

# health promoting schools

An Investing for Health Partnership



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for Health

The logo for "Investing for Health" features a stylized graphic of three human figures in blue and green, appearing to be in motion or dancing. Below the graphic, the words "Investing for Health" are written in a green, sans-serif font.

# What is the Health Promoting Schools initiative?

The Health Promoting Schools initiative aims to enable schools to provide an environment where the physical and mental wellbeing, health and safety of staff and pupils are supported, in partnership with family, community and external agencies.

It also aims to support schools in developing good practice in the development of policies, practices and structures that will underpin and facilitate a sustainable health promotion programme. The whole school is involved in the process and it features work in three key areas:

- the ethos and environment of the school;
- the quality of teaching and learning in health-related areas of the curriculum;
- links with the family, community and other agencies for health.

The Health Promoting Schools initiative is supported by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Department of Education.

## Who are the partners?

The Health Promoting Schools partnership includes members of the long established Health and Education Liaison Group (HELG) which brings together the five Education and Library Boards, health promotion representatives from each of the four Health and Social Services Board areas, and representatives of the Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland (HPA), the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE), the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) and the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA).

# What is the background to this initiative?

- Following the introduction of health education as a cross-curricular theme, the Northern Ireland Curriculum Council (now CCEA) and the Health Promotion Agency produced guidelines for schools to enable them to support the new curriculum by developing as health promoting organisations. This was in keeping with the World Health Organization's drive towards understanding that the environment in which learning takes place is as important as what is taught in the classroom, and that policies and actions to support health need to be included in school organisational plans.
- From 1995-1998 Northern Ireland was part of the European Network of Health Promoting Schools. This initiative was led by HELG. Participating schools provided examples of good practice on a range of issues, such as school policy development, and evaluation models, which were disseminated to all schools. Criteria to define the benchmark for a health promoting school were tested and refined. Recommendations for further action to support schools were also highlighted.
- In 1999 HELG worked together to produce guidance on self-assessment for schools in relation to these criteria, and this was provided to all schools. It offered a means of including health promotion plans within the school development plan.
- The recent Curriculum Review has outlined new proposals for personal, social and health education. There is a continuing need to support the health of both staff and pupils, and HELG has now received funding for a two year period to assist further the development of healthy schools.

## Investing for Health

The new public health strategy *Investing for Health* aims to tackle health inequalities across Northern Ireland and is supported by all Government departments. The strategy has highlighted the importance of the health promoting school concept as a vehicle for promoting and protecting the health of pupils and staff.

Through the *Investing for Health* strategy, funding has been granted to each Education and Library Board for the appointment of a local coordinator. The coordinator will assist a number of selected schools to develop plans and actions which will enable them to become health promoting places. Participating schools will build on their practice and this will then be shared with other schools.

# What is a health promoting school?

A health promoting school:

- actively promotes the self-esteem of all pupils;
- recognises the importance of the social ethos of the school in supporting a positive learning and working environment in which healthy relationships and the emotional wellbeing of pupils and staff are strengthened;
- uses every opportunity to improve the physical environment of the school;
- develops home/school/community links and shared activities;
- encourages pupils to develop responsible attitudes towards health and the appropriate skills to maintain it;
- extends understanding beyond the curriculum to include other influences on pupils' health.

# What are the benefits of being a partnership school?

The Health Promoting Schools initiative provides a clear framework to draw together health and safety, pastoral care, health education, health services, and personal, social and health education (PSHE) into a coherent whole.

The initiative also provides a recognised indicator of excellence, which enables the school to demonstrate to all its care and provision for pupils.

The initiative enables the school to access the expertise and support of a dedicated coordinator for practical support and development.

By becoming part of this initiative you will:

- be able to benefit the health of all in the school community;
- be prepared to meet the objectives of personal, social and health education;
- be able to further develop home and community links for health;
- receive guidance, support and staff development in designing and implementing the health promoting schools concept into your school's development plan;
- receive external evaluation of your activities;
- be assisted to become self-evaluating in the area of health promotion;
- enable your school to contribute to the public health strategy;
- make a significant contribution to the work of your school as well as nationally and internationally;
- be able to share your experiences and learn from other schools, thus contributing to staff development;
- contribute to the development of a set of quality standards for a health promoting school;
- receive recognition for your involvement;
- link to the wider European Network of Health Promoting Schools.

## What will be expected from partnership schools?

With the support of the partners, schools will be expected to:

- demonstrate a whole school commitment;
- establish a school working group to take the programme forward. The health promoting schools coordinator will support and take an active part in this group;
- audit the school's development needs in the area of health promotion with the local coordinator;
- design and implement an action plan within the school development plan;
- review and further develop policies and practices designed to promote health in the school;
- develop and extend links with the wider community for the benefit of health;
- contribute to evaluation activities;
- be involved in disseminating the learning from the initiative to a wider audience.

## What is the role of the health promoting schools coordinator?

The coordinator for your area can help:

- undertake an audit of your school's provision and needs in health promotion and education;
- give guidance and work with your school on the development of health promotion policies, curriculum development and school based initiatives;
- provide or facilitate inset training;
- research and source curriculum materials;
- provide a link with other health promoting schools to share good practice and support staff development.

## Regional coordination

### **Belfast Education and Library Board/Eastern Health and Social Services Board area**

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### **South Eastern Education and Library Board/Eastern Health and Social Services Board area**

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### **North Eastern Education and Library Board/ Northern Health and Social Services Board area**

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### **Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland**

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### **Southern Education and Library Board/Southern Health and Social Services Board area**

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### **Western Education and Library Board/ Western Health and Social Services Board area**

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