

Extending Break Time Duration



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.

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

- **All students** have break times at school – usually a morning break and a lunch break (unless detention policies result in missed break times).

Will this change work equally for all students?

- This policy change is potentially more effective for increasing physical activity in **boys**, but the evidence for this is limited.
- It might be more effective in **younger adolescents**. Evidence from primary schools show that the physical activity undertaken at break time reduces as children get older (therefore extending the break duration might not make any difference to older students who are less active anyway).

Will people like this change?

- Students in our CASE advisory groups reported **wanting a longer break time** (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.

How easy is it to make this change?

- Extending break time is likely to bring some initial **extra school-administration** time to organise changes- especially if the school day has to be extended.
- If the time (for making breaks longer) comes from making lessons slightly shorter – this will be easier to put into place, but timetables would need to be changed to reflect the longer break(s).
- There may need to be more **staff available for supervision**.

Will it work?

- In UK adolescents, longer break-time is associated with more physical activity and less sitting time **in boys only**. In **girls**, a longer break time was **not** associated with greater physical activity.
- There are no studies that have examined the effect of **changing break time length** on students' **social, mental and educational outcomes**; however there is evidence to support **the importance of break-times in general for these outcomes**.
- If the school grounds are small (i.e., a lack of space), then increased break time may not result in more activity.

How much will it cost?

- Approximately an additional **£6,500 per year** for increased lunchtime supervision (due to longer lunch breaks).
- Changes to contracts for school buses (due to increased length of school day) and also costs associated with changing the length of the school day (to allow more break) could cost approximately **£10,000** in administration costs but this would be a one off cost.