website: <a href="#">Sleep advice for young people – City of York Council</a>	Information and resources on sleep and sleep hygiene for children and young people
<b>CYC Health Trainers Young Peoples Stop Smoking and Vaping Service</b>	Website: <a href="#">CYC Health Trainers – City of York Council</a>  Email: <a href="mailto:cychhealthtrainers@york.gov.uk">cychhealthtrainers@york.gov.uk</a>	Offer a stop smoking and vaping service for young people and a range of free teaching resources on vaping

<b>School Wellbeing Service</b>	Website: <a href="#">School Wellbeing Service – Raise York</a>  Email: <a href="mailto:laura.mcmurray@york.gov.uk">laura.mcmurray@york.gov.uk</a>	The School Wellbeing Service (SWS) is a school based early intervention mental health support service
<b>NHS Wellbeing in Mind team</b>	Website: <a href="#">Wellbeing in Mind school support service for children and young people in North Yorkshire (Information for parents and carers) - Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust (tevv.nhs.uk)</a>  Email: <a href="mailto:tevv.wellbeinginmind@nhs.net">tevv.wellbeinginmind@nhs.net</a>	NHS professionals providing support, advice and training to schools and support to students experiencing difficulties with their emotional and mental wellbeing
<b>IDAS</b>	Website: <a href="#">IDAS</a>  Email: <a href="mailto:info@idas.org.uk">info@idas.org.uk</a>	Provide support, training and resources on domestic abuse and sexual assault
<b>Drugs, alcohol, and addiction</b>	Website: <a href="https://www.raiseyork.co.uk/young-people/drugs-alcohol-addiction">https://www.raiseyork.co.uk/young-people/drugs-alcohol-addiction</a>	Useful information on drugs, alcohol, and addiction and where to find support
<b>City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership (CYSCP)</b>	Website: <a href="#">Home – CYSCP (saferchildrenyork.org.uk)</a>	CYSCP support and enable local organisations to work together to safeguard children and young people
<b>Public Health England School Zone</b>	Website: <a href="#">PHE School Zone</a>	Flexible teaching resources for schools that cover a range of topics including nutrition, physical activity and mental wellbeing

## CONTACT

### For more information about the survey contact:

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