

Extending break time duration (plus access to facilities and equipment)



Description: Increase the total duration of breaks throughout the school day. Aim to have a total of at least 75 minutes of break within a school day AND include one break (probably lunchtime) that is at least 60 minutes in duration. In addition, there will be a school policy that students have (supervised) **access to equipment and facilities** during break times and lunchtimes.

Will this change affect a lot of students?

- **All students** have break times at school – usually a morning break and a lunch break (unless detention policies result in missed break times).
- **Access to facilities and equipment** would need to be managed through a school-wide booking system (for certain facilities) or staggered access per class/year group to ensure that this is fair.

Will this change work equally for all students?

- Increasing break duration is potentially more effective for increasing physical activity in **boys**, but the evidence for this is limited.
- Our CASE advisory group thought that having more access to facilities/equipment was potentially only effective for increasing **boys'** activity levels (it would have **no effect on girls'** activity).
- This policy change might be more effective in **younger adolescents**. Evidence from primary schools show that physical activity undertaken at break time reduces with age (therefore extending the break duration and providing access to facilities and equipment might not make any difference to older students who are less active anyway).

Will people like these changes?

- Students in our CASE advisory group reported **wanting longer break times and access to facilities and equipment during break times** (especially the lunch-break) in order to be physically active.
- Within research evidence and within our CASE advisory groups, teachers report that extending break duration is a good thing as students return to class **more alert and have better behaviour after a break**. They reported that breaks are good to **“let off steam”** and most teachers indicated that the current break times are too short to enable this.
- Teachers in our CASE advisory group raised concerns about **providing access to facilities and equipment**. They were particularly concerned that it would be the “same teachers” having to supervise most days (i.e., some staff are more willing than others) and also about the **safety** if it is not properly controlled.

How easy is it to make these changes?

- Extending break time is likely to bring some initial **extra school-admin time** to organise this change. This will cease once established.
- Sufficient supervisory staff need to be identified. This can be existing teachers or external staff. Given that this policy change also includes **access to facilities and equipment** it is likely that more staff would be required to supervise.
- **Availability of equipment and facilities** may limit how well this can work in some schools. External funding may be needed to purchase additional equipment.
- **A lack of space** (in some schools) may mean that students don't have sufficient space to be active during break time and lunch time – therefore providing access to equipment and facilities may be irrelevant.

Will it work?

- Please consider the 'effectiveness' information for **extending break duration** too.
- **Extra component: access to facilities and equipment:**
 - Existing evidence shows no impact for the **provision/presence of equipment** during school breaks on physical activity in **adolescents**. However, these studies did not *combine* increased access to equipment/facilities with increasing break-time duration too.
 - The evidence was mixed for an association between **access to facilities and physical activity** in **adolescents**.

How much will it cost?

- See estimated costs for '**extending break time duration**'.
- There is potentially slightly more costs associated with facilities being open and having access to sports equipment – this may require more staff to supervise (e.g., > **£10,000 per year**)
- The school may require **purchasing new or additional sports equipment** to enable this policy to be successful.