



***The Walk Tall Programme
— An Evaluation***

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Introduction

The **Walk Tall Programme** was developed and launched in primary schools in the mid-nineties. There were two earlier evaluations. One of these (the formative evaluation) evaluation was published in 1998. A later evaluation was completed in 2001 (the implementation evaluation) but was not published. Therefore, Chapter 1 of the present report summarises these earlier evaluations including the report not published before.

The main body of this report is concerned with an outcome evaluation based largely on the perceptions of the teachers who were involved in the Programme. It is concerned with how the Programme fulfilled the main aims that it was intended to achieve, frequency of implementing the Programme, satisfaction with the methodology of the **Walk Tall Programme** and the associated lesson plans. Other areas examined including links with other curricular areas, perception of the support service and the perceived need for the Programme. This report also sets out the perceived factors that influenced the implementation of the Programme, the extent to which policies on substance use had been developed in schools as well as providing a breakdown of activity in different Task Force Areas.

Chapter 1 summarises the earlier research. In chapter 2, the methodology of the present evaluation is described, while the main results are set out in chapter 3. Chapter 4 presents results broken down by Drugs Task Force area, while the final chapter suggests some conclusions based on the current research.

Chapter 1: Evaluation of Earlier Features

The present evaluation report is the third in a series since the launch of the **Walk Tall Programme** in the mid-nineties. The first of these reports was concerned with the pilot phase and might appropriately be referred to as the **formative evaluation (published in 1998)**. The second phase was concerned with the Programme as it was experienced in schools by children, trainers and Principals and could best be described as the **implementation evaluation (previously unpublished)**. Each of these two reports is described briefly below.

THE FORMATIVE EVALUATION

The formative evaluation presented the results of a survey of teachers who had initially participated in the pilot phase of the **Walk Tall Programme**. The study focused especially on:

- (i) the views of the teachers regarding principles of prevention
- (ii) their perception of the causes of substance misuse and
- (iii) views on the participants on the initial lesson plans that were associated with the **Programme**.

VIEWS ON PREVENTION

In the formative evaluation, teachers were asked about various aspects of prevention including the approaches that are most effective, the extent to which various influences are important in prevention and the kinds of learning involved in prevention education. These were topics that were central to the in-service programme associated with the **Walk Tall Programme** and were of fundamental significance to the ideas that underpin the Programme. For example a guiding idea in the Programme is that legal substances like alcohol and cigarettes are drugs and should be thought of as such.

The results indicated that nearly all of the participating teachers were of the view that teaching the facts about drug use would not of itself be adequate. It is also especially interesting that most disagreed with the idea of exaggerating the effects of particular substances in order to scare young people away from experimentation. Similarly only a small minority were of the view that encountering a person who had experienced drug problems would be enough to discourage young people from use.

In more recent times, it has been acknowledged that the kind of learning that would be appropriate in the case of prevention of drug use would be different from what was traditionally thought effective. This kind of learning is active (as opposed to passive) and involves learning the skills of withstanding the pressure to use substances. It emerged in the formative evaluation that the

teachers strongly endorsed the view that active learning plays an important part in prevention. Similarly almost all of the respondents took the view that community and family influences were important in drug use.

An important question centres on the extent to which the distinction between legal and illegal substances should be emphasised in programmes for young people – an idea which is central in the thinking behind the **Walk Tall Programme** approach. It was striking that only one in twenty of the teachers were of the view that cigarettes and alcohol should not be thought of as drugs .

Another matter considered in the formative evaluation had to do with the perception of the importance of various factors in drug use. The vast majority of respondents identified the ‘influence of peers’ and ‘low-self esteem’ as being either ‘extremely or very important’ as factors in drug misuse. It was especially appropriate that these two factors should have been identified given that the Programme targets skills to withstand peer influence and also is aimed at developing self-esteem. It was also interesting that while ‘dealers who push drugs’ were identified as being extremely/very important by quite a large number, they did not rank as high as either peer influence or low self-esteem. It is also worth noting that nearly four-fifths of the respondents took the view that ‘problems in families’ were an important influence in drug misuse. Again this perception is accurate especially in relation to serious misuse which has been found to be associated with a wide range of problem behaviours which, in turn, are frequently brought about as a result of family problems.

As in the case of principles of prevention, the teachers’ perception of the causes of misuse were closely in line with the ‘state-of-the-art’ regarding these issues. This indicates the extent to which this modern thinking was successfully conveyed to the participants in the course of the in-service programme and in the discussions of the Programme with teachers.

MOST USEFUL ASPECTS OF THE PROGRAMME

Teachers were asked about those lesson plans which they thought were best and why this was so. Many aspects of the lesson plans were highly praised by the teachers who assessed them. They were thought useful in a number of ways. For example many teachers were pleased with the entire content of all the lesson plans they encountered. Others specified lessons and themes that they found went very well with different age groups. The different methodologies employed, such as class discussion and circle time were also complimented. Others mentioned how the lessons valued students’ opinions, as well as that of teachers.

Many of the teachers described how they were pleased with the variety of approaches that were adopted in the lesson plans. The

follow up activities were deemed very useful. In particular many teachers identified ‘Circle Time’ as being of particular value. The programme was also praised for the clear continuity from infants to the senior classes.

Teachers were asked, in the formative evaluation, to say which of several factors contributed most to children’s involvement in the classes that were taught. The results showed that the opportunity for children to participate was perceived to be the single most important factor in contribution to children’s involvement in the lessons. The second most important factor was perceived to be the ‘interesting subject matter’ while ‘methodology used’ was very close.

This pattern of results seems to indicate that the active involvement of children is an extremely important feature, not only with regard to the success of the Programme but also with regard to children’s involvement. In other words, not only is it the case that the active learning methods enhance the effectiveness of drug education programmes, but it may also be the case that this effectiveness comes about because children are more interested and involved because of this (active) approach to teaching and learning.

IN-SERVICE TRAINING FOR THE PROGRAMME

The formative evaluation sought information from participants on their reaction to the in-service programme associated with the **Walk Tall Programme**. The overall satisfaction with training aspects of the Programme was very high with more than nine-tenths of the participants being satisfied with the in-service training. Furthermore it was evident that the in-service programme was considered by the vast majority of teachers to have been highly successful in relation to all aspects that were asked about including understanding prevention programmes and enabling teachers to teach the Programme.

CONCLUSIONS OF FORMATIVE EVALUATION

A number of conclusions are warranted on the basis of the formative evaluation of the **Walk Tall Programme**. These conclusions concern the rationale for the **Walk Tall Programme**, its acceptance by teachers and the associated in-service programme.

Firstly, the rationale for the Programme was found to be in line with the most effective approaches that have been shown to work in existing evaluations of programmes from abroad. In particular, it avoided ‘scare tactics’ and an emphasis on ‘mere facts’ which have been shown to be counterproductive. On the other hand, the emphasis on active learning, on skills to withstand pressures and the holistic emphasis of the Programme is in line with what previous research suggests should be most effective.

Secondly, the training for the Programme was seen as excellent with over 90% of the respondents taking the view that the training

was either very satisfactory or satisfactory. It is also of great interest that the teachers involved in the Programme had an excellent understanding of the most effective principles relating to prevention – something that is at least partially attributable to the in-service training.

THE IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION

In this phase of the evaluation (unpublished but incorporated into the present evaluation report) information was obtained from the following sources:

- (i) A structured questionnaire to classroom teachers and school principals,
- (ii) A open-ended questionnaire to trainers, and
- (iii) A children's questionnaire featuring both structured and open-ended items.

Information from each is summarised briefly below.

CLASSROOM TEACHERS' AND PRINCIPALS' VIEWS

As part of this phase of the evaluation questionnaires were given to classroom teachers and principals in schools in which there were teachers who had experienced training in the Programme. The questionnaires were concerned with extent of implementation of the Programme, the perceived value of features of the Programme and the factors that were important in its implementation.

A number of conclusions seem warranted on the basis of the evidence of the Principals and classroom teachers' questionnaires. Firstly, despite the demands on schools due to the launching of the revised curriculum, a substantial number of schools were implementing the Programme at that time. The indications are that about three quarters of the teachers been teaching the Programme at some time during the previous year and over one-third of the teachers had been teaching the Programme in their classes on a monthly basis at least. Secondly, the vast majority of the respondents were very enthusiastic about the lesson plans. These were perceived to be very valuable and were a major positive factor in the success in the implementation of the Programme. Thirdly, it would seem that the consensus among the teachers and principals was that the need for the **Walk Tall Programme** was very great. Finally, of the factors that make implementation difficult, the outstanding factor agreed by the respondents was the number of subjects on the curriculum. On the other hand, school-based in-service and the support service were considered to be important factors that helped in its implementation.

TRAINERS' VIEWS

In the implementation phase, the trainers involved in the in-

service work were given an open-ended questionnaire to establish their views on the various features of the effectiveness of the Programme. An analysis of the results showed that the trainers themselves and the teachers they met were very enthusiastic about the Programme and especially about the methodology. It was also clear they (trainers) were very satisfied with the lay-out and content of the class plans. They were of the view that the in-service programme had been extremely well received by teachers. They were also of the view that the **Walk Tall Programme** when combined with other measures would make a valuable contribution to prevention of drug use.

CHILDREN'S QUESTIONNAIRE AND RESPONSES

There was also a children's questionnaire comprising of three main areas. The first of these was concerned with children's reactions to the Programme, the second with information that might reasonably be expected to have been acquired in their experience of the Programme, while the third focused on attitudes that were of central concern in the **Walk Tall Programme**. Completed questionnaires were obtained from 233 children of whom 45% were boys and 55% girls.

The evidence from the children's questionnaires showed that children did enjoy the **Walk Tall Programme** classes. They seemed not to have any difficulty in identifying these classes and were fully convinced that they had learned many useful things in these classes. It is especially significant that four-fifths of the students said that the classes gave them a chance to express their views while a roughly similar number thought the classes were more enjoyable than were other classes.

As regard information on substances, the students had a good knowledge of the effects of cigarette smoking but interestingly many thought that advertisements for cigarettes are still seen on television. With regard to expression of feelings, the children almost all agreed that it was important to express these and they also agreed that it was better to reflect before making a decision.

What was most striking about the open-ended items, was the diversity in responses. It was especially noteworthy that there evidence of independence in their thinking, rather than they being satisfied to accept of the views of relevant others.

SUMMARY OF EARLIER EVALUATIONS

These evaluations indicated that the **Walk Tall Programme** has a widely accepted rationale and was based on principles that were in line with modern thinking on prevention. It is also clear that the in-service programme that was associated with the launch of the **Walk Tall Programme** was well received by teachers. Furthermore, the lesson plans were extremely useful and the methodologies that were introduced were greeted enthusiastically.

The indications were that during 1999-2000, the Programme was being implemented in those schools in which it had been introduced. The questionnaires to the various parties involved (teachers, trainers and children) indicated that it was seen as an important contribution to the curriculum

RECENT RELEVANT DEVELOPMENTS

Below we consider the context of the present evaluation with particular reference the increasing concern about drug misuse, the SPHE programme in schools, the National Drugs Strategy and the Guidelines for the development of substance abuse prevention policy issued to schools.

CONCERN ABOUT DRUG MISUSE

However, there has been a growing concern about the issues of drug use by young people and an agreement that successful prevention efforts would involve primary school programmes. The ESPAD study which surveys 16 year olds from nearly all European countries has shown that substance use among young Irish people is high by international standards. This was the case with the 1995 ESPAD and even more so with the 1999 phase which was published in 2001 (Hibell et al, 2001)

THE SPHE PROGRAMME

The importance of prevention of substance misuse and indeed other health matters is central to the Social, Personal and Health Education programme, which is currently being introduced into schools. The aims of the SPHE programme include promoting the personal development and well being of children, make informed decisions and choices with regard to lifestyle now and in the future and developing a sense of social responsibility. An important feature will be to examine the extent to which these aims are fostered by the Programme.

Among the objectives of the SPHE curriculum relevant to prevention of drug misuse are enhancing self-esteem, developing a sense of safety, making decisions and taking appropriate actions in various personal and health situations, becoming aware of the various influences on choices and decisions and developing skills and abilities necessary for participating fully in society. It is particularly significant that one of the strands of the SPHE curriculum (Myself) is concerned with 'Taking care of my body'. For example in the 5/6 class strand unit, under the heading of 'Health and well-being', the objectives include that children would be enabled to understand effects of various substances including alcohol, nicotine and cannabis and explore relevant influences including peer pressure, advertising, feeling good and making oneself feel grown up.

THE NEW NATIONAL DRUGS STRATEGY

A concern with drug issues and especially the more serious kinds of drugs, results in a new National Drugs Strategy (2001-8) published in 2001. This strategy has a number of pillars or components: supply reduction, treatment, prevention and research. While these components are the same as in the earlier National Drugs Strategy, there are a number of ways in which the focus is strengthened. Firstly, the Government's position within the National Drugs strategy is within the wider social inclusion policy and in particular involves a strong commitment to areas of disadvantage. Secondly, there is a requirement for all state agencies involved in delivering the National Drugs Strategy to specify annual targets in terms of outputs and desired outcomes for their respective programmes and initiatives.

With regard to prevention the objectives are to create greater awareness about the dangers and prevalence of drug misuse as well as equipping young people and other vulnerable groups with the skills and support necessary to make informed choices about their health, personal lives and social development. Specific initiatives include the development and launch of an ongoing National Awareness campaign to highlight the dangers of drugs, linking the Drugs Strategy with the National Alcohol Policy, strengthening the links between the Department of Education and Science with the Local Drugs Task Forces and providing educational supports in these areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING WALK TALL

The National Drugs Strategy makes specific recommendations with regard to prevention of substance use in the context of school programmes. Among these is the proposal to put in place mechanisms 'that will enhance and ensure the delivery of school-based education and prevention programmes in all schools over the next three years'. Another is that Walk Tall and On My Own Two Feet would be implemented in all schools in Local Drugs Task Force areas with immediate effect. Implicit is the notion that the Programme would be taught in the context of SPHE. Another specific recommendation is that the evaluation of the **Walk Tall Programme** would continue in order to establish if they need to be augmented or whether there is a need for alternative programmes to address gaps. It is also suggested that schools should encourage the participations of parents in such programmes. In particular, a need was identified for engaging the parents of 'at risk' children in programmes with a view to establishing models of best practice.

IMPLEMENTATION IN LOCAL DRUGS TASK FORCES AREAS

Following the publication of the National Drugs Strategy, the Department of Education and Science began to put in place the

recommendation regarding the **Walk Tall Programme** in the 14 Local Drugs Task Forces Areas. At this point, a National Support Officer for the Programme was employed. Included in the job specifications of the Support Officer were to initiate an in-service day in each Task Force area and to liaise with other agencies involved in prevention work, and particularly with the local Task Force co-ordinators. The administration of the current initiative is in the Dublin West Education Centre. A steering committee was appointed for the initiative involving the DES, Department of Health and Children, Local Drugs Task Forces and the Primary Curriculum Support Programme.

A major part of the current initiative was the development of school substance use policies. In October 2002, the DES in conjunction with the Dept of Health and Children published 'Guidelines for developing a substance use policy.' These guidelines state that the central objective of a school's substance use policy is the welfare and protection of every young person in line with the Education Act 1998 and the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. It suggest that the policy should address both education concerning alcohol, tobacco and drugs and the procedures for managing incidents relating to these substances.

The Guidelines propose the following steps in the development of a policy on substance use in schools. Firstly, it is proposed that a core committee be established to develop a policy. The study of relevant documents and legislation is proposed as the second step while reviewing the current situation in the school regarding substance use policy is the proposed third step. The fourth proposed step is suggested as preparing a draft policy statement followed by a publicizing and revision of the draft document. The sixth proposed step is the ratification and implementation of the policy and following its implementation, it is proposed that the policy be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.

THE PRESENT STUDY

In the light of this, the main aims of the present evaluation were:

- (i) To establish the extent of the implementation of the **Walk Tall Programmes** in schools in Local Task Force areas,
- (ii) To gauge the views of teachers and schools on the methodology and outcomes of the Programme,
- (iii) To see whether there was a perceived need for such a programme and the extent to which the **Walk Tall Programme** fulfilled this need,
- (iv) To examine the extent to which the Programme fitted with Social Personal and Health Education and could be integrated with other subjects on the Primary Curriculum.

2. School Survey - Methodology

Since the schools and teachers in the Programme are well placed to give opinions on the ideas guiding the Programme, and on its implementation and outcomes, it is especially appropriate that information should be sought from them in the current phase regarding what has been learned and which may have broad implications for primary schools.

The survey questionnaire for participating teachers was guided by the following objectives:

- To establish teachers' views about the aims and methodology of the **Walk Tall Programme**
- To find out how the Programme was being implemented in schools in various areas throughout the country,
- To establish the extent to which the Programme was located in the context of SPHE
- To ascertain the extent to which children found the Programme interesting
- To find out whether schools has begun to establish policies with regard to substance use in line with DES guidelines
- To find out how frequently various aspects of the methodology associated with the **Walk Tall Programme** was occurring in schools
- To establish how teachers saw the link between the **Walk Tall Programme** and other subjects
- To find out about teachers' views on the support service
- To see what teachers thought of the need for a substance misuse prevention programme in schools and why this was the case,

QUESTIONNAIRE

The complete questionnaire is shown in Appendix I. Section A in the questionnaire was concerned with background information including matters relating to the school and children. In Section B, participants were asked about their overall views on the **Walk Tall Programme**, especially on the extent to which it contributed to social and personal development, its suitability for children in primary school and its value as a substance misuse prevention programme. In this section, teachers were also asked about the frequency of teaching the Programme in their classes and how interesting children found these lessons. This section also inquired about the status of policy development in respondent's school and about the distinctive methods that are associated with the **Walk Tall Programme** e.g. Circle time, group discussion

and art-work. For each of these, teachers indicated how frequently they were used in the teaching of the Programme. There was a series of questions concerning the link/integration between the **Walk Tall Programme** and other subject areas including language development, physical education and music.

In Section C of the questionnaire, teachers were asked about the Support Service for the Programme. Included were matters like supporting the methodologies associated with the Programme and helping to link with the Local Drugs Task Force as well as promoting Policy Development in schools. Section D of the questionnaire features a range of items on the need for the Programme and on its future. Teachers were asked about the need for a programme like the **Walk Tall Programme** compared to five years ago and what factors had brought about the need that existed. The items listed included the changes in Irish society, the increase in alcohol abuse among young adults and the increase in the use of illegal drugs. In this section, teachers were also asked about the various factors that might be preventing the full implementation of the Programme and also about the factors that would maintain the momentum in substance misuse programmes.

COMPLETION OF QUESTIONNAIRES

The questionnaires (three to each school) were sent to the schools in the second week of January, 2003. They were given to the individual teachers by a teacher who had who had a special involvement in the Programme. An explanatory letter was enclosed with each questionnaire explaining the purpose of the research.

Teachers were reminded in each school about completing the questionnaire. An initial closing date in early February was proposed. However, for a variety of reasons it was decided to extend the deadline until before the Easter holidays (April 16th 2003) By this a total of 380 questionnaires had been received from 171 schools. Questionnaires were received from four additional schools in the course of analysis of the data. This represents about 60% of the total schools in the Task Force areas. This response is considered to be satisfactory by comparison with similar surveys. We will return to a discussion of the issue of non-response in the context of presenting the data for each Task Force area.

DESCRIPTION OF ACHIEVED SAMPLE

Of the teachers who responded to the questionnaire, 13.2 % were male and 86.4% female. As can be seen from Table 2. 1, there was a good distribution of experience with relatively more with less than five year and with more than 20 years experience. This is a reflection of the teaching profession generally in the population.

TABLE 2.1. LENGTH OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE OF RESPONDENTS

Experience of teaching	Percent
Less than 5 years	33.9
6-10 years	11.4
11-20 years	17.6
Twenty years or more	37.1

Table 2.2 shows the type of school in which they were teaching. From this it can be seen that each school type is represented roughly in proportion to their number.

TABLE 2.2: CLASS AND SCHOOL TYPE OF RESPONDENTS

School type	Percent
Boys only	17.8
Girls only	19.4
Boys and girls	62.8

Table 2.3 shows the size of school (as indicated by number of teachers) in which the respondents were teaching together with the location of these schools. From this table it is clear that the school size were broadly representative of the schools in the Task Force areas that were involved in the **Walk Tall Programme**. Thus, a great many were in the greater Dublin area. They also tended to be rather large schools.

TABLE 2.3: SCHOOL SIZE AND LOCATION OF SCHOOL

School size	Percent
Three teachers or less	3.5
4- 6 teachers	7.3
7-10 teachers	12.9
More than 10 teachers	76.3
Location	
	Percent
Dublin	83.7
Large town	16.0
Village/rural	0.3

3. Results of the Evaluation

OVERALL ATTITUDE TO THE PROGRAMME

Table 3.1 shows the views of the participants with regard to various features of the **Walk Tall Programme**. From this it is evident that the vast majority of participants agreed that the Programme was helping children in several important ways. Thus, about nine-tenths of the teachers took the view the Programme helped children make healthy choices, helped children develop a sense of self-esteem and provided a basis for prevention of substance misuse.

The only item on which this very high level of endorsement was not given was had to do with helping children become more confident. With regard to this, however, just four fifths of the teachers thought it helped in this regard and only a very small minority took the view that the Programme was not helped with regard to the development of confidence.

By any standard the level of endorsement of the items in Table 3.1 shows that the teachers held a very positive view of the Programme in terms of its potential outcomes for children. This is all the more positive given the importance of the matters that were asked about including safety, drug prevention, self-esteem, personal responsibility and decision making.

TABLE 3.1: VIEWS OF PARTICIPANTS ON ASPECTS OF THE WALK TALL PROGRAMME

The Walk Tall Programme ...	Agree/ Strongly Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Hard to Say
... helps children to make healthy choices	95.4	—	4.6
... is very suitable for all children in primary schools	88.6	2.2	9.2
... provides a basis for prevention of substance misuse	86.4	0.5	13.1
... contributes to developing a sense of self-esteem among children	93.7	—	6.3
... helps children to develop a sense of personal responsibility	89.9	0.4	9.8
... helps children to develop a sense of safety	92.4	0.5	7.0
... helps children become aware of the various influences on decisions	87.8	0.5	11.7
... helps children to make decisions in various situations	88.3	0.3	11.4
... helps children to become more confident	79.7	0.8	19.7
... helps to develop some of the skills necessary for participating in groups and society	91.6	0.4	7.9

FREQUENCY OF TEACHING THE LESSONS

A crucially important question concerns the frequency with which the **Walk Tall Programme** actually ‘happens’ in schools. This information is shown in Table 3.2. From this it is evident that the teachers in the survey were engaged in the Programme with their children on a regular basis. About 90% of the participants said they taught the **Walk Tall Programme** once a month or more often.

While it might be ideal to have children involved in the Programme on a weekly basis, it is worth mentioning that the demand on classroom time, due to changes in the revised curriculum are so great that consistent teaching of the Programme at this frequency can be regarded as satisfactory.

TABLE 3.2: FREQUENCY OF TEACHING THE WALK TALL PROGRAMME

Frequency of Teaching the Walk Tall Programme	Per Cent
Never	1.4
Less than once a month	8.8
About once a month	33.1
About two-three times a month	40.1
About once a week or more often	16.7

The teachers were asked about the interest of children in the **Walk Tall Programme** compared to other topics on the curriculum. The results are shown in Table 3.3. From this it is evident that the vast majority of teachers took the view that the children enjoyed the lesson in the **Walk Tall Programme** more than other lessons. It can be seen that two thirds of the teachers thought that the Programme was more interesting (or much more interesting) than other lessons. Only a small minority were of the view that children’s interest was less than for other lessons.

TABLE 3.3: CHILDREN’S INTEREST IN THE WALK TALL PROGRAMME COMPARED TO OTHER LESSONS

Level of Interest	Percent
Much more interesting than other topics	10.9
More interesting than other topics	54.1
About the same as other topics	33.1
Less interesting than other topics	1.6
Much less interesting than other topics	0.3

METHODOLOGY OF THE WALK TALL PROGRAMME

Eleven features of the **Walk Tall Programme** were listed and teachers were asked how frequently they engaged the children in each of these. The results are shown in Table 3.4. From this it is clear that a great many features of the methodology of programme were engaged by the majority of the teachers frequently or very frequently. It is particularly interesting that the most popular aspects of the methodology were those that had do with group activities. For instance, nearly nine-tenths of the teachers said they engaged the children in group discussion on a regular basis. In addition, the children were frequently involved in circle work, group work and co-operative games.

Several other features of the methodology were also very popular including artwork, stories, poems and songs. These latter activities indicate the extent to which the Programme is integrated with other features of the curriculum.

TABLE 3.4. FREQUENCY OF ENGAGEMENT IN METHODOLOGY OF THE WALK TALL PROGRAMME

	Frequently/ Very frequently	Sometimes	Seldom/ Never
Group discussion	87.6	11.3	1.1
Art work	53.4	42.1	4.4
Cooperative games	59.9	34.3	5.8
Circle work	64.9	28.5	6.6
Stories, poems, songs and rhymes	55.2	37.6	7.1
Role play and mime	41.3	46.6	12.1
Visualisation	28.1	47.9	24.0
Group work	61.8	32.4	5.8
Project work	18.9	34.5	46.6
Brainstorming	58.3	27.3	14.4
Movement	31.1	45.2	23.7

SATISFACTION WITH LESSON PLANS

The participants were asked about their satisfaction with lesson plans with respect to various features including appropriateness for class, opportunity for activities and having the correct amount of material. The results are shown in Table 3.5. This table shows that there was an extremely high level of satisfaction with the Programme. For each aspect the vast majority of the teachers gave the highest rating.

In terms of ‘good ideas’ there was virtually unanimous agreement that the lesson plans were satisfactory/very satisfactory. This is a very important outcome not only because of the unanimous agreement but also because of the significance of having ideas that can have an inspiring effect.

It is also noteworthy that there was also a major endorsement of the lesson plans as ‘providing good opportunities for activities’. Nearly 95% of the teachers found them satisfactory under this heading and only over 1% did not agree. Given the range of the methodologies that were used by teachers of the **Walk Tall Programme**, this high level of endorsement is to be expected. It is also significant as an important endorsement of the methodologies proposed for SPHE.

There was also a high level of agreement that the lesson plans contained the right amount of material and were class appropriate. While the ratings of these were not fully as strong as for the other aspects, it should be noted that this was due to some teachers not being sure (possibly due to a lack of familiarity) rather than disagreeing that the lesson plans were satisfactory.

TABLE 3.5: SATISFACTION WITH LESSON PLANS

	Satisfactory/ Very satisfactory	Unsatisfactory/ Very Unsatisfactory	Hard to Say
Good ideas	99.2	0.5	0.3
Appropriate to my class	90.6	2.2	7.2
Good opportunities for activities	94.5	1.1	4.4
Correct amount of material	81.7	5.2	13.1

LINKS OF THE WALK TALL PROGRAMME WITH OTHER AREAS OF EXPERIENCE

Participants were asked about their views on how the Programme linked with other areas of experience in the Primary School Curriculum. One question focused specifically on SPHE and the results are shown in Table 3.6. The responses of the teachers indicated that in the teachers’ views, the **Walk Tall Programme** links in extremely well with other aspects of SPHE including the RSE programme and the Stay Safe programme. This is an important finding given the importance of integrating the Programme with the new SPHE syllabus.

TABLE 3.6: LINKS OF THE WALK TALL PROGRAMME WITH OTHER AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM

	Very well/ Quite Well	Not very well/ Not well at all	Hard to Say
The Relationships and Sexuality programme	79.8	3.3	16.9
The Stay Safe programme	88.4	1.4	10.2
Health and Nutrition	78.4	5.6	16.1
Other features of SPHE	81.7	0.6	17.7

The respondents were also asked about the links with other areas of the curriculum including language development and physical education. The results are shown in Table 3.7. The results indicate that the Programme was perceived to have very strong links with other curricular areas.

This was especially the case with regard to language development and the visual arts. In the case of PE and music just over half of the respondents took the view that there was a strong link between the **Walk Tall Programme** and these areas of the curriculum.

TABLE 3.7: PERCEIVED LINKS OF THE WALK TALL PROGRAMME WITH OTHER CURRICULAR AREAS

	Very well/ Quite Well	Not very well/ Not well at all	Hard to Say
Language development	96.7	—	3.3
Physical education	55.9	12.0	32.2
Visual Arts	84.2	4.3	11.4
Music	50.3	16.7	33.1
Other areas	71.6	6.3	22.1

EXPERIENCE OF SUPPORT SERVICE

Participants were asked about their experience of the support service including updating information on the relevant aspects of drug use, helping teachers to plan their work in the area and promoting policy development in schools. The support service involved one person from March-September 2002 and a further person from September 2002 until April 2003. (While an additional appointment was made after the latter date, this is not relevant to the evaluation since the data gathering was complete by that date).

Table 3.8 shows the level of satisfaction with respect to each of these features. It can be seen that the majority of the respondents expressed satisfaction of the support service with respect to each of

the features that were asked about. The support service received the highest level of satisfaction with respect to encouraging teachers to try out new ideas and supporting the methodologies of the **Walk Tall Programme**. Nearly three quarters of the teachers were satisfied or very satisfied with the support service in this regard. A slightly smaller percentage thought that the support service was helpful in updating information on relevant aspects of the Programme and on drug use. It should be noted that for any of the features for which the ratings were not as high as these, the ‘hard to say’ category accounted for many of the responses (rather than the dissatisfied category).

TABLE 3.8: PERCEPTION OF SUPPORT SERVICE

	Very satisfied/ Satisfied	Very dissatisfied/ Dissatisfied	Hard to Say
Updating your information on relevant aspects of drug use	59.2	10.9	29.9
Updating your information on the Programme	63.6	8.7	27.6
Helping you to plan your work in this area	67.7	7.5	24.8
Encouraging you to try out new ideas	69.7	6.9	23.3
Promoting policy development in schools	59.7	9.5	30.8
Supporting the methodologies of the programme (e.g. Circle work)	73.9	8.9	17.2
Helping to connect schools with the Local Drugs Task Force	48.3	15.7	35.0

PERCEIVED NEED FOR THE *Walk Tall Programme*

Schools were asked about the extent of the need for a programme like the present one. The results are shown in Table 3.9. This indicates that the teachers were of the view that there was indeed a major need for such a programme. In fact, there was almost unanimous agreement that there was a great need (or a very great need) for a programme like the **Walk Tall Programme**. Only .5% disagreed with a similar percentage not giving an opinion.

It might be expected that some of the perceived need for the Programme derives from the public debate on the issue of drugs as opposed to teachers’ direct experiences. Nevertheless the level of consensus on this matter is remarkable.

TABLE 3.9: PERCEIVED NEED FOR THE WALK TALL PROGRAMME

Perceived Need	Percent
Very great need	60.6
A great need	39.8
Hard to say	0.5
Not much need	0.5
No need at all	—

A related question was whether there was a greater need now for the Programme than was the case five years ago. The responses to this area shown in Table 3.10. This shows that the vast majority of the respondents took the view that there was a greater need (or a much greater need) for a programme like the **Walk Tall Programme** than was the case five years ago. Less than one seventh thought that the need was the same or less than five years ago.

TABLE 3.10: NEED FOR THE WALK TALL PROGRAMME IN COMPARISON TO FIVE YEARS AGO

Perceived Need	Percent
Much greater need than five years ago	46.1
Greater need than five years ago	39.8
About the same need as five years ago	13.3
Lesser need than five years ago	0.8
Much lesser need than five years ago	—

REASONS FOR NEED OF THE *Walk Tall Programme*

Participants were asked why they thought there was a need for a programme like the **Walk Tall Programme** and specifically the importance of a variety of potential reasons. The results are shown in Table 3.11 from which it can be seen that the teachers took the view that the most of the factors listed were important in bringing about the need for the **Walk Tall Programme**.

It is noteworthy that some of the factors listed were endorsed by almost all of the respondents. With regard to the pressure to experiment with various substances it can be seen that every teacher in the study took the view that this was an important (or very important reason) for having the Programme. It is also striking that substance use by adults including the number who drink and the number who continue to smoke were also regarded as very important factors by the vast majority (over 95%).

The only reason listed which was not regarded as being very important by the vast majority had to do with access to sports clubs. However, even for this it should be noted that over 85% regarded this as being important or very important.

TABLE 3.11: REASONS FOR NEED FOR THE WALK TALL PROGRAMME

	Very important/important	Not very important/Not important at all
The fact that children are subject to pressures to experiment with substances	100.0	—
The influence of TV and other media	98.4	1.6
The changes in Irish society over the last decade	97.8	2.2
The absence of sports clubs in certain areas	84.3	15.7
The fact that children have to grow up more quickly than a generation ago	95.7	4.3
The extent of alcohol abuse among adults in Ireland	99.2	0.8
The increase in the use of illegal drugs	99.5	0.5
The fact that so many Irish adults continue to smoke	96.0	4.0

FACTORS PREVENTING REGULAR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WALK TALL PROGRAMME

Teachers were asked about the factors that might be preventing the regular implementation of the Programme. These included the fact that there were so many subject on the curriculum and the possible lack of support for such a programme. The results are shown in Table 3.12. This shows that the over-crowded curriculum was regarded by the vast majority of teachers as being the most important factor in preventing the full implementation of the Programme. Only a minority of less than 5% took the view that this factor was not very important. It is also of considerable interest to note that the ‘casual attitudes towards substance misuse’ in Ireland was regarded by four-fifths of the teachers were of the view this was an important factor in preventing the implementation of the Programme.

It is also worthy of noting that some factors that were intrinsic to the Programme were not perceived to be of major significance in preventing full implementation. The most striking of these was ‘not being able to see the link with other school subjects’. Three fifths of the teachers thought this was not a very important factor.

In summary it would seem that while there may be difficulties in the full implementation of the **Walk Tall Programme**, these have more to do with the range of subjects in the revised primary

curriculum and associated new pressures on schools than they have with the perceived value of the Programme.

TABLE 3.12: FACTORS PREVENTING FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WALK TALL PROGRAMME

	Very Important/important	Not very important/Not important at all
The fact that there are so many subjects in the curriculum	95.4	4.6
Not having a clear idea of what the Programme should achieve	56.4	43.6
Lack of support by parents for such a programme	60.4	39.5
Not being able to see the links with other school subjects	40.2	59.8
The casual attitude towards substance misuse in Ireland	79.2	20.8

MAINTAINING SUPPORT FOR THE PROGRAMME

Participants were also asked about the factors that would be necessary to maintain the momentum in schools with regard to the prevention of substance misuse. These included developing school policies and maintaining the support service. The results are shown in Table 3.13. From this evident that the respondents were of the view that a large number of these factors were helpful with regard to keeping the momentum.

In fact nearly all of the factors listed were thought to be important in keeping up the momentum on prevention.

This is a reasonable outcome since all the evidence suggests that in order to have effective prevention programmes, there is a need to have a range of supports from school, community and society.

TABLE 3.13: FACTORS TO HELP KEEP MOMENTUM ON PREVENTION

	Help a lot/Somewhat	Help a Little	Would not Help
Maintaining a support service for the Walk Tall Programme	95.8	4.2	—
Keeping the Walk Tall Programme central to SPHE	95.1	3.8	1.1
Developing school policies on substance use and misuse	89.5	9.6	0.8
Parents becoming more involved	88.2	10.7	1.1
Change in attitude in society to legal drugs	93.6	4.7	1.7
Having Gardai/outside personnel more involved in schools and the Programme	88.2	9.9	1.9
Maintaining suitable in-service programmes	95.6	3.8	0.5

DEVELOPMENT OF POLICIES

Teachers were asked about the situation on policy development in their schools. The choices ranged from the school not having yet established a policy committee right up to having a policy statements finalised and circulated.

The results shown in Table 3.14 suggests that the majority of schools had not yet established a committee (the first step in policy development within schools). At the other extreme, it can be seen that in about one quarter of the schools a policy statement had been drafted only in a small number of instances was this statement circulated. In between a quarter of the schools has established a committee had begun work.

In contrast to the enthusiasm for the *Walk Tall Programme* which was evident in the responses to the various questions above, it would seem that the area of policy development needs considerably more attention. It is especially a concern that more than half of the schools have not yet taken the first step in this direction.

TABLE 3.14: POLICY DEVELOPMENT ON SUBSTANCE MISUSE IN SCHOOLS

Action	Percent
The school has not yet established a policy committee	54.1
The school has established a policy committee which has begun work	23.1
A policy statement has been drafted by a committee	9.4
A policy statement has been drafted and teachers/parents consulted	4.9
A policy statement has been finalised	4.6
A policy statement has been finalised and circulated to all concerned	3.9

4. Breakdown for Task Force Areas

The matter of establishing what the picture is in each Task Force area is not easy. There are complications that arise from the size of each area and the associated issue of the number of schools in each. The further complication that arises has to do with different rates of response

Table 4.1 shows the number of schools in each task force area, the number of schools from which responses were obtained and the number of questionnaires in total from those schools (Because 3 questionnaires were sent to each school, the number of questionnaires returned is not totally predictable from the number of schools).

Area	Total Schools	Schools Returning Questionnaires	No. of Questionnaires Returned
Ballyfermot	9	7	15
Blanchardstown	10	4	9
Ballymun	11	8	16
Bray	14	5	13
Cork	77	38	79
Canal Communities	10	4	5
Clondalkin	20	11	23
Dublin 12	17	9	19
DunLaoghaire-Rathdown	12	4	11
Dublin North-East	56	29	69
Finglas/Cabra	22	13	30
North Inner City	22	12	30
South Inner City	17	8	18
Tallaght	33	19	43

A number of points emerge from Table 4.1. Firstly, it is evident that there are great variations in the number of primary schools in these areas (something which reflects the population of young people). For example, there are nine primary schools in the Ballyfermot area and more than six times this number in the Dublin North East area. The Cork area has even more schools than Dublin North East. However, there are also likely to be good

reasons why some Task Force areas are substantially larger than others.

Secondly, there are major differences between areas in the number of schools returning questionnaires. For example in the case of the Ballyfermot and Ballymun Task Force areas there were returns from over two-thirds of schools. In many other Task Force areas (Tallaght, Dublin North East, Clondalkin) over half of the schools responded. However, in the case of some areas the response was below this and was closer to 40% of schools.

This is an important issue since returns of questionnaires from schools is likely to be influenced by among other matters the extent of implementation of the Programme in schools. We are not suggesting that there is a simple relationship involved and it would be entirely wrong simply to assume that those schools from which we did not hear were not doing the Programme. However, it is also fair to say that extent of implementation of the Programme is likely to be one factor that influenced the return of questionnaires. This should be borne in mind when the information on extent of implementation is considered below.

TABLE 4.2 FREQUENCY OF TEACHING THE WALK TALL PROGRAMME IN TASK FORCE AREAS		
	About once a month or less	Two-three times a month or more often
Ballyfermot	46.6	53.3
Blanchardstown	33.3	66.6
Ballymun	21.4	78.6
Bray	49.5	50.5
Cork	65.2	34.8
Canal Communities	40.0	60.0
Clondalkin	30.4	69.6
Dublin 12	36.8	63.2
DunLaoghaire-Rathdown	36.4	63.7
Dublin North-East	41.6	58.4
Finglas/Cabra	27.3	72.7
North Inner City	48.2	51.8
South Inner City	23.2	76.8
Tallaght	42.7	57.3

Table 4.2 shows the frequency of teaching the Programme in the various Task Force areas. As noted above care should be taken in interpreting this table, especially where a very small of

questionnaires were returned. On the other hand, we can have greater confidence in the returns where there a relatively large number of questionnaires were received.

Overall, the level of implementation in the various Task Force areas seems quite satisfactory with over 50% teaching the Programme 2-3 times a month or more often. This was not the case in one Task Force area (Cork). The reasons for this merit further exploration.

5 Conclusions

Earlier evaluations had indicated that the **Walk Tall Programme** has a widely accepted rationale and was based on principles that were in line with modern thinking on prevention. They also showed the in-service programme was well received by teachers. The indications were that during 1999-2000, the Programme was being implemented in those schools in which it had been introduced. The questionnaires to the various parties involved (teachers, trainers and children) indicated that it was seen as an important contribution to the curriculum

The context of the present evaluation was the increasing concern about drug misuse, the SPHE programme in schools, the National Drugs Strategy and the Guidelines for the development of substance abuse prevention policy issued to schools.. A questionnaire was completed by teachers involved in the Programme in the various Task Force areas. Completed questionnaires were returned from about 60%.

An analysis of the results of the questionnaire indicated that teachers held a very positive view of the Programme in terms of its potential outcomes for children, including safety, drug prevention, self-esteem, personal responsibility and decision making. About 90% of the teachers had taught the WALKTALL programme at least on a monthly basis and the perception of the vast majority was that the children enjoyed the lessons.

A great many features of the methodology of programme were engaged by the majority of the teachers especially those that had do with group activities. For instance, nearly nine-tenths of the teachers said they engaged the children in group discussion on a regular basis. In addition, the children were frequently involved in circle work, group work and co-operative games. When teachers were asked about their satisfaction with lesson plans, they expressed a high level of satisfaction especially with respect to appropriateness of lessons for class, opportunity for activities and

having the correct amount of material. In the teachers' views, the **Walk Tall Programme** links in extremely well with other aspects of SPHE including the RSE programme and the Stay Safe programme. This is an important finding given the importance of integrating the Programme with the new SPHE syllabus.

The majority of the respondents expressed satisfaction of the support service with respect to each of the features that were asked about especially with respect to encouraging teachers to try out new ideas and supporting the methodologies of the **Walk Tall Programme**.

The teachers were strongly of the view that there was indeed a major need for a programme like the present one. In fact, there was almost unanimous agreement that there was a great need (or a very great need) for a programme like the **Walk Tall Programme** with only .5% disagreeing. The vast majority of the respondents took the view that there was a greater need for such a programme like the **Walk Tall Programme** than was the case five years ago.

When teachers were asked about the reasons for the need for a programme like the present one they were almost unanimous in their views that the pressure to experiment with various substances was an important reason. Similarly they thought that substance use by adults including the number who drink and the number who smoke cigarettes were important reasons.

When teachers were asked about the factors that prevent full and regular implementation of the Programme, the 'over-crowded curriculum' was regarded by the vast majority of teachers as being the most important factor in preventing the full implementation of the Programme. Only a minority of less than 5% took the view that this factor was not very important. It is also of considerable interest to note that the 'casual attitudes towards substance misuse' in Ireland was regarded by four-fifths of the teachers as an important factor in preventing the implementation of the Programme. It is also worthy of noting that some factors that were intrinsic to the Programme were not perceived to be of major significance in preventing full implementation.

Teachers were asked about the situation on policy development in their schools. The choices ranged from the school not having yet established a policy committee right up to having a policy statements finalised and circulated. It emerged that the majority of schools had not yet established a committee (the first step in policy development within schools. In contrast to the enthusiasm for the **Walk Tall Programme** which was evident in the responses to the various questions above, it is clear that the area of policy development needs considerably more attention. It is especially a concern that more than half of the schools have not yet taken the first step in this direction.