

Drawing attention to big kids won't help

A COVENTRY teenager who has lost four-and-a-half stone in five months has spoken out against The National Child Measurement programme.

Ben Fletcher, of Rollason Road, Radford, weighed 19 stone at the age of 16.

The trainee chef at Henley College in Bell Green, joined Slimming World in March this year and now weighs just under 14 stone.

Ben said: "I am so happy I have lost all this weight and I have promised myself I will never slip back into old habits."

He hopes to reach his target weight of 13 to 14 stone by Christmas this year.

Things were not always so good for the 17-year-old, who has been overweight since childhood.

Ben said: "I got bullied at school, which led me to eat more."

"This is why I think the

new child measurement programme is ridiculous because it will just draw attention to bigger children and won't help.

"I was referred to nutritionists while I was growing up but there wasn't enough contact or advice."

Ben has been working as a chef at the Jardine Crescent Cafe in Tile Hill for three years.

"At work I would have a fry-up including sausages, bacon and fried bread for my lunch," added Ben.

"And on the way home I would grab a takeaway of chips or Chinese food because it was easier than cooking."

"After joining Slimming World I changed my eating habits by cooking at home and increasing my physical activity."

Ben walks to work, walks his dog and regularly goes swimming.

His mother, Sue Grant,

who is extremely proud of his achievement, realises it is a family problem.

She said: "He's done it for himself and I can't praise him enough."

"I was big myself when I was younger and I know what it's like being bullied because of it."

"But when he was growing up I did give in to his demands for crisps and chocolates."

The 36-year-old domestic assistant at University Hospital in Clifford Bridge Road also disagrees with The National Child Measurement Programme.

She said: "I just think it will be humiliating for the child. More needs to be done to advise children and parents about healthy eating."



KIM PEARSON has worked in the weight-loss industry for the past four years and qualified as a nutritionist last summer. Kim, who is based in Warwickshire, gives her opinion on the programme and some expert advice for parents to help kids cut back the calories.

"Childhood obesity is on the rise and fast – measures must be taken to reverse this worrying trend."

The parent-notification system may highlight the need to take action to improve their child's diet and lifestyle, but this is only part of a much bigger picture. Many parents are confused about what to feed their children, so more practical strategies and guidelines, along with healthier school meals, are needed to help improve weight and long-term health. Here are some top tips:

■ **Reduce sugar** – the fastest way for children to put on weight is foods high in sugar and refined 'white' carbohydrates.

■ **Whole foods** – foods that are slow to break down give sustained release of energy and prevent weight gain and hyperactivity.

■ **Quality protein** – fish, organic meat, free range eggs and beans provide protein which is essential for growth and provide slow releasing energy.

■ **Essential fats** – Omega 3s in foods like oily fish are important for managing weight and brain development.

■ **Get active** – Less time in front of a computer or TV and more time playing active games will help children burn fat faster."

For advice visit www.kim-pearson.com.

