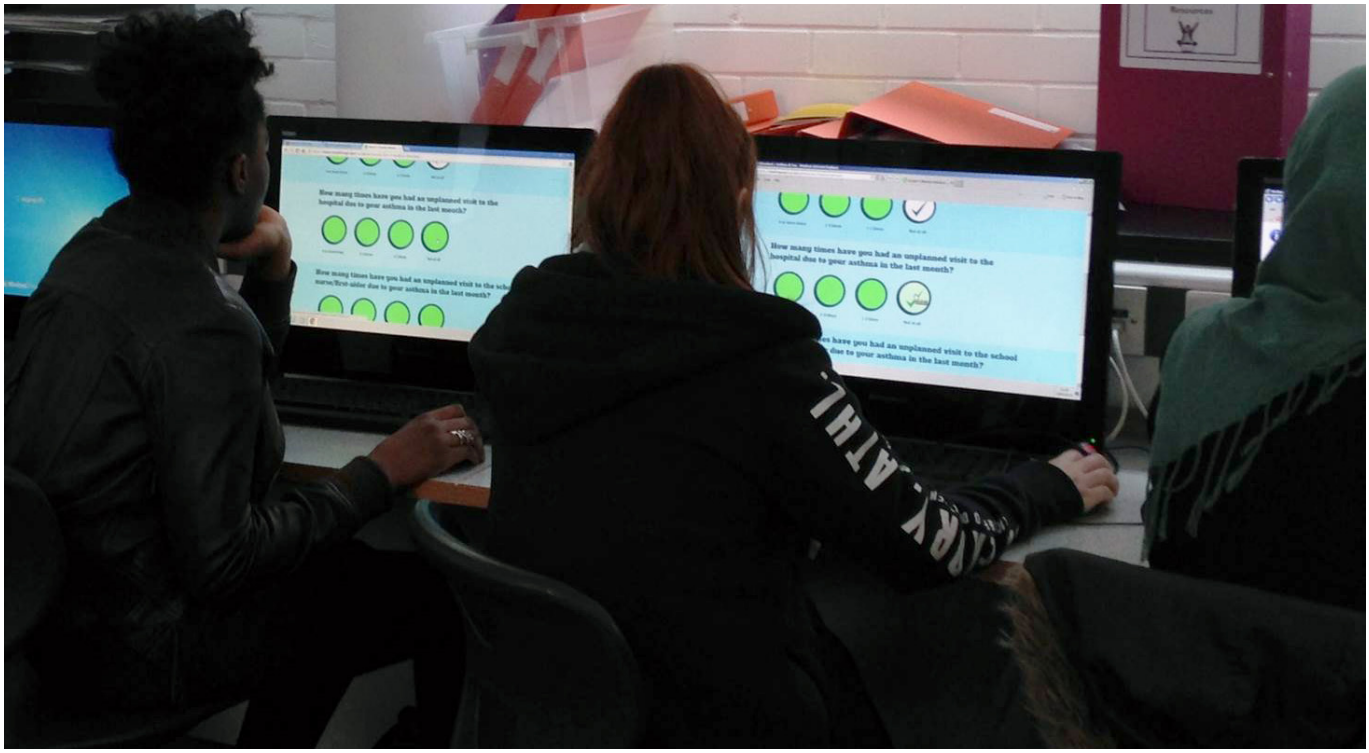
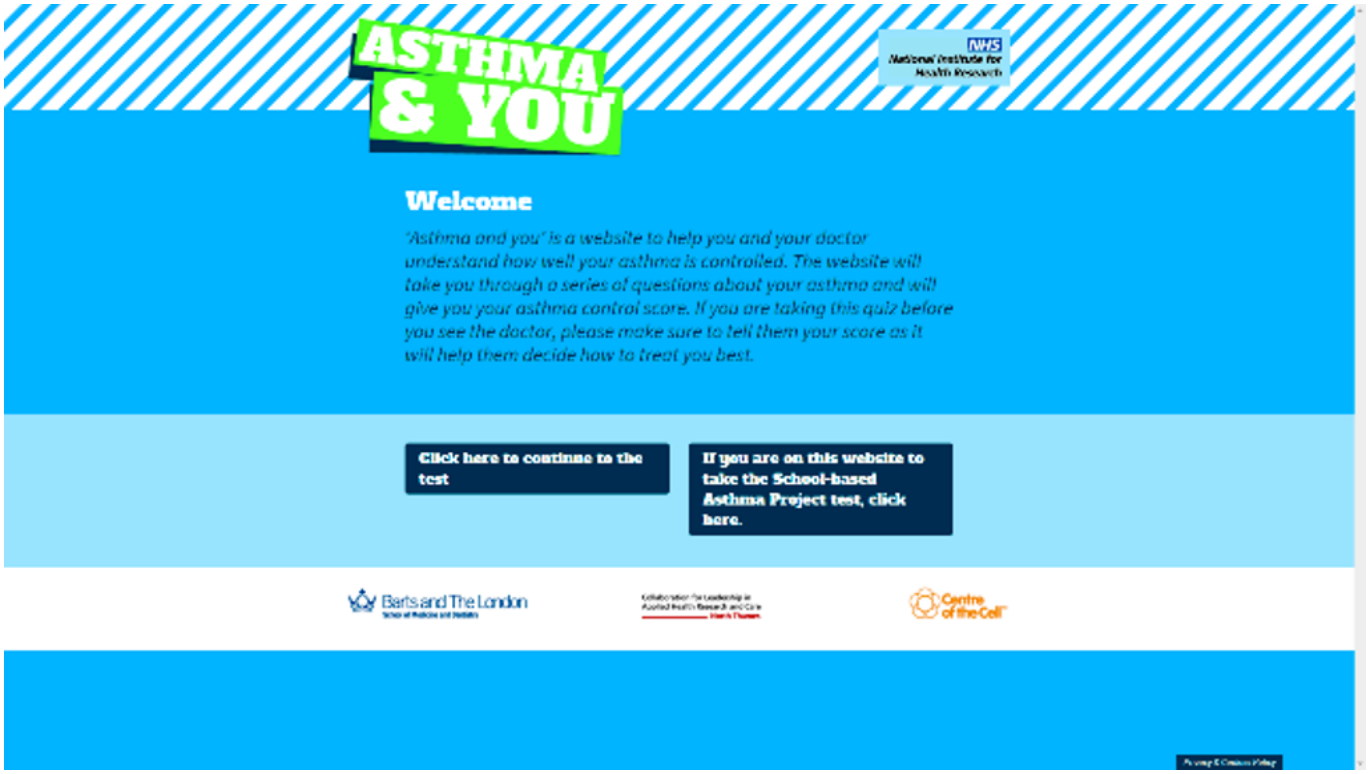
Newly published CLAHRC research has revealed that nearly half of secondary school pupils living with asthma have sub-optimal control of their condition and gaps in knowledge around symptoms, triggers and treatments.

The findings, published in the Journal of Asthma,  emerged from the results of nearly 800 pupils from across London schools completing questionnaires incorporating the asthma control test (ACT) – a validated tool for assessing control in asthmatic children aged 12 years and older. Using the ACT, we sought to assess asthma control and knowledge in London secondary school children.




Pupils completing the ACT




Results showed a high prevalence of poor asthma control, poor asthma knowledge, and a high morbidity in London children with asthma.

799 children with doctor-diagnosed asthma completed the questionnaire;

- suboptimal asthma control was reported by 49.6% of students
- over a third (42.4%) prescribed a short-acting β2-agonist inhaler felt uncomfortable using it at school, and 29.2% reported not using this inhaler when wheezy
- 56.4% of those with regular inhaled corticosteroids did not take them as prescribed, and 41.7% did not know what this inhaler was for.
- suboptimal control was associated with a greater proportion of students reporting that they were “somewhat”, “hardly” or “not at all” comfortable using inhalers at school (52.7% vs 29.1 %) and outside school (22.8% vs. 14.8%)

Since suboptimal control by ACT is a risk factor for future severe exacerbations, and should prompt more intense clinical monitoring, our results suggest a need for interventions aimed

at addressing poor asthma control in UK schoolchildren.

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Original Articles

# Asthma control in London secondary school children

Katherine Harris , MSc, Gioia Mosler , PhD, Samson A. Williams , BSc, Abigail Whitehouse , MBChB, Rosalind Raine , MBBS, PhD & Jonathan Grigg , MD

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## Abstract

*Objective*: The asthma control test (ACT) is a validated tool for assessing control in asthmatic children aged 12 years and older. Using the ACT, we sought to assess asthma control and knowledge in London secondary school children. *Methods*: Secondary schools in London, UK, participated in this study. Children with doctor-diagnosed asthma were invited to complete an online questionnaire that included the ACT and questions about asthma. Suboptimal asthma control was defined as an ACT score of ≤ 19 out of a maximum score of 25. Data are summarised as median and interquartile range (IQR), and were analysed by either Mann-Whitney test, or chi-square test. A $p$ value of $< 0.05$ was considered significant. *Results*: A total of 799 children completed the questionnaire; 689 (86.2%) were included for analysis. Suboptimal asthma control was reported by 49.6% of students. Over a third (42.4%) of students prescribed a short-acting β2-agonist inhaler felt uncomfortable using it at school, and 29.2% ($n$ = 173) reported not using this inhaler when wheezy. 56.4% ($n$ = 220) of those with regular inhaled corticosteroids did not take them as prescribed, and 41.7% did not know what this inhaler was for. Suboptimal control was associated with a greater proportion of students reporting that they were 'somewhat', 'hardly' or 'not at all' comfortable using inhalers at school (52.7% vs 29.1%, $p < 0.01$) and outside school (22.8% vs. 14.8%, $p < 0.01$). *Conclusions*: Suboptimal asthma control and poor asthma knowledge are common in London schoolchildren.

### *Asthma control in London secondary school children*

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