



Dumfries and Galloway Physical Activity Survey

The Very Low Activity Group – A Priority for the Physical Activity Strategy

Findings from the Dumfries and Galloway Schools Physical Activity Survey (DGSPAS) 2026



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Why this briefing matters

These briefings use local evidence from the Dumfries and Galloway Schools Physical Activity Survey (2026) to support delivery of the Physical Activity Strategy 2025–2030. They are designed to:

- provide clear evidence to support decision-making
- highlight where change is needed
- guide action across schools, health and communities

The findings show:

- activity levels are not improving in line with targets
- very low activity is increasing
- some groups are less active than others

About this briefing

- Based on DGSPAS 2026 (P4-S6 pupils)
- Focuses on pupils in the very low activity group
- Supports delivery of:
- Physical Activity Strategy 2025–2030
- Dumfries and Galloway Best Investments (2025)



What do we mean by very low activity?

The very low activity group includes pupils achieving less than 30 minutes of physical activity per day on average, compared with the recommended 60 minutes per day.

This group represents almost one in four pupils (23.5%) and should be considered a priority population for action within the Physical Activity Strategy 2025–2030.

Why this matters

Almost one in four pupils (23.5%) are in the very low activity group, achieving less than 30 minutes of physical activity per day on average, compared with the recommended 60 minutes per day. This group has increased since the 2018 baseline and remains well above the Physical Activity Strategy target of 15.1% by 2030.

Pupils in the very low activity group are less likely to benefit from the physical, mental and social wellbeing benefits associated with regular physical activity. They are also more likely to report lower confidence, lower participation in organised activity and a wider range of barriers to being active.



Reducing very low activity is therefore likely to have the greatest impact on improving overall activity levels and reducing inequalities among children and young people in Dumfries and Galloway.



Section 2. What the data shows

Participation in organised physical activity by setting and activity level (n=2,894)

	In school only	School and outside school	Outside school only	No participation
Very low activity group	18%	18%	24%	34%
Active for 30-59 minutes per day on average	13%	39%	29%	19%
Active for 60+ minutes per day on average	6%	56%	27%	11%

Key findings

- **23.5% of pupils are in the very low activity group.**
- **The proportion has increased from the 2018 baseline of 17.8% and remains above the 2030 target of 15.1%.**
- **Pupils in the very low activity group are substantially less likely to participate in organised physical activity and are more likely to report no participation than active pupils.**
- **Pupils in the very low activity group report lower confidence, competence and enjoyment than active pupils.**



Pupils in the very low activity group are not only less active, they are also less likely to participate in organised activity opportunities. This suggests that increasing activity among the least active pupils will require more than simply providing opportunities.

4. Alignment with local policy and practice

Dumfries and Galloway Physical Activity Strategy 2025–2030

Target Area: Reduce the proportion of children and young people with the lowest levels of physical activity. The Strategy aims to reduce the proportion of pupils in the very low activity group from 17.8% to 15.1% by 2030.

Strategic Delivery Outcome 1: A system-based approach to physical activity is undertaken prioritising our least active populations.

Dumfries and Galloway Best Investments (2025)

Supports priorities to:

- focus action on those least active and facing the greatest barriers to participation
- strengthen prevention and early intervention
- support people during key life transitions
- align action across multiple parts of the system

5. Implications for policy and practice

Prioritise

- the very low activity group as a key target population
- pupils experiencing multiple barriers to participation
- support during key transition points, particularly the move to secondary school.

Strengthen

- confidence-building approaches
- inclusive and supportive activity opportunities
- low-pressure entry points for those least active.
- involve less active pupils in shaping approaches that respond to their barriers and interests.

Improve

- access to opportunities across schools, communities and everyday environments where pupils already spend time.
- connections between school, community and leisure provision
- pathways that support progression into sustained participation over time.

Align action across

- schools
- health and social care
- community services
- leisure and active travel partners.

6. Key messages

- The proportion of pupils in the very low activity group has increased since the strategy baseline.
- Current performance is moving away from the Physical Activity Strategy ambition.
- Inactive pupils are substantially less likely to participate in organised physical activity and are more likely to report barriers to participation than active pupils.
- The very low activity group should be considered a priority population for action.
- Reducing very low activity is likely to have the greatest impact on improving overall activity levels and reducing inequalities.

References

UK Government (2022) Getting the Inactive Active.

Scottish Government (2024) Physical Activity for Health Framework.

World Health Organization (2018) Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018–2030: More active people for a healthier world.

Dumfries and Galloway Community Planning Partnership (2026) Physical Activity Strategy 2025–2030.