Media release

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Physical activity in government primary schools needs to improve

The Auditor-General, Peter Achterstraat, today called on the Department of Education and Communities to improve physical activity in NSW government primary schools.

> "Around 30 per cent of government primary schools are not providing the required two hours of physical education and sport per week," said Mr Achterstraat.

While some schools are doing well, many could make better use of their physical activity time.

> "Students are spending too much time waiting their turn, setting up equipment or travelling to venues and not enough time on moderate to vigorous activity and learning fundamental movement skills," said Mr Achterstraat.
>
> "Less than 40 per cent of year four students have mastered fundamental movement skills," he added

Physical inactivity contributes to the deaths of over 13,000 Australians and results in more than $1.5 billion in direct healthcare costs each year. One in four kids is overweight or obese. If we can increase activity amongst our children, there will be immediate health benefits.

> "Physical activity does not have to come at the expense of reading and writing. Higher levels of physical fitness are linked to improved academic performance," said Mr Achterstraat.

While the Department extensively monitors academic performance it does not monitor children's physical activity at schools.

> "Schools should report to parents on their child's physical activity – their aptitude, attitude, skills and level of activity." said Mr Achterstraat. "Schools should also report publicly on their physical activity programs and achievements," he added.

Programs such as the School Swimming Scheme and the Premier's Sporting Challenge provide good opportunities for physical activity.

Physical activity can be better integrated into other parts of the curriculum. Skilled educators can combine subjects such as maths and english with physical activity.

> "We need to help schools help our children, as part of a larger commitment by the people of this State to turn things around," said Mr Achterstraat.

Schools are uniquely placed to ensure most NSW children get at least a minimum amount of physical activity and gain skills and positive experiences which place them on a path to a long and active life.

> "I would like to see local community leaders and business people who adopt and advocate an active lifestyle act as role models and visit schools and champion the lifelong benefits of physical activity," said Mr Achterstraat.

Mr Achterstraat concluded:

> "We are less physically active than we were. As a society, we have an important decision to make. We can continue as we are and subsidise inactivity to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars, or we can make a concerted effort to become more active. A more active population would be happier, healthier and more productive. What better place to start than our children."

Further information

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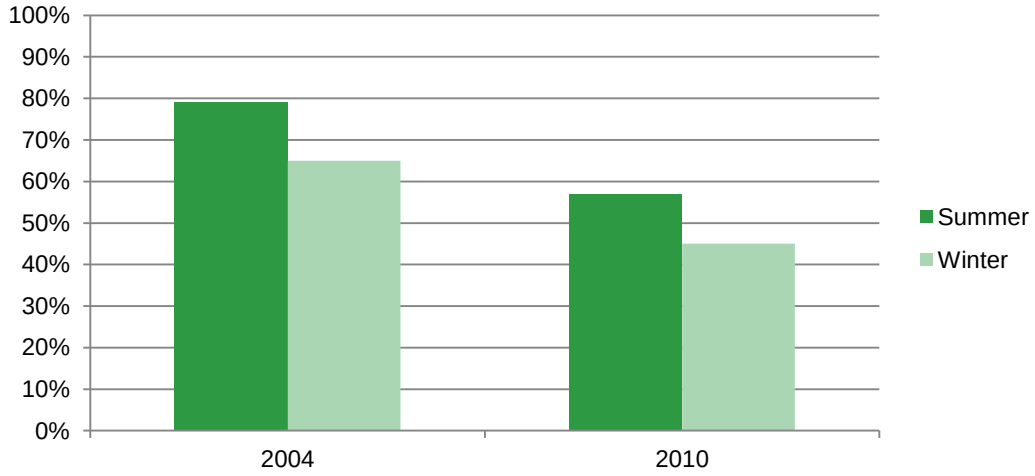
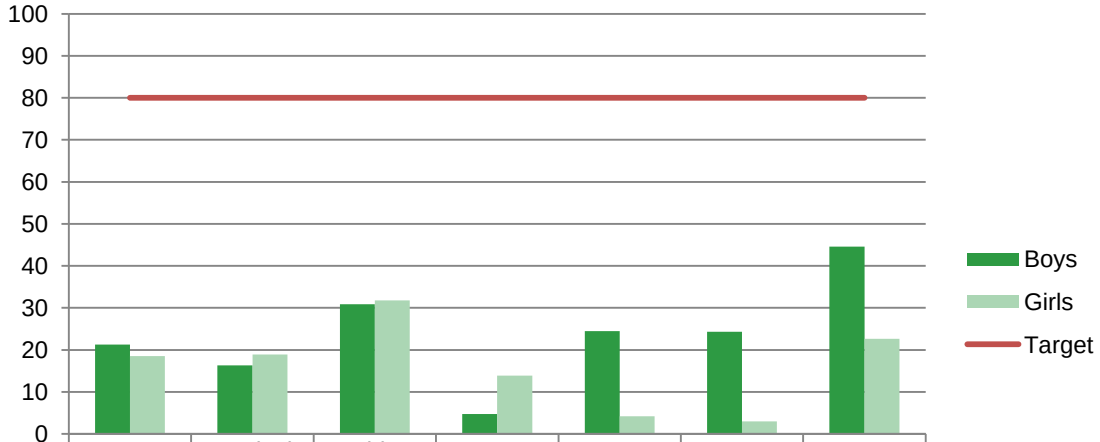
Prevalence of achieving at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day during summer and winter school terms among Year Six students in 2004 and 2010 (%)



Source: NSW Department of Health's 2010 Schools Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey (page 4).

Percentage of Year Four students who had mastered a fundamental movement skill in 2010



	Sprint run	Vertical jump	Side gallop	Leap	Kick	Over-arm throw	Catch
Boys	21.3	16.3	30.9	4.7	24.5	24.3	44.6
Girls	18.5	18.9	31.8	13.9	4.2	3	22.6

Source NSW Department of Health's 2010 Schools Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey (page 170).