

The Daily Mile -

How All Schools Can Benefit From a Daily Mile Track

The “Daily Mile” is fast becoming a familiar phrase in classrooms around the UK. It is a new initiative aimed at getting more children physically fit, active and healthy, and it really seems to be doing the trick.

So what exactly does the Daily Mile involve? Is it something that every school can easily participate in? The answer is a resounding “yes”.

Why Install a Designated Daily Mile Track in the School Grounds

Every child should be able to participate in the Daily Mile, and in recognition of this, more and more schools around the UK are now looking to implement this wonderful initiative. And why wouldn't they?

It is very easy to incorporate a Daily Mile into the school day. It can be done at any time of day to suit a particular class, and it **only takes 15 minutes**.

There is no set up or pack away time involved (unless you are incorporating the Daily Mile into a specific subject lesson and you choose to include additional resources). The Daily Mile movement even recommends that children don't need to change into their PE kit to take part. Simply swapping their school shoes for some pumps or trainers suitable for running where necessary is all that is needed.

The real obstacle that any school might face to incorporating the Daily Mile initiative, is poor ground conditions. In many cases, soggy, wet and waterlogged grounds and a perceived shortage of space is what puts schools off.

Realistically, areas like this just cannot be used for running a Daily Mile. Carry out a risk assessment and a number of issues spring to mind. Excessive amounts of

dirt and mud will end up all over the children and be taken back to the classroom, meaning time wasted as they clean up before the next lesson and even more work for cleaning staff every day.

Wet fields become mud-baths and are rendered unusable. Worse still, slippery wet grounds and cramped spaces mean a high risk of children banging into one another, slipping over and really injuring themselves.



Your Daily Mile Surfacing Options

Thankfully, this doesn't need to be the case. There are a number of different track surface options that can easily be installed, even in the muddiest and most compact of school grounds, to create a perfect, safe and enticing designated Daily Mile track that children can use in all weathers:

1. **Playturf** Daily Mile Tracks are free of the maintenance that a natural grass surface requires, yet look and feel natural and realistic. They are ideal for waterlogged school fields and areas which are underused or unsafe. They can even be placed over tarmac and concrete.

2. **Wet Pour** Daily Mile Tracks offer a safe, non-slip rubber surfacing solution that can be accessed in all weathers. Different colour options mean they brighten up the school grounds and entice children to follow them - think of the Yellow Brick Road! They can run across both field and playground, connecting the areas together and offering different views, leading to points of interest, and setting natural target distances. It's easy to traverse and suitable for wheelchair users.

3. A **Playbond** Daily Mile Track can also be used in rain or shine and offers different colour options to suit any theme. Slightly more textured, the rubber bark chippings are permeable and prevent any mud, weeds or debris from penetrating from below ground. This track can also run through both a school field or playground.

4. A **Safeturf** Daily Mile Track is a good value, colourful and fun all-weather track option which is free draining. Wonderfully flexible, it can be installed onto tarmac, concrete or the school field.

5. A **Playground Markings** Daily Mile Track is an ideal cost-effective solution for schools that might not have the budget to lay new specific surfacing for their Daily Mile. This offers clearly marked track lines to greatly improve provision for the Daily Mile in the school playground. This type of track offers children a clear route and point of focus to run along and increase their motivation to participate. It can also be well used in smaller playgrounds, making good use of all the space available to offer a "one way system" for children to follow and avoid bumping into each other!



A designated track inspires children to complete their Daily Mile so much more than at a school without one. As well as being much safer and more practical, it is far easier to motivate children to go outside every day if

the track is enticing and enjoyable to use, rather than having to run around on a wet field or hard concrete which often ends in bumps, scrapes and bruises and damaged clothes!

When children have a designated path to follow, a challenge laid out in front of them begging to be pursued, it grabs their natural curiosity and there's little holding them back!

A designated track is a much better way of setting movable, flexible, achievable targets and goals too. Creating smaller laps, placing transferable markers along the course, being flexible with time limits and pace, starting small and working up to a full mile around the track at pace, sets children achievable goals that they will be proud to reach.

Installing the right kind of Daily Mile track, suitable both for your particular school grounds and the ability of the pupils that attend the school, mean that it really can be a fully inclusive sporting activity that every child can enjoy.

Whatever their circumstances, age or ability, they will all be able to succeed, enjoy better fitness, achieve their goal and most of all have fun in the process!

Implementing the Daily Mile Track at Your School - Where to Begin

Getting the right sort of Daily Mile track in place is key. All children including children with mobility issues can be properly supported if you start off by making sure that the course is safe and manageable for them.

The Daily Mile is fun to do, and it's easy to implement. More often than not, even the children who are most hesitant during P.E. lessons can enjoy participating in a Daily Mile.

If children do need a bit more encouragement and are starting out with low levels of fitness, there are plenty of things you can do to get them started:

The main thing to remember, particularly as you are starting out with the Daily Mile, is to keep it simple. It's meant to be fun and in no way competitive or intimidating! At this stage it's all about just having a go and enjoying being outdoors in the fresh air.

Start off walking the Daily Mile if necessary, especially with very young children. It's not about speed. Walking or sprinting, it's all good movement and a huge step closer to getting fit than sitting still!

You don't have to start off trying to achieve the full mile if it's going to be too much for the children. As long as they are walking or running a reasonable distance every day, they shouldn't have to feel disappointed or that they have failed if they don't make the full mile. Work up to it, set achievable targets and gradually increase them until the children can run the full mile in 15 minutes or maybe even further!

Each child or class can plan their own approach to the Daily Mile, setting their own measurements and targets (if any) and tracking their own performance. Positive encouragement such as class reward points for completing the Daily Mile each day, or certificates of achievement for children who complete their own targets can really motivate children and help them to see it as a really positive thing.

Make it easier for children to cope with the distance of the challenge by using markers along the way to keep the course fun and engaging. If there are no natural landmarks such as plants, the edge of the playground, in line with the climbing frame etc, then you put some props such as colourful cones along the track to break up the journey. Breaking it down into sections will help children to visualise, measure and understand the distance to travel and the length of time it will take. They will start to see for themselves how far along they are, how far they still have to go and how well they are doing, and they will discover that they are enjoying the experience too!

The clue is in the name - once you get going with the initiative, it needs to be done daily whatever the weather (unless it really is hazardous outside!). If not, children will find it much harder to get motivated next time you go out. They won't build

up their fitness to make it achievable and it will become more of an interruption to routine rather than an important and settled part of their routine. It's easier to achieve a daily mile than you might think because it is not meant to be a rigid activity. Fit it into your schedule at any time of the day to work around whatever else you have planned.

How to Retain Motivation & Enthusiasm Whilst Using Your Daily Mile

1. Invent some running games or themed running for different days of the week, months of the year or seasons. Do a Whacky Wednesday or Fun Time Friday and let them wear a funny hat or item of fancy dress to run in. If you have the facility to take a portable music player outside, let the children take it in turns to choose some music to listen to and motivate them as they run.
2. Set some new challenges for really advanced runners by placing obstacles such as hurdles or skipping ropes to jump over along the course.
3. Younger children will enjoy finding items to pick up and collect along the way such as bean bags, hula hoops, coloured balls or any other equipment you have access to.
4. Use the Daily Mile Track to improve language development through movement. EYFS children will love learning new vocabulary and concepts, for example, trying to move along the track "as slow as a tortoise", "as fast as a hare", "scuttling like a spider" or "marching like an ant". As they move onto Key Stages 1 and 2, use sessions at the Daily Mile track to develop more advanced language, improve grammar and inspire some "exciting sentences". Ask children to think about what they are doing at the track and write exciting sentences about it, for example "Deliberately, the children poised at the start of the track, waiting for the sharp, shrill sound of the whistle to signal that the race had begun!"
5. Use mixed group activities at the Daily Mile track to improve social cohesion and to help children

build relationships with peers and staff. This is an important part of their personal, social and emotional development, understanding how to look after themselves and keep healthy, and how to be considerate and look after other people too. Some teachers have specifically noticed a real improvement in children's desire and ability to support their friends through running the Daily Mile. If one child is not as fast or as motivated, and is struggling to keep up, others run with them and encourage them to keep going. This builds friendships and supports emotional well-being for everyone involved.

Once you have begun, the Daily Mile is something that will become a way of life in your school for many years to come.

We would encourage all schools to take part in the Daily Mile initiative, and to carefully plan their Daily Mile route, using grounds that are inspiring, exciting and encouraging, but also safe and free from unnecessary risks. We design, supply and install a range of Daily Mile tracks to bespoke fit all types of school grounds. If you are looking to implement the Daily Mile at your school and would like to talk to us about setting up your Daily Mile track, please contact us to arrange a free consultation.

6. Installing an outdoor marker board near the track allows children to record their activities, distances travelled, number of laps, time taken, personal bests etc. They could use pedometers to count steps, or measure out distances by placing bean bags or other items at equal distances to set their own markers. As well as setting goals for children to challenge themselves, it's a good cross-curricular way of teaching these mathematical concepts and helping children learn through hands on experiences how to measure distance and time.



Daily Mile tracks can also be well used for out of school hours running clubs to promote fitness within the wider community. To extend their use even further, children can set their own challenges to raise funds for the PTA or other charities through a sponsored run.

Asking friends and family to sponsor them to complete any number of laps of the track within a time frame is great for fitness, as well as helping children to learn about currency, the value of money, and the importance of supporting good causes.

To find out more about our [Daily Mile tracks](#) as well as find out more information about how you can allocate your [Sports Premium](#) make sure to visit our website at www.pentagonplay.co.uk