Active Lessons

Description: Introduce **physical activity into classroom lessons.** This involves training teachers to adapt their lesson plans to combine physical activity with academic content (i.e., the lesson **content** is the same; it's just taught in a way that involves less sitting and more moving around – either indoors or outdoors).

Will this change affect a lot of students within a school?

- All students could receive regular active lessons **if all teachers are trained to deliver them** within a school.
- Existing outdoor space and facilities will determine whether students could have *outdoor* active lessons on a regular basis.

Will this change work equally for all students?

- It may be challenging to include **disabled students** in all active lessons (depending on what is involved).
- It is unclear if the potential benefits of active lessons (e.g., improved learning, improved concentration) are equal for ALL children:
    - There is some evidence to suggest that **overweight children** may benefit *more* from active lessons, as would **students who have difficulty concentrating**.
    - One study in a primary school showed that active lessons are beneficial for students from all types of backgrounds.

Will people like this change?

- Teachers and students have been **very positive** in their ratings of active lessons.
- There has been some feedback that active lessons **can create more work for teachers** as they have to re-design lesson plans to include active components.
- Students in our CASE advisory group reported enjoying and "getting a lot out of" **outdoor lessons**. They reported that outdoor lessons are **more interesting** and can **help with learning** (as these are often the more practical lessons in which students learn "by doing").

How easy is it to make this change?

- There is evidence to show that introducing active lessons in **primary schools** is easy to do. There is only one study that has tried out active lessons in **secondary schools** (with adolescents aged 14-15) and this also showed that it was easy to put into place.

- Active lessons may involve **moving classroom furniture**. At **secondary schools**, this may be more difficult to do as students regularly move between classrooms. Active lessons may therefore be particularly suitable to **double lessons** so that it does not take away time from lesson time.
- Teachers would receive training on how to deliver active lessons (probably within a teacher-training day)
- Some outdoor space would need to be re-designed to allow active **outdoor** lessons; and timetabling would need to ensure that all students get exposed to some outdoor lesson space.

Will it work?

- To date, there has been only one study conducted in **secondary schools** in which students walked to different 'stations' around the school to complete different exercises and worksheets.
  - This study revealed **no changes in overall physical activity** but **positively affected other health outcomes** (e.g., improved students blood pressure and weight).
- In primary schools, students have consistently shown **increases in physical activity** and **less time sitting** following active lessons.
- Teachers report that active lessons help students **learn concepts better**; **enhance memory, alertness**, and **focus**; and **reduce behaviour problems**.
- Evidence (mostly from primary schools) shows that active lessons may either improve **educational outcomes** (e.g. attention, concentration, academic achievement) or have no effect - but they won't harm educational outcomes. In other words, there are **no negative consequences** of active lessons, but this has only been studied in primary schools.

How much will it cost?

- Teacher training is required: this would probably take place during a teacher training day (approximately **£2000**).
- It is difficult to say how much suitable outdoor space would cost. This could be a few logs, basic seating or purpose designed outdoor classrooms; a covered wood gazebo could cost up to **£6900.**