

DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY

School Physical Activity Survey 2025



Summary Evaluation Results

For Pupils in Primary 4 to Secondary 6



DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY
Health and Social Care

SWESTtrans.org.uk
South West of Scotland Transport Partnership

With thanks to SWestrans for funding
analysis of results

Dumfries
and Galloway



Physical activity is used as a broad term that encompasses ‘any form of activity performed by the human body, inclusive of both incidental and deliberate bodily movement’¹.

Physical activity includes²:

- **everyday activities:** active travel - walking, cycling or wheeling, heavy housework, gardening, DIY, occupational activity
- **active recreation:** recreational walking, cycling, active play or dance
- **sport:** regular cycling (>30 minutes per week), swimming, formal and informal sport, structured competitive activity, exercise and fitness training and individual outdoor pursuits.

Being physically active benefits physical, mental and social wellbeing. Benefits to children and young people (5-18 years) include³:

- Bone health
- Cognitive function
- Cardiovascular fitness
- Weight status
- Depression

While all physical activity intensities bring health benefits, movement of moderate or vigorous intensity deliver the full range of health benefits. Moderate to vigorous activity are those where the heart and muscles work harder.

“Regular physical activity is an important part of living well”



1 International Society for Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH). 2020. ISPAH's Eight Investments That Work for Physical Activity.

2 Public Health Scotland. 2022. A systems-based approach to physical activity in Scotland

Despite the many benefits of being physically active, many children and young people in Scotland do not meet physical activity guidelines (see Table 1)³. The physical activity guidelines state that ‘Children and young people aged 5 to 18 years should do ‘moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity for around 60 minutes per day’.



Figure 1: Physical Activity for Children and Young People – Infographic³

Data from the Scottish Health Survey (2023)⁴ reports that around a seven in ten (72%) children and young people aged 5-15 years meet the physical activity guidelines in Scotland⁴. The proportion meeting these guidelines nationally has remained consistent overtime, ranging from between 69%-76% since 2008⁴.

The proportion meeting this guideline was lower although not statistically in girls (70%) compared with boys (75%)⁴.

The proportion of children and young people meeting guidelines (including school-based activities) declines from the age of 11 years⁴. Table 1 shows the physical activity level for children and young people in Scotland.

3 Department of Health and Social Care. UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines. 2019

4 Scottish Health Survey. 2023 Volume 1: Main Report. ISBN: 9781836019602

Table 1: Children and Young People physical activity levels in Scotland, by age and sex (Scottish Health Survey 2023)⁴

Children and Young People	5-7	8-10	11-12	13-15	Total aged 5-15
Meets guidelines	81	80	72	56	72.3
Some activity*	13	14	17	23	16.8
Low activity**	6	6	11	21	11.0

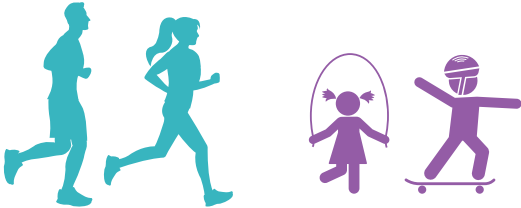
* An average of at least 30 minutes, but less than 60 minutes, of activity per day in previous week.

** An average of less than 30 minutes of activity per day in previous week.

Physical Activity Levels – Dumfries and Galloway

The Dumfries and Galloway Schools Physical Activity Survey (DGSPAS) was first issued by Dumfries and Galloway Council’s Education and Learning Directorate in 2013 to measure physical activity levels and behaviours of local children and young people.

The 2025 DGSPAS is the eighth version of the survey. The DGSPAS provides long-term surveillance data on the proportion of children and young people locally meeting physical activity guidelines, an indicator included in the Dumfries and Galloway Council Plan 2023–2028⁵.



The most recent data reports that

64% of adults⁶ and

49.6% of school pupils

in Dumfries and Galloway are achieving the physical activity guidelines

The DGSPAS will provide the dataset to measure long-term population physical activity targets outlined in the forthcoming Dumfries and Galloway Physical Activity Strategy⁷ (due October 2025).

The strategy aligns with global⁸ and national⁹ targets for reducing physical inactivity population between 2018 and 2030. Targets for Dumfries and Galloway are shown in Figures 2-3.

5 Dumfries and Galloway Council Plan 2023–2028.

6 Scottish Government. Scottish Health Survey. 2017-2023. <https://scotland.shinyapps.io/sg-scottish-health-survey/>

Figure 2: Relative risk reduction in physical inactivity in the least active children and young people in Dumfries and Galloway

Target - Change in population levels of physical activity in children and young people (CYP) living in Dumfries and Galloway: 2022 – 2030

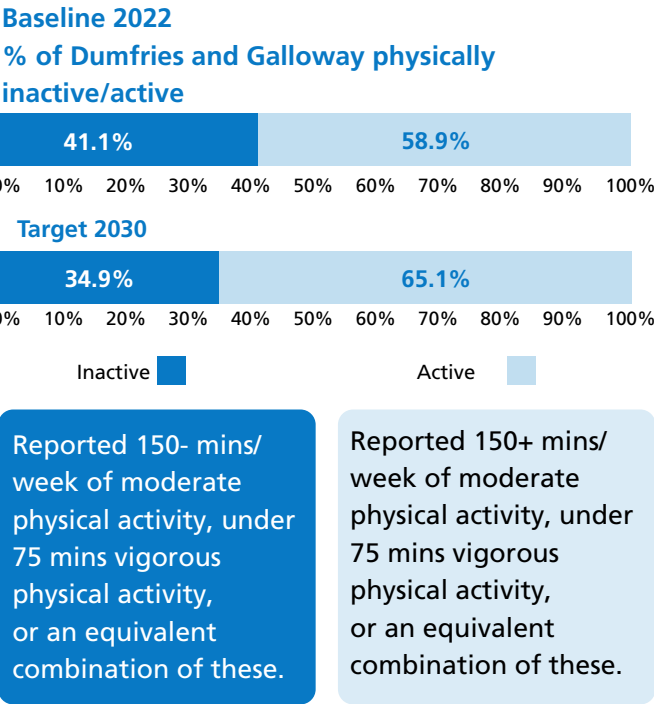
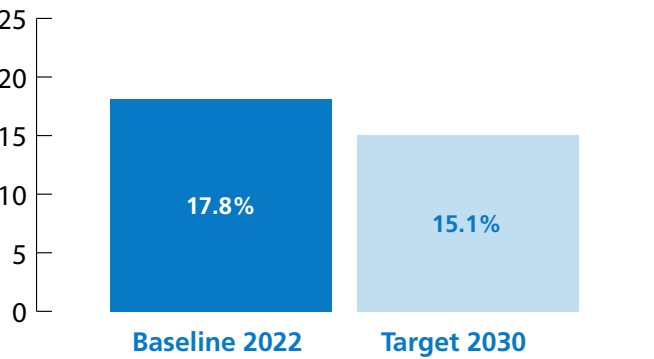


Figure 3: Relative risk reduction in physical inactivity in the least active children and young people in Dumfries and Galloway

Target - Reduce physical inactivity levels in Dumfries and Galloway most inactive children and young people (CYP): 2022 – 2030



Very Low Activity

Reported 30- mins/week of moderate physical activity, 15- mins bigorous physical activity, or an equivalent combination of these

7 Dumfries and Galloway Physical Activity Strategy. 2025–2030. Pending

8 World Health Organisation. 2018. Global action plan on physical activity 2018–2030: more active people for a healthier world. ISBN: 9789241514187

9 Scottish Government. 2024. Physical activity for health: framework. ISBN: 9781836016663

The aim of the Dumfries and Galloway Schools Physical Activity Survey is to:

- improve policy and practice
- identify, understand and measure changes in physical activity levels, attitudes and trends
- strengthen planning of delivery based on children and young people responses and
- allocate resources effectively to encourage and enable the most active to become and remain more active.

This 2025 DGSPAS continues to measure physical activity levels allowing comparison overtime. Data was also collected in a further eight priority areas detailed in Figure 4 below. This report will summarise high-level summary data for each of the eight priorities.

Physical Activity Levels	Participation Insides/ Outside Of School	Physical Literacy
Physical Activity - Barriers	Physical Activity - Enablers	Desired Activities
Happiness	Bike Ownership	screen time

Figure 4: DGSPAS 2025 Priority Areas

Methodology

The 2025 DGSPAS opened online on 19 May 2025 closing on 3 July 2025. Table 2 provides details of previous DGSPAS administration dates and sample sizes.

Table 2: DGSPAS administration dates and administration methods

Year	Administration date	Year Groups	Administration Method	Sample
2013	April 2013	P7, S1, S3, S5	Paper	3,803
2015	September 2015	P7, S1, S3, S5	Paper	2,575
2017	November 2017	P7, S1, S3, S5	Paper	2,979
2018	November 2018	P7, S1, S3, S5	Paper	3,269
2019	November 2019 - March 2020	P7, S1, S3, S5	Online	1,872
2022	June 2022	P4-S6	Online	2,263
2024	June 2024	P4-S6	Online	3,330
2025	May to July 2025	P4-S6	Online	2,850



Schools Physical Activity Survey: Results

Survey responses are detailed below:

Total Responses 2,850

20.2% of eligible pupils completed the survey



Boys
1,350
(47%)



Girls
1,397
(49%)



Other
19
(1%)

Prefer Not to Say
75
(3%)

Blank
9
(0%)



No Disability	1,653	(58%)
Learning Disability	319	(11%)
Another Disability or difficulty	109	(4%)
Long-term illness, or medical condition	108	(4%)
Physical Disability	66	(2%)
Sensory disability	42	(1%)



Year Group

Primary 4	283	10%
Primary 5	305	11%
Primary 6	353	12%
Primary 7	374	13%
Secondary 1	145	5%
Secondary 2	365	13%
Secondary 3	245	9%
Secondary 4	258	9%
Secondary 5	345	12%
Secondary 6	166	6%



White Scottish
2,059 **(72%)**

White English
304 **(11%)**

My ethnic group is not represented here.
116 **(4%)**

Blank
102 **(4%)**

SIMD

QUINTILE 1	79 (3%)	MOST DEPRIVED
QUINTILE 2	240 (8%)	
QUINTILE 3	377 (13%)	
QUINTILE 4	132 (5%)	
QUINTILE 5	78 (3%)	
BLANK	1944 (68%)	LEAST DEPRIVED

Physical Activity Levels - Key Findings

Updated UK physical activity guidelines were published in 2019 in line with new evidence³. The guidelines changed from the Daily Threshold Guideline (60 minutes health enhancing physical activity every day) to the Average Over a Week Guideline. The Average Over a Week Guideline states that “Children and young people should be active in health enhancing physical activity (of moderate/ vigorous intensity) for an average of 60 minutes per day across the week³”. The DGSPAS provides data back to 2013 on the Daily

Threshold Guideline, however this document reports on the Average Over a Week Guideline in line with new evidence³.

To avoid binary reporting of physical activity levels (active or inactive), Dumfries and Galloway segmented into three classifications (see Table 3). This was done to improve understanding and improve targeting of policy and practice to those with the very lowest levels of activity.

Table 3: Average over a week Activity Classifications

Physical activity classification	Definition
Inactive	Active for under 30 minutes on average over the past 7 days
Some activity	Active for 30-59 minutes on average over the past 7 days
Meets guideline	Active for an average of 60+ minutes or more the past 7 days



Schools Physical Activity

49.6% of all pupils in P4 to S6 were active for **60 minutes or more** over on average over the past week



Boys (55%)
more active than
Girls (44.1%)*

* Result is statistically significant meaning it is unlikely to have occurred by chance



0.3% points decrease in pupils meeting guidelines in 2025 compared with 2024*



1.2%* points increase in the number of inactive pupils in 2025, compared with 2024

Secondary pupils are more active (53.6%) than Primary pupils (43.7%)

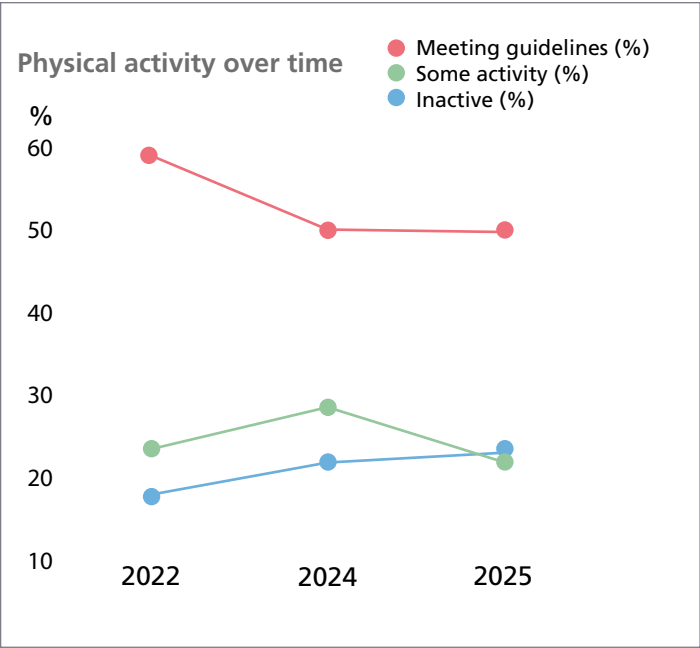




Data for pupils in all year groups (P4 to S6) is only available back to 2022. Figure 5 shows the proportion of all school pupils meeting each of three physical activity classifications overtime.

2022	58.9%
2024	49.9%
2025	49.6%

Figure 5: Percentage of active and inactive pupils meeting average over a week guidelines overtime



Interest towards being more physically active



73% of all pupils were interested in being more physically active



66% of inactive pupils are interested in being more active compared with **76%** of those meeting guidelines



71% of children living in the most deprived communities want to be more active compared with **75%** in the least deprived

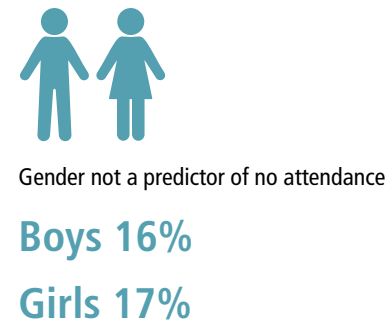
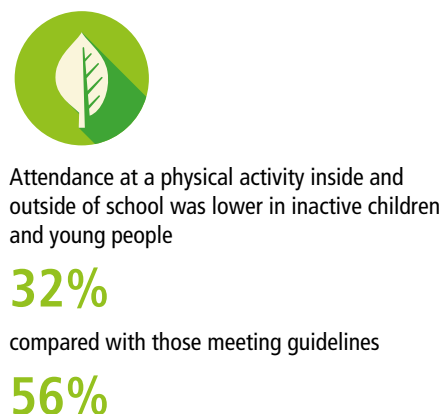
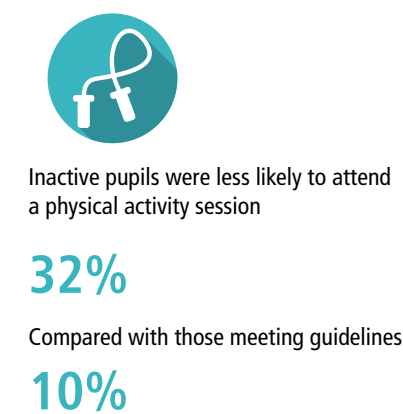
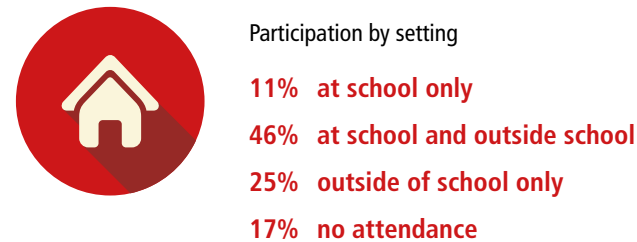
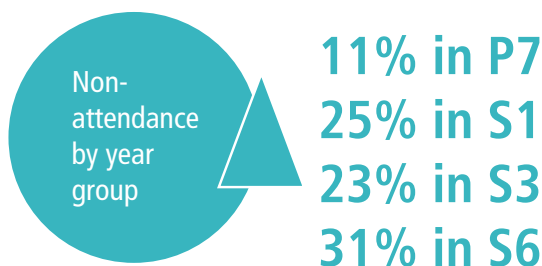
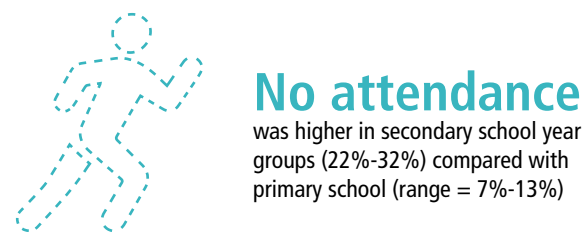
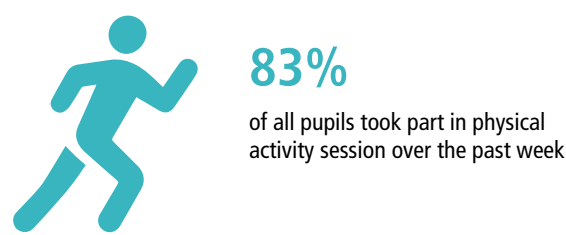
Interest in being more active by year group

Primary 4	80%
Primary 5	84%
Primary 6	82%
Primary 7	79%
Secondary 1	61%
Secondary 2	68%
Secondary 3	68%
Secondary 4	60%
Secondary 5	62%
Secondary 6	67%

Participation Physical Activity, Fitness, Dance or Sports Club Session

Pupils were asked to report if they had taken part in a physical activity, fitness, dance or sports club session over the past week.

Schools Physical Activity Survey 2025 - Key Findings





Physical Literacy

Physical literacy is defined as “the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life”¹⁰

The concept of Physical Literacy proposes that at each stage of life, our decisions to be physically active are influenced by five important but entwined and interdependent domains¹¹:

1. Motivation
2. Confidence
3. Physical Competence
4. Knowledge
5. Understanding

Pupils were asked to give their perception on each domain scored on a Likert Scale from zero (not like me) to ten (this is very like me). Five domains were also grouped to provide a total Physical Literacy score.

A person lacking one or more domain is less likely to engage in physical activity with examples shown in Figure 6^{12/13}



Figure 6: Impact of removing domain on engagement in physical activity^{12/13}

There was no real change in single domain or grouped domain physical literacy scores between 2024 (36.9) and 2025 (36.2). See Table 4 for a breakdown.

Table 4: All Pupil - Physical Literacy Scores (5 domain combined score)

DOMAIN	2025	2024	2022
Motivation	7.3	7.4	7.4
Confidence	6.6	6.7	6.6
Competence	7	7.1	6.8
Knowledge	8.3	8.4	8.4
Understanding	7	7.1	7
Combined (range = 0-50)	36.2	36.9	36.2

Equals 36.7 if total scores up in Table, with rounding = 36.9



Score
ZERO = Not like me
TEN = This is very like me

As physical literacy scores increase, the proportion of children reporting feeling ‘quite’ or ‘very happy’ also increases. See Table 5 for a breakdown.

Table 5: Present happiness by physical literacy grouped score

PHYSICAL LITERACY SCORE (Domains Combined)	SAMPLE	Proportion of Quite and Very Happy Pupils
0-10	46	54%
11-20	109	67%
21-30	382	73%
31-40	536	83%
41-50	779	90%

10 International Physical Literacy Association. 2017. <https://www.physical-literacy.org.uk/>

11 International Physical Literacy Association. 2020. Choosing Physical Activity for Life: Be your best. <https://www.physical-literacy.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/IPLA-Choosing-Physical-Activity-for-Life-web.pdf>

12 Myers, E., 2017. Physical Literacy and Human Flourishing. International Physical Literacy Conference, Toronto, Canada April, 2017

13 Topping, C et al., 2019. IN: Whitehead, M. ed., 2019. Physical literacy across the world. London, UK:: Routledge

Boys Physical Literacy (38.2)
was higher than
girls (34.9)



In secondary school Physical Literacy values range from 33.6 to 36.2

In primary school physical Literacy values domain scores range from 36.1 to 38.6



Pupils reporting a disability had lower physical literacy score than those reporting no disability (see Table 6).

Table 6: Physical Literacy Score by Disability

Disability Classification	5 Domains Grouped
All Pupils	36.3
No Disability	38.3
Learning Disability	35
Physical Disability	32
Sensory Disability	34.7
Another Disability or difficulty	33.2
I have multiple types of disability or difficulty	34.1
I have a long-term illness, or medical condition that has been diagnosed by a doctor	37.3

Analysis found no clear evidence that deprivation influenced physical literacy score.



There is clear evidence that pupils who are more physically active report higher physical literacy scores across all domains (see Figure 7).

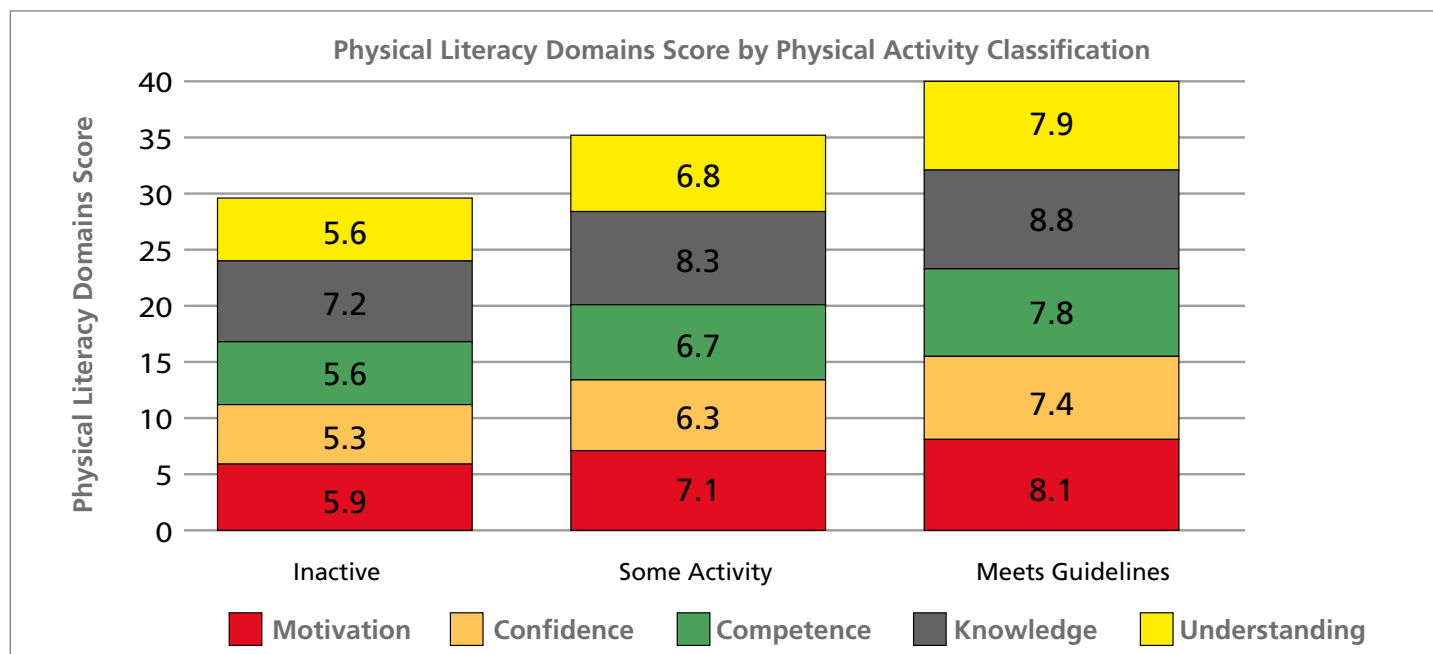


Figure 7 Physical Literacy Domain score by physical activity classification

Barriers to Physical Activity Participation

Top 5 barriers to physical activity participation in Dumfries and Galloway - All Pupils

I don't have time	24%
The weather is too bad	12%
I feel embarrassed about not doing well in an activity	10%
I would rather do other things with my time	8%
It is difficult for me to get places where I can do physical activity	7%

Top 5 barriers - Gender

Girls

I don't have time	25%
I feel embarrassed about not doing well in an activity	13%
The weather is too bad	12%
It is difficult for me to get places where I can do physical activity	8%
I would rather do other things with my time	8%

Boys

I don't have time	23%
The weather is too bad	11%
I would rather do other things with my time	8%
It is difficult for me to get places where I can do physical activity	7%
I feel embarrassed about not doing well in an activity	5%
The physical activities I want to take part in are not available	5%

5. Physical Activity - Enablers

When and where I go to take part in physical activity

All pupils

1 PE class at school	53%
2 Activity at lunchtime	38%
3 Public park	35%

Girl: Where I go to be physically active

1 PE class at school	55%
2 Activity at lunchtime	36%
3 Walking, cycling, wheeling or scooting for fun (not to/from school)	36%
3 Outdoors including forests and beaches	36%

Boy: Where I go to be physically active

1 PE class at school	51%
2 Activity at lunchtime	41%
3 Activity at breaktime	37%

When and where I would like to go to take part in more physical activity

All pupils

1 Activity at breakfast club	20%
2 Leisure / sport centre	15%
2 Walking, cycling, wheeling or scooting for fun (not to/from school)	15%
2 Activity during school class (not PE)	15%
2 After school activity at community sport club	15%
2 Swimming pool	15%

Girls: Where I would like to go for physical activity

1 Activity at breakfast club	22%
2 Leisure / sport centre	18%
3 Walking, cycling, wheeling or scooting for fun (not to/from school)	17%
3 Swimming pool	17%

Boys: Where I would like to go for physical activity

1 Activity at breakfast club	18%
2 Walking, cycling, wheeling or scooting for fun (not to/from school)	14%
2 After school activity at community sport club	14%
2 Activity during school class (not PE)	14%



6. Desired Activities

Pupils were asked to identify activities that they would like to do more of.

Top 10 Activities - All Pupils

Activity	2024 (%)	2025 (%)
Football	38%	Football 29%
Swimming	31%	Swimming 23%
Walking	25%	Walking 21%
Cycling	24%	Cycling 20%
Ice Skating	21%	Badminton 18%
Basketball	21%	Rounders 18%
Golf	21%	Golf 16%
Tennis, Rounders and Trampolining	20%	Basketball 15%
		Ice Skating, Trampolining, Tennis and Netball 14%

Top 3 Activities – Pupils with a disability or medical condition

Learning Disability	
Football	27%
Walking	21%
Swimming	19%

Physical Disability	
Swimming	21%
Basketball	15%
Walking	15%
Badminton, Cycling, Football and Rounders	13%

Sensory disability	
Ice Skating	28%
Walking	28%
Badminton, Curling, Football, Golf and Trampolining	20%
Basketball, Cycling, Netball, Rounders, Squash and Swimming	16%

Multiple types of disability	
Cycling	26%
Football	25%
Swimming	25%
Trampolining	19%
Walking	19%

Long-term illness or medical condition diagnosed by a doctor	
Football	33%
Cycling	29%
Badminton	28%

Top Five Activities By Gender

Gender	Activity	Percentage of group (%)
Boy	Football	42%
Boy	Golf	23%
Boy	Cycling	23%
Boy	Swimming	20%
Boy	Basketball	20%
Boy	Badminton	18%
Girl	Swimming	27%
Girl	Walking	26%
Girl	Gymnastics	24%
Girl	Ice Skating	20%
Girl	Netball	20%
Girl	Dance, Rounders, Badminton and Cycling	19%

Top Five Activities By Inactivity

Physical Activity Classification		2024	2025
Inactive	Football	29%	29%
Inactive	Swimming	28%	28%
Inactive	Walking	27%	27%
Inactive	Cycling	22%	22%
Inactive	Badminton	22%	22%
Inactive	Rounders	20%	20%

Top Five Activities - Pupils living in regions most deprived communities

Physical Activity Classification	
Inactive	Walking 43%
Inactive	Football 35%
Inactive	Swimming 27%
Inactive	Badminton 26%
Inactive	Cycling 26%
Inactive	Rounders 25%



Happiness**

Physically active pupils were 10 percentage points more likely to report being quite or very happy compared those inactive

- 77%** of inactive pupils reported being **happy or very happy**
- 83%** of pupils doing some activity reported **being happy or very happy**
- 87%** of active pupils reported being **happy or very happy**



Screen Time**

Pupils reported how much of their free time they spent on screens (e.g. computer, game console, tablet, smartphone...).

Guidelines from Canada recommend¹⁵:

'No more than 2 hours per day of recreational screen time'

For children and young people aged 5-17 years



35% points of all pupils -

Pupils spend <2 hours per day in their free time on screens

2024 Girls = 34% / Boys = 30%

2025 Girls = 36% / Boys = 32%

32% points of all pupils -

Pupils spend 5+ hours per day in their free time on screens

2024 Girls = 29% / Boys = 33%

2025 Girls = 30% / Boys = 32%

15% points of all pupils -

Pupils spend 7+ hours per day in their free time on screens

2024 Girls = 12% / Boys = 16%

2025 Girls = 14% / Boys = 15%

Time spent on screens decreased by physical activity level*



23% of inactive pupils sit for 7+ hours per day compared to 13% who do some activity and 13% who meet guidelines



Bike Ownership

	2024	2025	Most Deprived	Least Deprived	Inactive	Meets Guideline
Pupils with access to a bike	65%	65%	49%	70%	53%	74%
Pupils have access to bike but requires fixing	18%	15%	10%	12%	15%	14%
No access but would like a bike	6%	7%	8%	6%	11%	3%
No access and do not want access	7%	10%	29%	9%	14%	5%



**Questions used with permission from University of Glasgow =14

14 Inchley, J., Mabelis, J., Brown, J., Willis, M., Currie, D. (2023) Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) 2022 Survey in Scotland: National Report. MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, University of Glasgow.

15 24 Hour Movement Guidelines. 2021. Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Children and Youth (5-17 years): An Integration of Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour, and Sleep. Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology

Conclusion

In 2018, the Directors of Public Health identified physical activity as a national public health priority¹⁶. More recently, physical activity has been recognised as a key part of “enabling healthy living” in Scotland’s Population Health Framework 2025–2035. This framework aims to shift the focus from treatment to prevention, helping communities and services create environments that support physical and mental wellbeing¹⁷.

The Dumfries and Galloway Physical Activity Strategy⁷, set for publication in October 2025, outlines actions to reduce inactivity across the region. It includes targets for a 15% relative reduction in pupils not meeting physical activity guidelines, and for those with the lowest activity levels, between 2018 and 2030.

The DGSPAS 2025 provides pupil-level data to monitor progress against these targets. It also offers insights at regional and school levels to inform policy and practice. This includes data on activity levels, barriers and enablers, and pupils’ preferences for when, where, and how they want to be active. Full demographic breakdowns are included to help identify and address inequalities in access and participation.

For the second year in a row, the DGSPAS 2025 shows a decline in the number of pupils meeting activity guidelines. Of concern, the decline from 2024 to 2025 although appearing relatively small from 49.9% to 49.6%, reached statistical significance. Further, there was a 1.2% rise in our most inactive pupils also reported (this also reached statistical significance).

Further, DGSPAS 2025 found new and repeated evidence that physical activity levels are not equal across our children and young people. DGPAS205 found

evidence for lower levels of physical activity by gender, disability and deprivation.

These downward trends require to be monitored closely with subsequent action targeted to prevent or reduce further declines.

Data from the DGSPAS 2025 provides detailed information to support strategic and operational delivery of physical activity opportunities. There is strong potential to increase activity levels by making better use of the region’s natural beauty and outdoor spaces. Combined with the role of sport and recreation and active travel, this presents many opportunities to encourage positive behaviour change.

Data will be shared with organisations and partners working to create environments that support all pupils—especially the least active—to become and stay more active. For the second consecutive year, participating schools will receive a breakdown of their own data to support even more localised planning and delivery. This data will be used by our regional Active Schools Team in partnership with schools to inform delivery based pupil responses including those least active.

Utilising the data from DGSPAS 2025 provides a significant opportunity to positively impact on the physical activity behaviours of our children and young people. This will be critical if Dumfries and Galloway is to achieve its target of increasing physical activity and reducing inactivity of our most inactive pupils by 2030, a target set-out in our new Physical Activity Strategy.

16 Scottish Government. 2018. Scotland’s Public Health Priorities. ISBN: 9781788519830.

17 Scottish Government. 2025. Scotland’s Population Health Framework. ISBN: 9781836915942

