

## One in three Irish primary schools sign up to Super Troopers health homework

*- Leading psychologist backs habit-changing programme that places equal importance on physical activity as regular schoolwork -*

**Tuesday, 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2015:** Some 180,000 school children, 7,000 teachers and 75,000 families are currently signed up to the **biggest health homework programme in Ireland**. Super Troopers with laya healthcare, which encourages teachers, parents and children to treat the task of daily physical activity with the same importance as their regular school homework and other subjects, is now in place in more than 1,000 or one third of all Ireland's primary schools. Registration is still open for more schools to sign up to the programme until October 30<sup>th</sup>.

The programme has been designed by teachers for teachers and is backed by leading clinical psychologist and parenting expert, **David Coleman**. Coleman explains that the unique part of the Super Troopers initiative is that it is a long-term habit-changing programme for children to encourage positive attitudes towards healthy eating, well-being and exercise and not a quick-fix solution.

"Super Troopers is unique in that it is the first health programme that bridges school with home, and connects kids with their 'triangle of influence' - peers, teachers and families - to get more active and learn healthy habits together. It is building good habits from a young age," said Mr Coleman.

"While it's aimed, in part, at tackling the issue of childhood obesity, Super Troopers is a game changer as it concentrates more on fostering healthy attitudes and behaviours around physical activity, food and wellbeing that kids can take from childhood into their adulthood," continued Coleman.

According to Safe Food, one in four children in Ireland is currently overweight or obese\*. As the biggest health homework programme in Ireland, Super Troopers is endorsed by Healthy Ireland, which recently announced an action plan that involves every part of Irish society in improving our health and wellbeing.

"We need more intervention initiatives like this that are less concerned with 'quick fixes' and more invested in long-term preventative healthcare that deliver measurable attitudinal and behavioural shifts," said Mr Coleman. "I'd encourage teachers and schools to sign up for Super Troopers if they've not yet done so."

Running over 30 weeks and involving teachers, parents and children aged 4-12 years, Super Troopers provides an easy-to-follow physical activity homework planner based on short-burst activities that combine daily exercise with imaginative fun.

"The aim of Super Troopers is daringly simple," said Lorraine Walsh, Head of Marketing at laya healthcare. "We want to instill positive health habits in kids and embed them in a powerful, impactful way that allows them become healthier adults. That's the ultimate goal."

Ms Walsh explained that creating a programme that complemented the school curriculum is key to the success of Super Troopers, "Our programme is designed by teachers, for teachers and we've been blown away by the reaction of the thousands of teachers who have embraced it. We've managed to put fun at the heart of a very serious health mission that allows kids complete health and activity-based 'homework' collaboratively with their teachers and schoolmates and also with their family at home."

Susan Gibney, Principal, Queen of Angels Primary School, a school in Wedgewood, Dublin, says that Super Troopers with laya healthcare brought fresh thinking and a fresh approach to physical activity that teachers, children and parents embraced with zeal, "Super Troopers ties in perfectly with the movement breaks we wanted to introduce to the school. The programme is inclusive and it made a tangible impact to the overall wellbeing of our school children and their families during the pilot year, so we didn't hesitate to sign up again this year. It's no longer a case of 'them' and 'us' when it comes to parents and teachers and whose role it is to encourage children to get more physically active. With Super Troopers we work together collaboratively. It sounds so simple, but it really has delivered a breakthrough in our school's approach to physical activity and general wellbeing."