

Introduction

North West Cancer Research is a completely independent charity, dedicated to putting our region's cancer needs first, funding pioneering, life-saving research and education to tackle the cause, improve the care and find the cure for cancer. We have been in existence for over 70 years and support the best cancer research, education and awareness throughout the North West.

We prioritise schools, community groups and the public in areas of deprivation and we target harder to reach communities who do not traditionally engage with health messages. You are up to 25% more likely to develop cancer in the North West than in the rest of the country.

PROJECT DETAILS

The region suffers from social-deprivation and health inequalities that when combined, lead to lower-than-average life-expectancy and quality of life for the community. Our award-winning engagement work tackles these inequalities through education, awareness and prevention work.

Labcoat Learning is an educational outreach programme, providing children with the knowledge, tools and insight to make healthy life-choices for themselves.

We use hands-on experiments and interactions to help children understand the science behind the health messages – rather than 'lecturing' which is ineffective. Topics covered include: cell structure, growth and division, apoptosis, sun-safety, diet, exercise, alcohol, smoking/vaping.

The health messages focus on the importance of making informed choices and the difference simple lifestyle changes can make.

The Dow High Foundation kindly provided funding for 250 children to take part in Labcoat Learning.

DELIVERY

Labcoat Learning was delivered to 290 young people at Mab Lane School in Stockbridge Village, Liverpool. Mab Lane is a school where the majority of pupils qualify for free school meals and they also have an above average number of pupils with special educational needs.

At the request of the school, each child received three Labcoat Learning sessions, a sun safety session, a healthy eating session and a follow-up session to track progress and discuss general health messages to encourage children to get to know what's 'normal' for their bodies so that they can spot any changes.

The children also discussed ways in which they can become advocates for their own health and bodies and how they are able to make better choices for themselves.

1. Early Years and Key Stage One Sessions:

Sunsafety

The interactive session began with a visit from Hope Bear (our teddy bear mascot) who was planning to go on holiday. We checked what the weather forecast was going to be and then worked together to decide what type of clothes Hope should take. We chose the most appropriate clothing and then packed her case!

The children also learnt about how sun cream works, UVA, UVB and the importance of SPF factors and star ratings. In addition, they also looked at a variety of different types of sunglasses to decide which would provide the most protection.

Following the main body of the session, children then worked in groups on a number of related activities – all aimed at providing materials that were taken home to share with families.

Activities included colouring a postcard from Hope from her holiday that features a message from Hope reminding the children of the ways to stay safe in the sun. Designing outfits for Hope and explaining what sunsafe features they had and practice dressing and packing for Hope individually.

Healthy Bodies

Once again, the sessions began with a visit from Hope Bear who was planning a teddy bear's picnic. Hope wanted the children's help to choose the best food to take that would give her body all the goodness it needed so she would have the energy to play lots of games.

We talked about making tiny changes to what we eat and how that could make a big difference to our health e.g. making Hope's sandwich from brown bread instead of white and adding some salad to the sandwich too. The children then had fun using food models to pack the picnic. We also examined what drinks would be best to take, thinking about what we should drink all the time, what we could have sometimes and what we could have only very rarely.

Children then designed their own picnic plate pictures to show all the different types of food they should have and they also included a treat too as we had discussed the need for balance in our diets.

2. Key Stage Two Sessions:

During the sessions, the children were recruited to the North West Cancer Research sun safe academy to train to become sunsafety ninjas!

The children were assigned a number of missions to complete before passing a final assessment and graduating as a ninja.

Missions focused on highlighting what UV is and how it is harmful to eyes and skin, safety ratings on sunglasses and how to look more closely at the different ratings of sun creams. Children were given the opportunity to explore how sun cream actually works using a UV camera.

Pupils also discussed how the decisions they make now about their lifestyles, including what they eat, take care of themselves will impact on them at a later stage e.g. when they have families of their own.

Healthy Bodies

We started the session by thinking about what it meant to be healthy and discussing the different things we needed to do to keep healthy such as getting enough sleep, drinking water and exercising.

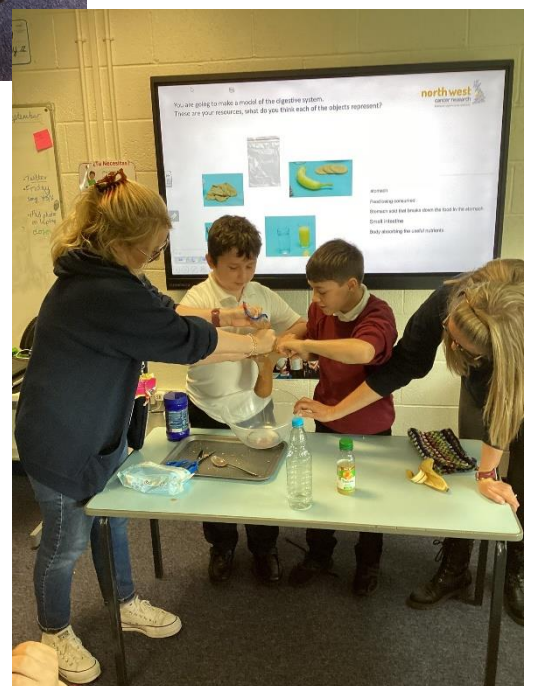
We explored what exercise could mean and realised that it didn't have to just be team sports but could be anything that got our bodies moving.

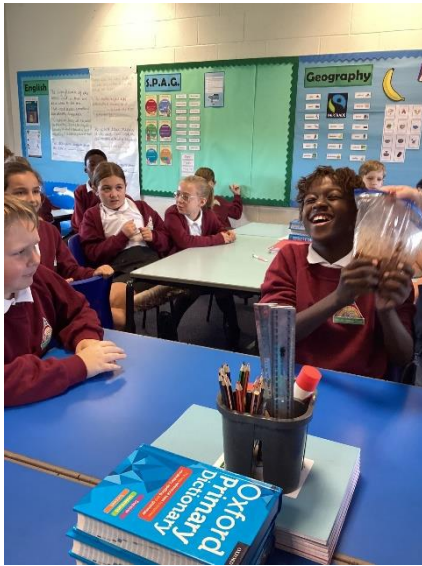
The session then focused on the journey of food through our digestive systems as children took part in a poo making workshop!

Discussions centred around how our body takes the nutrients and goodness it needs to function properly and for our brains to be the best they can be.

Children then made a model of the digestive system which they used to name the different parts and what jobs they each do. They then recreated the journey of their after-school snack from their 'gums to their bums!'

Finally, children used the eatwell guide to divide foods into sections and explore the different elements that should make up a balanced diet.





OUTCOMES

Following their respective sessions children were able to:

- Identify three ways to stay safe in the sun (90%)
- Talk about why we should stay safe in the sun (95%)
- Explain what an SPF is and what numbers will keep you protected (85%)
- Acknowledge that the sun can damage your skin and eyes and could affect health (89%)
- Identify three ways to keep their bodies as healthy as they can be (92%)
- Name three parts of the digestive system (84%)
- Name one change they could make to make their food healthier (98%)
- Name all the food groups that should be part of a healthy balanced diet (80%)

TESTIMONIALS FROM TEACHERS AT MAB LANE SCHOOL

Hope was a great hit with all the children and they were really engaged in the lessons.

The whole class got to take part and it was brilliant to see some of our less confident children getting really involved too.

The ninja training was a really good fun way to learn about sun safety

We have definitely seen an increase in the use of sun cream and sun hats.

The children absolutely loved the poo workshop, it's such a clever way to show how our body works. There were screams of delight and giggles from the whole class!

There were some really good discussions about exercise and I was pleased to see them discussing other things, not just football!