



Sick note school kids avoid PE with a little help from mum and dad

- *One in five parents admit sending a bogus off-games note for their children*
 - *'Upset stomach' is the most common excuse*
 - *Cross county voted the most disliked school sport*

One in five parents (20%) admit to sending a sick note to school to excuse their child from a PE lesson when they knew or suspected the reason wasn't genuine. Parents who spent their schooldays trying to skip PE lessons are also five times more likely to help their own children bunk off from games, new research reveals today (Monday 21 June).

The national survey commissioned by The Cricket Foundation charity to mark "Brit Insurance National Cricket Day" (23 June), found that three quarters of parents of eight to 16-year-olds polled admit they regularly tried to get out of PE during their schooldays; while one in five (21%) own up to having skived 'many times' in a school year.

Now they are grown up, these sporting shirkers are passing on that PE-phobia, with almost a third (31%) confessing they have sent a note to school excusing their own child from PE without a genuine reason. However, only 6% of parents who enjoyed sports as children have done the same.

An upset stomach has passed through the generations as the top excuse for getting out of PE, used by half of all parents and 40% of today's children. A headache and forgetting kit are the next most popular sick note excuses.

While 44% of children cite the British weather as their reason for wanting to skip PE, 28% of girls say they are embarrassed about their appearance in sports kit and 18% of children say it is down to a lack of sporting ability.

The Cricket Foundation runs a sports education programme, 'Chance to Shine supported by Brit Insurance', that uses cricket to educate young people. The initiative brings in professional coaches from local cricket clubs to work with PE teachers in state schools and deliver a programme of cricket coaching and competition.

Last year, a Cricket Foundation survey found that PE lessons were the cause of our unhappiest school day memories, outranking bullying, exams, teachers and school dinners. Recent research by Loughborough University also highlights that significantly more pupils look forward to and enjoy attending school when a Chance to Shine session is taking place in PE -53% - compared to 36% when it is not.

Wasim Khan, Chief Executive of The Cricket Foundation said: "There should be no excuse for avoiding PE lessons, which ought to be a positive experience for children. Schools involved in Chance to Shine find that cricket coaches from local clubs can bring a different perspective to PE and help enthuse both teachers and pupils.

"Special events like 'Brit Insurance National Cricket Day', with cricket-themed classroom and playground activity, can also help inspire children, even those who may otherwise try to avoid games."

Cross country running was voted the most disliked PE lesson by the majority of parents (47%), followed by hockey (32%), athletics (29%), gymnastics and swimming (24%). Cricket came tenth in the least favourite PE sports (21%), while 11% of parents 'enjoyed every sport in PE'.

Other highlights of The Cricket Foundation's school days survey include:

- Four in 10 children (39%) admit asking their parents to lie and come up with an excuse on their behalf, while nearly a quarter (22%) resort to faking a problem to fool their parents. 15% admit to forging a sick note;
- Edinburgh and Norwich top the table of PE-shirking cities in the children's survey (75%), while Glasgow has the highest number of children who say they have never tried to get out of PE (68%);
- Cardiff is the city where most parents tried to get of PE at some point while they were at school (85%) followed, again, by Norwich (84%). Yorkshire has the most PE-embracing parents with a third of respondents in Sheffield (35%) and Leeds (34%) saying they never used to skip PE;
- Mums are the softer touch when it comes to sending a sick note. Children are almost twice as likely to ask their mum to sign a sick note (31%) than their dad (16%);
- The older children get, the less they enjoy PE: 68% of eight to 10 year olds 'really enjoy' PE, while 6% 'hate' it. By contrast, 39% of 15 to 16 year olds really enjoy PE and a fifth of children this age (20%) hate it;
- What would make PE more enjoyable? 43% of children say 'trying some different sports', 36% say 'getting special coaches in to show us new things', while 27% want 'more or better equipment'.

Thousands of school children will take part in a day of cricket activity, in classrooms and playgrounds across the country, on Wednesday 23 June for "Brit Insurance National Cricket Day".

Pupils from Newcastle to Newquay will take part in cricket classes, break-time batting and bowling and extra-curricular cricket competitions. The Cricket Foundation will hold a series of flagship events across the country* attended by high profile cricket ambassadors.

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For more information please contact:

Fabian Devlin, Head of Communications, The Cricket Foundation
 T. 07920 502 152 E. fabian.devlin.cricketfoundation@ecb.co.uk

Notes to editors

- Opinion Matters questioned a representative sample of 1,086 parents of children aged 8-16 and 503 children, aged 8-16, between 9^h – 14th June 2009.
- * Flagship Brit Insurance National Cricket Day events on Wednesday 23 June:

Area	Name of School	Address of school	Confirmed ambassador
Birmingham	Prince Albert Junior & Infant School	Albert Road, Aston, Birmingham, B6 5NH	Gladstone Small
Bristol	St Werburghs	James Street, St Werburgh's, BS2 9US	Alastair Cook Charlotte Edwards
Cardiff	Melin Gryffydd Primary School	Whitchurch, Cardiff, CF14 1NL	Mike Powell
Cornwall	Beach Cricket (joint Cricket Foundation/MCC event)	Perranporth beach, Beach Road, Perranporth, Cornwall TR6 0JL	Caroline Atkins Nick Compton
Darlington	North Road Primary School	Pendleton Road South, Darlington, DL1 2HF	Graham Onions Danielle Hazell
Leeds	Burley Matthias' CofE Primary School	Burley Road, Leeds, LS4 2HY	Katherine Brunt Adil Rashid
London	Johanna Primary School	Johanna Street, Lower Marsh, London, SE1 7RH	Matt Prior
Manchester	All Hallows Secondary	Weaste Lane, Salford, Manchester M5 5JH	TBC
Nottingham	Milford Hall Primary School	Dungannon Road, Clifton Estate, Nottingham, NG11 9BT	Jenny Gunn Chris Read

Winchester	Kings Worthy Primary School	Church Lane, Kings Worthy, Winchester S023 7QS	Dominic Cork Lydia Greenway
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- A range of images can be downloaded from Chance to Shine's online image gallery found at www.flickr.com/photos/chancetoshinepix/

- **About Chance to Shine supported by Brit Insurance**

Chance to Shine supported by Brit Insurance is one of the single biggest grass-roots sports development programmes ever undertaken in Britain. The campaign, run by independent registered charity The Cricket Foundation, aims to educate through cricket two million children and to establish regular coaching and competitive cricket opportunities in a third of state schools - 5,200 primary and 1,500 secondary schools - by 2015. To achieve this, £25million needs to be raised through private donors, which the Government, through Sport England, has pledged to match-fund. The charity receives financial and logistical support from the England and Wales Cricket Board, Slazenger, The Lord's Taverners and Marylebone Cricket Club. Further details and ways to donate can be found at chancetoshine.org

- **About Brit Insurance**

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