

"EVERYONE NEEDS TO BE EDUCATED"

PUPILS' VOICES ON MENSTRUAL EDUCATION



9 ALL FEMALE FOCUS GROUPS



PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

6 LOCATIONS ACROSS ENGLAND AND WALES

4 MAIN THEMES DEVELOPED



EDUCATIONAL PREFERENCES

"Although it may be more comfortable to have like a lesson with just females, the boys need to learn about it more because it is like a serious topic"

TEACHERS' CONFIDENCE IS IMPORTANT

"I think before I got my period I was so scared because they never told us"

MOST PUPILS RECEIVED ONLY ONE MENSTRUAL EDUCATION LESSON AT SCHOOL; ITS TIMING WAS PERCEIVED AS BEING TOO LATE



PERIOD POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

EXTERNAL SUPPORT

"I didn't find it out from school I found out from YouTube"

PERCEIVED SCHOOL SUPPORT

"You just feel like they [teachers] don't understand"

COMFORT AND CONFIDENCE COMMUNICATING

LIMITED AWARENESS

"Why do you have cramps, like, what causes them?"



IMPACT ON SCHOOL

"It affects how much I attend in lessons say, how much I get distracted"

MOST PUPILS EXPERIENCED NEGATIVE IMPACT ON



LEARNING



ENGAGEMENT



ATTENDANCE

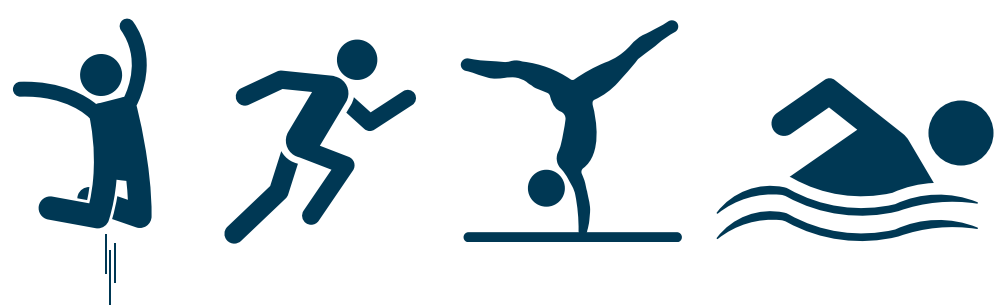
THE FIRST TWO DAYS OF THEIR PERIOD WERE REPORTED AS THE WORST FOR AFFECTING PUPILS' LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT IN LESSONS

IMPACT ON PHYSICAL EDUCATION

PE IS THE MOST AFFECTED ASPECT OF SCHOOL

"Period boobs, where it's just like for example when you're running, and it just hurts so much"

ACTIVITIES AVOIDED DURING MENSTRUATION



"Rather than saying sit out of PE they [teachers] can give the girls who are on their periods like time to do exercise that helps with cramps or reduces pain"



PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

SYMPTOMS

PHYSICAL

"We all hate cramps"

PSYCHOLOGICAL

"It's quite bad for my mental health"

"Inconvenience"

"Annoying"

"Suffering"

MANAGEMENT

Hot water bottles, exercise and mobile menstrual tracking apps

PAIN AND FEAR OF LEAKING ARE ATTRIBUTING FACTORS TO THE TYPE OF EXERCISE PUPILS WERE MORE LIKELY TO TAKE PART IN



RECOMMENDATIONS

4 MAIN ACTION AREAS

ENABLE SCHOOLS TO BE A PLATFORM FOR MENSTRUAL EDUCATION

PROVIDE ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE FACILITIES

EMBED SPECIFIC PE CONSIDERATIONS

SUPPORT A SOCIETAL APPROACH TO IMPROVE MENSTRUAL KNOWLEDGE AND COMMUNICATION

1. REVIEW MENSTRUAL EDUCATION IN YOUR SCHOOL

- frequency of lessons
- content delivered
- who teaches it
- who it is delivered to (both boys and girls)

2. DEVELOP PUPILS' VOICES

- what gaps exist in pupils' knowledge
- what do pupils want to know
- what do pupils think is needed to create a period-positive environment

3. ENCOURAGE OPEN, POSITIVE CONVERSATIONS

- among staff and pupils
- challenging attitudes
- raising awareness

4. CONSIDER HOW TO SUPPORT PUPILS

- to manage their menstrual cycle symptoms
- in all lessons
- especially in PE

5. CONSIDER FLEXIBLE OPTIONS WITHIN PE

- choice on physical activities
- choice on kit
- help girls to remain engaged

6. REVIEW TOILET POLICIES

- access
- unisex use
- period products location and access

REFERENCES

Brown, N., Forrest, L. J., Williams, R., Piasecki, J., & Bruinvels, G. (2024). 'Everyone needs to be educated': pupils' voices on menstrual education. *Reproductive health*, 21(1), 121. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12978-024-01862-6>