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Cambridgeshire schools are looking to the future

Cambridgeshire is one of the leading local authorities in England for its work in PSHE and we have been used for consultation by other authorities keen to learn from our work. An important part of our service has been the survey work that we have done with the Schools Health Education Unit (SHEU) over the last ten and more years.

Beginnings

Cambridgeshire has participated in SHEU's Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire (HRBQ) since the 1990s. In 1998, we co-ordinated the survey with 20 of Cambridgeshire's secondary schools. The resolution grew to survey every school in every other year, and now all secondary schools in Cambridgeshire schools take part in the survey.

Surveying every two years with Years 8 and 10 provides a more interesting and robust data set, since the same Year 8 pupils are picked up again in Year 10, two years on. A total of over 50,000 secondary school scripts have been processed over the years.

	1998	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010
Schools	20	39	28	31	28	30
Scripts	3456	9606	8111	9477	9401	9699

[Peterborough became a unitary authority in 1998 and began organising its own survey series from 2004.]

In 2010, a parallel primary survey was also carried out, with a total of 70 schools and 3785 pupils taking part, almost entirely online.

This is not the first time primary schools

have been involved with survey work, however.

Health Promoting Primary Schools

Since 1999, primary schools have been supported to undertake the Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire as part of their health needs assessment for their Healthy Schools programme work. The survey provides schools with a snapshot of their pupils' health related behaviour and can challenge both over-pessimistic and over-optimistic perceptions of teachers about their pupils. In Summer 2010, all Cambridgeshire primary schools were offered the opportunity to participate in the survey. This not only provides schools with data about the health needs of their own pupil population but also comparative data with other Cambridge schools. The data are also used by strategic partners to support local health planning and priority setting. The data are included as part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for children and young people.

Questionnaire Consultations

SHEU offers clients the opportunity to customise the questionnaires used and this chance has been seized by Cambridgeshire, consulting with a wide group of professionals in the county. Changes made over the years include additional questions about:

- o Citizenship and volunteering (2002)
- o Bullying policies in schools (2004)
- o Sexual health (2008)
- o Equalities monitoring (2010)

In this way the questionnaire keeps up with changing policy concerns and maximises its usefulness for the authority.

Excelling with statistics

To improve the service to schools and enable them to make better sense of their reports, we designed a spreadsheet for schools that selects key results and gives the schools' figures alongside the County findings and findings from the SHEU aggregate databanks.

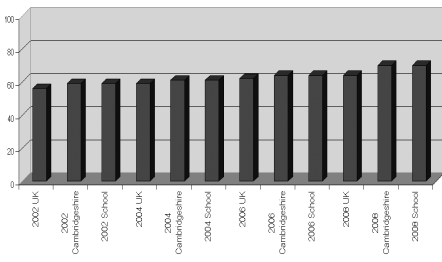
	2002 UK	2002 Cambridgeshire	2002 School	2004 UK	2004 Cambridgeshire	2004 School	2006 UK	2006 Cambridgeshire	2006 School	All Data Graph	School Only Graph	School/Cambs Graph	Question Number
% with high self-esteem	38	36	41	37	40	46	36	37	70				89
% having positive health locus of control score	70	73	82	72	75	83	66	69	80				90
% who say they have been afraid to go to school because of bullying at some time	32	32	30	29	29	21	39	31	30				58
% with at least one issue about which they worry "quite a lot" or "a lot"	58	63	56	58	61	61	67	69	60				62

Spreadsheet figures for a school

Macros built in to the spreadsheet enable school staff to see quickly any trends and if those trends are found only in their school or are more general. There is also an indication given if differences are likely to be a genuine rather than due to random changes in the samples.

Schools have found these invaluable in their own self-evaluation processes.

% anticipated further education or skills training at end of Year 11



Charts at the click of a mouse

School Improvement

School results were previously treated as highly confidential. The information about bullying, drug use and so on is very sensitive, and we would not wish to see schools reluctant to do the survey for fear of their results becoming known. However schools have shown an increasing willingness to share their findings with local colleagues for local planning and to highlight areas where additional support is needed.

In this regard, Cambridgeshire's data and spreadsheets are now being shared with School Improvement Partners (SIPs) and other strategic partners forming a sound starting-point for discussions about the way forward for a school, localities and Cambridgeshire as a whole.

Challenging Data

The now-defunct Tellus series of surveys was conducted in some Cambridgeshire schools from 2005. Like many other authorities, Cambridgeshire found the data relating to bullying to be open to question and was leading to some artificially poor performance figures.

Anyone who works with surveys knows it is impossible to ask a question which will be interpreted in the same way by everyone who reads it, even if you provide a lot of guidance about it, and this goes double for work with children.

Cambridgeshire schools have worked hard on the issue of bullying, and their pupils may be more willing and able to identify bullying behaviours by that term. This should be considered a success, and not a problem in itself.

Through use of the HRBQ survey and customising questions carefully, colleagues in Cambridgeshire have been able to get a much more detailed picture about bullying - e.g. how bullying and other negative behaviours are experienced by young people, how they see their schools dealing

with it, and how far schools' efforts to tackle the issue are understood. We can also say that, using figures from SHEU's wider databanks, bullying is not worse in Cambridgeshire schools than in comparable counties.

Pupils' Voice

Listening to what pupils have to say is part of SHEU's project and close to the heart of the Cambridgeshire PSHE service. This shows itself in three ways:

- ~ The survey itself is one long opportunity for pupils to tell adults what their lives are like.
- ~ As part of the survey, pupils are also invited to reflect on whether their views are listened to and if their views make a difference in their schools and communities.
- ~ Lastly, survey results have been used as part of a pioneering initiative in Pupil Citizen's Juries, where pupils in schools invite witnesses from the Cambridgeshire establishment and local community to give evidence about issues of concern to young people. So the local Chief Inspector of Police might be hauled in and asked questions like *How does the situation seem to you?* and *What are you going to do about it?*

Local Profiles

One of the strengths of the work in Cambridgeshire has been the almost 100% participation each year. This not only gives a very robust picture of young people in Cambridgeshire as a whole, but also allows for results to be examined for different districts within the county.

For example, we were able recently to take a report showing results from Fenland

schools* and comparing those figures to those from the rest of the county. This made a significant contribution to a County and District Council Members Scrutiny programme that looked at underachievement in Fenland. The availability of health and wellbeing data was invaluable in reinforcing the contribution of health and wellbeing to pupil performance and attainment.

A Brave New World?

The new Government has made it clear that it has a new model for how school services are going to operate. Local Authorities have been used to devolving an increasing proportion of funds to schools and then inviting schools to buy back services from them. It is likely that more of what have been seen as core activities are now going to be offered as a buy-in service for schools. We have some concerns about this process, of course, but our current thinking about an offer to schools includes:

- ~ Opportunity to take part in the survey on paper or online
- ~ Report comparing school with Cambridgeshire results
- ~ Spreadsheets showing trends for a school
- ~ Guidance and resources for gathering data from young children
- ~ Guidance on using data for planning, school evaluation, informing parents and as a component of pupil participation

We hope and believe our good work with schools and with SHEU will continue into the next decade - and longer!

*A report on the health related behaviour of young people in Fenland 2010 compared with Cambridgeshire 2010