Reviewer's report

Title: Differences in school environment, school policy and actions regarding overweight prevention between Dutch schools. A nationwide survey.

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Reviewer: Norman J Temple

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This study provides an interesting picture of factors associated with the prevalence of obesity in Dutch schools. However the paper would be much improved by having it edited by someone more skilled than the authors at writing good English and also by deleting the excessive amounts of data. In particular, Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5 have much too much data. The authors should bear in mind that “less is more”. It would be better to highlight the key points in a few sentences in the text.

Here are specific comments:

P 4, line 5, the word “monitor” does not seem correct. At the top of the next page it says: “This study was performed within the scope of a national survey on the prevention of Overweight.” While “national survey” is appropriate, the next 5 words are not (a survey aims only to gather information, not to achieve a change).

P 6, line 5, this should be “lunch breaks” (cars have brakes)

P8, line 6, there is no such word as “missingness”

P8, last line, the correct term is “basketball field”

The following sentence is on both pages 7 and 9: “All associations were adjusted for school size”. It can be deleted from p 9.

The next sentence on p 9 is not clear. A better wording is: “Most associations were attenuated after adjustment for school size.”

Further down on p 9 the following sentence is confusing: “The vocational education schools indicated significantly less often than higher education schools that they thought that the students at their schools were less often overweight than the 12 to 18 year old children in the general population.”

Bottom of p 9 this sentence needs revising: “Adjustment for school size did not change the crude association to a large extent.” The word “association” should be plural. “to a large extent” is vague. This problem occurs again on p 11, line 3.

P 10, line 6, The following sentence is not clear: “No differences between school levels were observed.” What stats does this refer to?
P 13, half way down. The following sentence is unclear as regards meaning: “The majority of the schools have taken some actions to stimulate healthy eating behaviour and to increase levels of physical activity, but only a couple of schools indicated that they had taken actions to prevent overweight.” Surely, healthy eating and physical activity are actions to prevent overweight.

P 15, 8 lines from bottom “dense” is spelled wrongly.

Final sentence on p 16 is poorly written.

Table 1 states that the questionnaire included question on nutrition education, but no findings on this are given.

In Table 2 give the data on questions only for total of all schools (but keep 4 sets of numbers on school size).

Table 3 can be much simplified. At a minimum the 2 columns on the right should be deleted. I would prefer to have only the first column (all schools). Key findings can then be stated in the text.

Table 4 has less of a problem of data overload than Table 3. However the final 2 columns can still be deleted.

Table 5 would also be much improved by deleting much of the data.