

# future fitness

Sport and fitness for today's youth

Children in London are benefitting from a fitness company dedicated to getting youngsters active – both at school and on the streets. Mary Ferguson found out more.

## Kids are choosing fitness ...

MOTIVE8 has been running in Hampton Hill for ten years, and working with schools in South West London for five.

Other arms of the company include celebrity personal training and the design and installation of residential gyms, but their work with children is really taking off.

As well as other youth projects, the company works with four primary schools and one secondary, delivering PE lessons, after-school clubs and teaching pupils about health and fitness.

They have been involved with Kew Riverside Primary School since it opened five years ago, and today deliver seven curricular and five extra-curricular sessions per week – which are always over subscribed.

Emma Pilgrim, schools and research manager for Motive8 said: "On a Friday afternoon the kids are given a choice of activities, including gardening, cooking and a Motive8 session – and a lot of them choose us. It's encouraging that given the choice, so many children want to do exercise. They are really enthusiastic about us and have built up a strong rapport with the coaches.

"Teachers tell us they are always asking when we are coming in, and they see our sessions more as a treat than a PE lesson."

There are never more than eight five to eight year olds per coach, or 15 nine to 13 year olds, to ensure group sizes remain small.

And this summer will see the first ever summer Holiday Camp held at the school, which will open to pupils from across the borough.

The five-day camp will involve sports coaching and world sports, culminating in an Olympic-themed sports day, where parents will be encouraged to watch their children take part.

In another primary school they work with, Emma goes in once a week to take a motor skills session with pupils that have been identified as struggling with basics like coordination and balance.

"It's a great way to get their confidence up and encourage them to participate more in the main sessions – and it's amazing to see the difference it makes."

On some evenings seven after school clubs run at the same time at schools across the borough, so Motive8 employs 12 coaches, who are all degree qualified.

Their work with the secondary school is slightly different as they have their own PE department, but they are brought in to deliver specialist sports such as tennis, and after school clubs.



Emma is working with the School of Sport and Health Sciences at the University of Exeter to investigate the effect that the Motive8 Schools programme has on children's health and activity levels.

In the first project, they teamed up with two year six classes to investigate how active children are throughout Motive8 PE lessons, compared to normal PE lessons. Provisional results show the sessions reach their target of providing 50 per cent of a child's daily moderate to vigorous activity.

Emma said: "I see lots of PE classes where kids are actually sitting down for most of it, even though the school can say they are delivering the required two hours a week.

"Plus, newly trained primary school teachers often received less than two weeks training in teaching PE and are not always confident in providing quality sessions." Motive8 are also investigating the effect of physical activity during PE lessons on total daily activity levels in children, highlighting the importance of the school environment in keeping children healthy and active.

There are also plans to run a six week intervention programme in a primary school in the new academic year.