

## **PROLONGED WEARING OF PLIMSOLLS AND ITS EFFECT ON FEET**

- 1(a) Most plimsolls are only available in a single (average) fitting and in many cases whole sizes only.
- 1(b) Surveys indicate that less than a third of children have “average” fitting feet. Seven children in ten will therefore be forced to wear plimsolls which are too narrow, too wide, too short or too long. Not detrimental for short periods like a P.E. lesson or exercises, but potentially catastrophic for longer periods.
- 2(a) The vast majority of plimsolls have elastic gussets rather than laces to make it easier for the child and the teacher when “putting on and taking off”.
- 2(b) The lack of effective fastening further reduces the effective fit of the plimsolls causing the child to curl their toes or have them squashed together in the plimsolls. This process will be seriously affected in footwear not available in fittings with effective fastening, such as plimsolls.
- 3(a) Plimsolls are rarely designed to include, nor will the style normally allow, growing room for feet.
- 3(b) By school age a child’s foot contains 45 separate bone centres. These bones grow and fuse together continuously until at least the mid teens forming the 26 bones in a normal adult foot.
- 4(a) Plimsolls are made of canvas or similar materials as this has no detrimental effect over short periods.
- 4(b) Each foot contains 250,000 sweat glands and releases an egg cupful of perspiration each day.

The effects on the feet of wearing a plimsoll for prolonged periods are:

- (i) Hot, wet feet
  - (ii) Increased risk of skin disorders
  - (iii) Ideal conditions in a plimsoll for fungal infections (athletes foot) to develop
  - (iv) Bacteriological breakdown of perspiration increasing foot and plimsoll odours.
- 5(a) Floors and carpets can be cleaned and replaced when worn out.
  - 5(b) One pair of feet have to last us a lifetime. Six or more hours (a normal school day) wearing plimsolls is sufficient to cause long term problems for an active child. For the average person this means 18,000 steps every day and around 175,000 miles in a normal lifetime.
  - 6. Plimsolls are lightweight and soft – especially for gym activities – and they do not afford the protection an ordinary shoe would, in the school environment.
  - 7. Children’s shoes are outgrown in a maximum of six months. If the wear time is limited to walking to and from school there is a distinct danger that shoes will continue to be worn after they have been outgrown or passed down to other children. Both scenarios are likely to cause significant foot damage.

Additional copies of this notice are available from:  
Children’s Foot Health Register  
PO Box 123  
Banbury  
Oxon OX15 6QE.