

Bristol primary breakfast club leads healthy eating charge

A Bristol primary school's breakfast club has been held up as a shining example of tackling soaring obesity rates.

Ashton Gate Out of School Care, which has been running at Ashton Gate Primary School for four years, was visited in March by Public Health Minister Dawn Primarolo as she officially launched the Government's "lifestyle revolution" in the South West, called Change4Life.

The nationwide campaign involves local organisations and charities working together to help families eat well and take more exercise.

In Bristol, one in 10 children who starts school is obese, according to the latest available figures for the financial year of 2007/08.

A large part of Change4Life is the Breakfast4Life initiative, which encourages families to get into the habit of having a good breakfast every day.

Information will be available from the end of March to help parents and organisers of breakfast clubs to find fun ways to introduce healthy breakfasts to kids.

The Ashton Gate breakfast club runs from 7.45am until 8.45am every school day and is attended by about 18 children.

The club's manager, Hannah Harris is one of three members of staff there.

She said: "Sometimes we get children coming to us who have been used to sugary cereals and we then try to change their diets a bit. We serve things like boiled eggs, cereal, toast and fruit here.

"We also try to get children involved in making their breakfast, for example making their own muesli or fruit kebabs.

"We chat about healthy eating options and do arts and crafts activities with them while they are waiting for their breakfast."

Ms Primarolo, who is also MP for Bristol South, had breakfast with the children at the club and was shown around their vegetable patch, where the children have been growing their own produce.

She said that Change4Life would also incorporate working with supermarkets and Ofcom to deal with issues such as advertising and sweets being sold at supermarket checkouts.

She said: "The Change4Life is an incredibly broad alliance, including the supermarkets, the fitness industry and food producers.

"It includes issues around food labelling and working with restaurants to have calorie labelling on their menus so that people know how many calories they are eating.

"It includes working with the food industry to reduce the amount of salt, fat and sugar in foods. One of the things we are encouraging children to do with Breakfast4Life is swap a sugary drink for a low-sugar drink.

"The whole Change4Life is about production through to point of sale, advertising, and then the choices we make as parents and individuals about what we buy."