

4 and 5 year olds' understanding of fluid intake within England.

Background

Within the England children start school in the September following their fourth birthday. Within the preschool school setting and within the first year of primary school the same early years' foundation stage curriculum is followed (DfE, 2013). Within this curriculum children are to learn about the importance for good health of physical exercise, and a healthy diet. Previously, Coppinger and Howells' (2019) completed an international comparison between primary schools in Ireland and England focusing on children's understanding of fluid intake and found that children under 11 years did not understand the amount of fluid that is needed each day for good health, however, they only had a small sample of children from the 4 – 5 age category. This paper focuses solely on this youngest age range within England's context of primary (elementary) school as a focused analysis.

Methods

The questionnaire used by Coppinger and Howells in their research has been adapted to be aged appropriate for use for 4 and 5 year olds, including physical visual representations to aid understanding of the younger age group. 130 children from 5 different schools, in the same geographical location, were questioned as to their understanding of fluid intake, when they are allowed to drink within the school setting, the barriers that prevent them from drinking and who influences and encourages their fluid intake.

Results and Conclusion

Data will be presented according to age, and gender. Data collection was undertaken between January and April 2019. It is hypothesised that the age range of 4 and 5 year olds will not understand their daily fluid intake needs, but it is proposed that this research will give insight to help teachers and practitioners identify what is the current understanding of this age range and how educational materials could help the children, teachers and parents develop the children's knowledge to drink healthily.