



# Estyn

*Rhagoriaeth i bawb - Excellence for all*

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg  
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales

## Physical education in secondary schools

February 2012



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- ▲ teacher education and training;
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## Summary

In 'Creating an Active Wales' (Welsh Government 2009) the Welsh Government identified well-delivered and appropriately designed physical education programmes, complemented by a range of school-based activities, as critical factors in helping children and young people to live active lives and become active adults.

Since 2001, the percentage of key stage 3 pupils attaining the expected level (level 5) or above in National Curriculum teacher assessments has increased steadily in physical education. In 2011, the percentage of pupils in Wales entering GCSE physical education gaining grades A\*-C was 73%, two percentage points above the figure for the UK, and an improvement from 70% in 2010.

In many of the lessons observed for this survey, pupils make good progress in understanding key concepts, and developing their subject-specific and wider skills, particularly their communication and thinking skills.

Teaching is good or better in about three-quarters of lessons observed. Where teaching is excellent, teachers have high expectations and plan learning activities that challenge and engage pupils and provide extensive opportunities for pupils to reflect on, evaluate and improve their work. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not plan well enough to make sure that pupils of all abilities make progress.

Generally, schools are increasing the emphasis on creative and adventurous activities and health, fitness and wellbeing activities at key stage 3 and this has helped to engage girls more successfully. Most schools promote healthy lifestyles well. The 5x60 initiative has been successful in complementing the more traditional, largely team-based extra-curricular programmes most schools offered previously.

## Main findings

- 1 Since 2001, the percentage of key stage 3 pupils attaining the expected level (level 5) or above in National Curriculum teacher assessments has increased steadily in physical education. In 2011, the percentage of pupils attaining the expected level was broadly in line with other subjects. However, the percentage of pupils who attain the higher levels (level 6 or above) is smaller than for most other non-core subjects.
- 2 In 2011, the percentage of pupils in Wales entering GCSE physical education gaining grades A\*-C was 73%, two percentage points above the figure for the UK, and an improvement from 70% in 2010. Around a quarter of pupils entered gained the higher grades A\*/A.
- 3 In 2011, about two-thirds of pupils entering physical education at GCSE were boys. This is a higher proportion than for almost any other subject. The difference between the performance of girls and boys is smaller than for most other subjects.
- 4 Standards were good or better in around two-thirds of lessons observed for this survey and broadly similar at key stage 3 and key stage 4. In many lessons, pupils recall previous learning well and understand key concepts. They make good progress in developing and refining their subject-specific skills and in acquiring wider skills.
- 5 At key stage 3, pupils make the best progress in creative and competitive activities. In these areas, the most common outstanding features are in pupils' ability to:
  - create original and high-quality sequences with particularly good flow and accurate technical execution; and
  - perform specific skills with a high degree of accuracy, technical efficiency and control.
- 6 Pupils also make good progress in health, fitness and wellbeing activities, but their progress in athletic and adventurous activities is less secure.
- 7 At key stage 4, mainly in GCSE classes, there are outstanding features in pupils' ability to plan, perform and evaluate their own work and the work of others.
- 8 In about a third of lessons observed, there are shortcomings in the standards pupils achieve. In particular, more able key stage 3 pupils do not make as much progress as might be expected. In key stages 3 and 4, the most common shortcomings in the standards that pupils attain are their:
  - poorly co-ordinated and controlled movements and actions;
  - difficulties in transferring skills successfully from practice to game situations; and
  - lack of confidence in developing ideas or solutions to problems.
- 9 Physical education can make an effective contribution to the development of pupils' communication and thinking skills. In more than a quarter of schools, pupils make very good progress in developing these skills.

- 10 Teaching is good or better in about three-quarters of lessons observed. In many cases, teachers plan learning activities that:
  - keep pupils physically active and enable them to compete at an appropriate level;
  - build on previous learning and help pupils move forward at the right pace; and
  - develop pupils' understanding of key principles, terminology and technique.
- 11 In a few lessons, where teaching is excellent, teachers plan learning activities thoughtfully to challenge and engage pupils. In these lessons, learning activities provide extensive opportunities for pupils to reflect on, evaluate and improve their work and teachers have high expectations of what all pupils, including the more able, can achieve.
- 12 In the majority of lessons, there is a good emphasis on developing pupils' communication and thinking skills. This is most effective when it is embedded naturally into all learning activities and does not detract from the development of pupils' subject-specific skills. Generally there is less emphasis on developing pupils' numeracy or information and communication technology skills.
- 13 In a minority of lessons, teachers do not plan well enough to make sure that pupils of all abilities make progress. In these lessons, learning activities do not keep pupils physically active, and do not give pupils enough opportunities to learn independently and take leadership roles, develop their wider skills or to review and evaluate their work and progress.
- 14 In about half of the schools visited, teachers do not ensure that pupils who cannot participate actively in lessons are engaged, for example by carrying out roles as officials or by coaching their peers.
- 15 In about half of the schools visited, assessment, target-setting and tracking arrangements are not systematic or robust enough at key stage 3. Many teachers are not confident about the accuracy and consistency of levelling at key stage 3, especially when awarding higher levels to more able pupils. Arrangements for assessing and monitoring the progress of key stage 4 pupils following non-examination programmes are also weak. In most schools, assessment, target-setting and tracking arrangements for key stage 4 pupils following examination courses are appropriate.
- 16 The Physical Education and School Sport (PESS) initiative has had a significant impact on improving the quality of teaching and raising standards, particularly in stimulating creative and adventurous activities in many primary schools. However, the initiative has had less impact on standards in key stage 3. Few secondary schools receive detailed information on pupils' physical education abilities from partner primary schools.
- 17 Generally, schools allocate a larger proportion of time at key stage 3 to competitive activities than to other areas of activity. This is particularly true for boys. However, schools are increasing the emphasis on creative and adventurous activities and health, fitness and wellbeing activities and this has helped to engage girls more

successfully. Most schools promote healthy lifestyles well. A few schools have well-designed cross-curricular arrangements to develop pupils' awareness of healthy lifestyles. However, few schools co-ordinate this work systematically enough across subject areas.

- 18 The majority of schools are developing their adventurous activities courses in key stage 3 well, but a minority have not developed sufficiently engaging or challenging programmes.
- 19 Most schools offer pupils a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. The 5x60 initiative has been successful in complementing the more traditional, largely team-based programmes most schools offered previously. New activities such as aerobics, street dance, pilates, zumba and boxercise have had a positive impact on the participation levels of girls. However, too often there has not been a close enough link with local clubs and organisations, which could offer enthusiastic pupils a chance to develop their interests after and beyond school.
- 20 In the majority of schools visited, there are systematic arrangements to monitor the work of the physical education department. However, in a significant minority of schools, self-evaluation reviews lack detail and do not provide a good basis for improvement, mainly because leaders and managers do not analyse standards or monitor teaching in a robust enough manner.
- 21 In the majority of schools visited, professional development arrangements reflect school and departmental priorities. Only a minority of local authorities provide good advisory support for physical education departments. In a significant minority of schools, the lack of strong advisory support narrows the context of professional dialogue and this can also prevent schools from observing good practice elsewhere.
- 22 In the majority of schools, accommodation, including playing fields and indoor facilities, is good and provides a suitable setting for effective teaching and learning. However, there are important shortcomings in the quality of accommodation in a significant minority of schools that impede pupils' progress in physical education. These include limited indoor space, poorly-equipped gymasia, unsuitable changing facilities, and badly-drained or poorly-maintained playing fields.

## Recommendations

23 To improve standards of physical education at key stage 3 and key stage 4:

### **Physical education departments should:**

- R1 make sure that lessons provide suitable opportunities for pupils to keep physically active and engage in sustained physical activity;
- R2 develop pupils' wider skills, including communication, numeracy, thinking, leadership and evaluative skills, without detracting from subject-specific skill development;
- R3 offer learning activities that will enable pupils of all abilities to make progress and, in particular, provide suitable challenge for more able key stage 3 pupils;
- R4 develop engaging, and appropriately challenging, adventurous activities programmes at key stage 3;
- R5 develop systematic assessment, target-setting and tracking arrangements for key stage 3 and for key stage 4 non-examination programmes; and
- R6 strengthen self-evaluation and improvement planning arrangements.

### **Local authorities should:**

- R7 improve support and advice for physical education practitioners and promote best practice;
- R8 use the 5x60 initiative to promote more effective links with local clubs and organisations to promote healthy lifestyles and lifelong participation in sport and physical recreation; and
- R9 secure greater accuracy and consistency in judging National Curriculum levels at key stage 3.

### **The Welsh Government should:**

- R10 consider how best to sustain the good practice and impact of the PESS and 5x60 initiatives.



## Context

### Strategic context

- 24 This report has been produced in response to a request for advice from the Welsh Government in the Minister's annual remit to Estyn for 2010-2011.
- 25 'Creating an Active Wales' (Welsh Government 2009) emphasises the provision of high-quality physical education and the effective delivery of physical literacy as essential for young people to develop the skills and confidence for lifelong participation in sport and physical recreation. It identifies well-delivered and appropriately designed physical education programmes, complemented by a range of school-based activities, as critical factors in helping children and young people to live active lives and become active adults. This aim is reinforced in the Welsh Government's 'Programme for Government 2011-2016' (Welsh Government 2011), which sets out its commitment to promote physical activity for people of all ages.
- 26 A number of other Welsh Government plans contribute to this agenda. These include:
- 'Food and Fitness - Promoting Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Children and Young People in Wales Five Year Implementation Plan' (2006);
  - 'Play Policy Implementation Plan' (2002); and
  - 'A Walking and Cycling Action Plan for Wales' (2008).

### Background

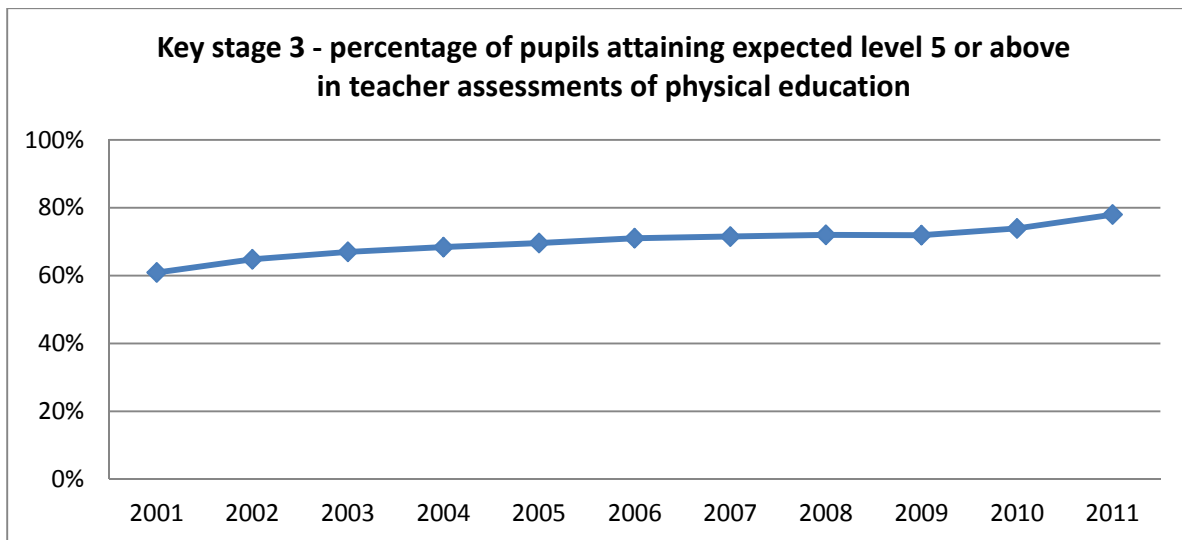
- 27 The Physical Education and School Sport (PESS) initiative began in 2001. It has a number of strands:
- raising standards in physical education in the curriculum;
  - making sure that initial teacher education and training gives trainees the necessary confidence, knowledge, skills and understanding to teach physical education;
  - establishing accredited continuing professional development (CPD) programmes in physical education for all teachers; and
  - establishing curriculum development centres and making sure they work together for the identification and development of good practice in physical education and school sport.
- 28 Estyn has produced four reports on the progress made in implementing the PESS Action Plan. These are:
- 'PE and School Sport Initiative - Progress in the implementation in Development Centre schools in Wales 2004-2005' (2005);
  - 'An in-depth look at the progress made in the implementation of the PESS Action Plan' (2006);
  - 'Progress made in the implementation of the PE and School Sport Action Plan in

- schools' (2007); and
  - 'Progress in implementing the Physical Education and School Sport Action Plan' (2008).
- 29 The 2008 report stated that standards in physical education have improved in almost all primary schools that have been involved with the initiative for some time. It pointed out that standards were improving very quickly in the primary schools in the newer development centres.
- 30 An Estyn report entitled 'Girls' participation in physical activity in schools' (2007) described how secondary schools have used different programmes and initiatives to help to increase girls' participation in physical activity. The report identified many factors that influence the take-up of physical activities by girls in school. While the National Curriculum for physical education offers considerable flexibility to provide a variety of activities for girls, at the time of the report many physical education teachers offered a programme predominantly comprising traditional team games. Many girls prefer greater variety including more creative and fitness activities.
- 31 In February 2009, Estyn published 'Physical Education for pupils with learning difficulties – a good practice guide', which evaluated standards and quality of provision and identified good practice. This report stated that in many of the schools visited, most pupils with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress in physical education. It indicated that in the best practice, which was evident in about 40% of all schools visited, teachers have the experience and confidence to make good provision for pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs. However, the report stated that, in a few schools, teachers clearly lack sufficient subject knowledge to plan progressive tasks to challenge pupils effectively.

## Standards in physical education at key stage 3 and key stage 4

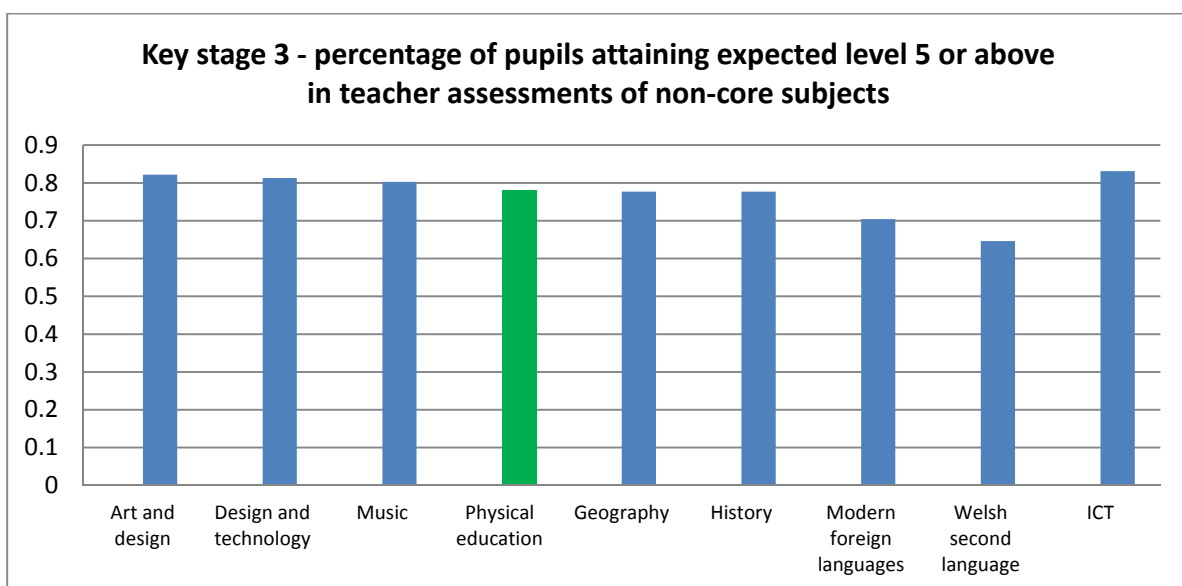
### Teacher assessments at key stage 3

- 32 Since 2001, there has been an increase of about 17 percentage points in the percentage of pupils attaining the expected level (level 5) or above in National Curriculum teacher assessments in physical education. This improvement is in line with that for other non-core subjects. However, since 2006, the improvement in physical education (seven percentage points) has been less than in the other non-core subjects except art and design, and geography.



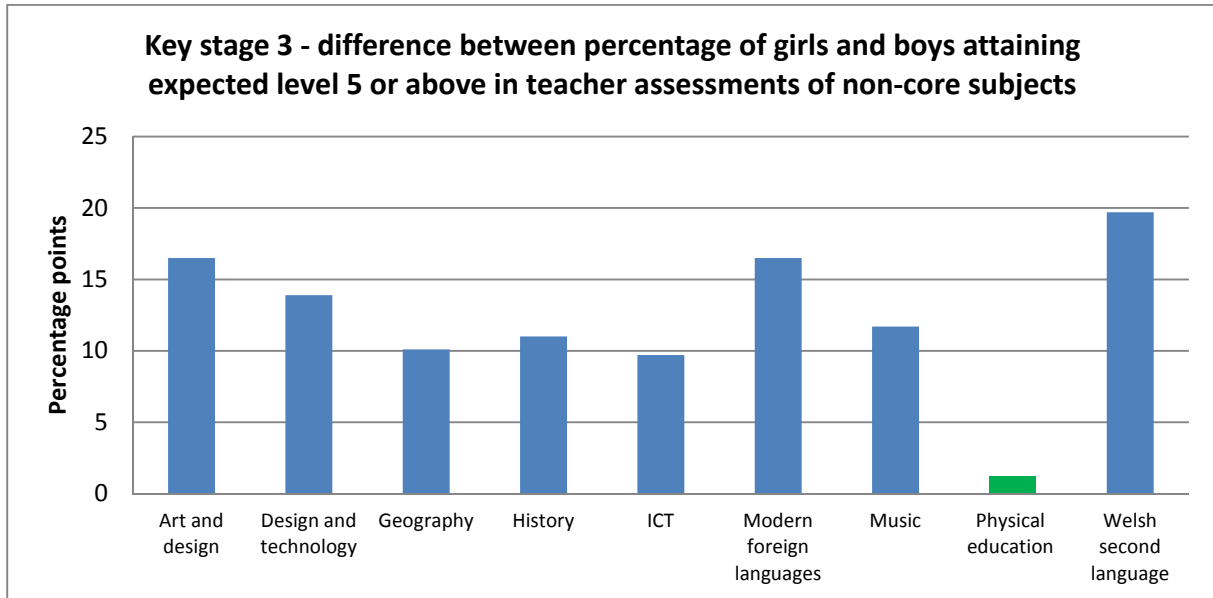
Source: School Statistics, Welsh Government

- 33 In 2011, the percentage of key stage 3 pupils attaining the expected level in teacher assessments in physical education was 78%. This was broadly in line with the percentage gaining the expected level in history and geography and an improvement of about four percentage points from 2010.



Source: School Statistics, Welsh Government

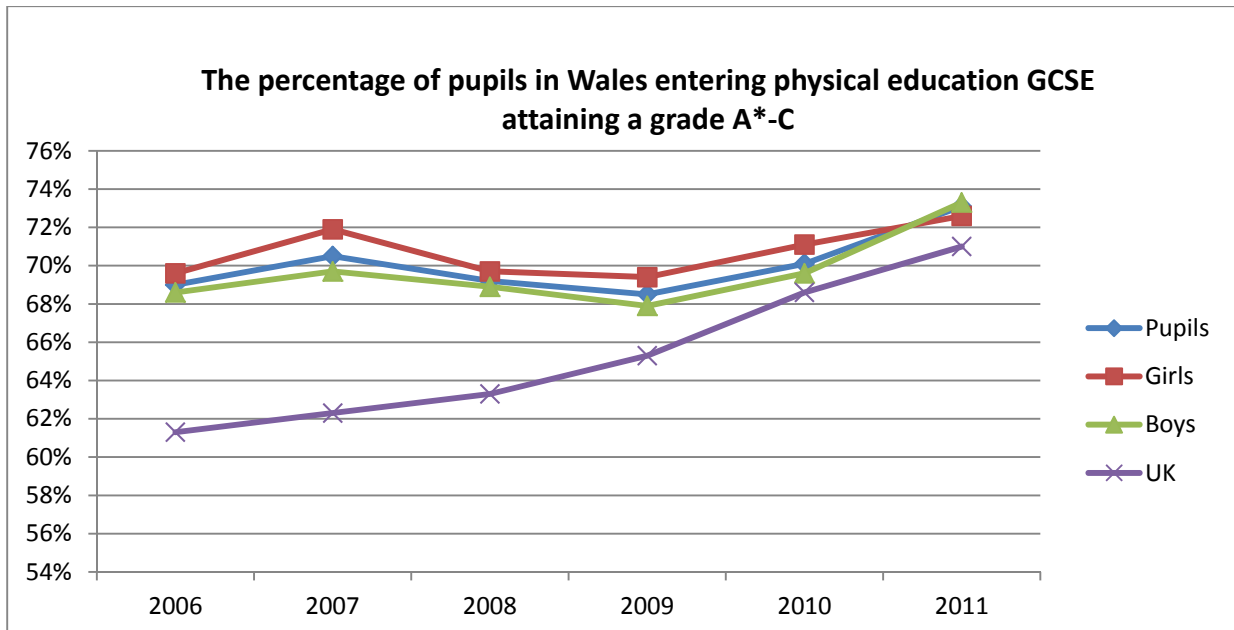
- 34 About 27% of pupils attain the higher (level 6 or above) levels, which is fewer than in all other non-core subjects except music and Welsh second language.
- 35 Over the last five years, the gap between the performance of boys and girls has been much smaller than in other subjects. In 2011, a slightly greater proportion of girls attained the expected level 5 or above.



Source: School Statistics, Welsh Government

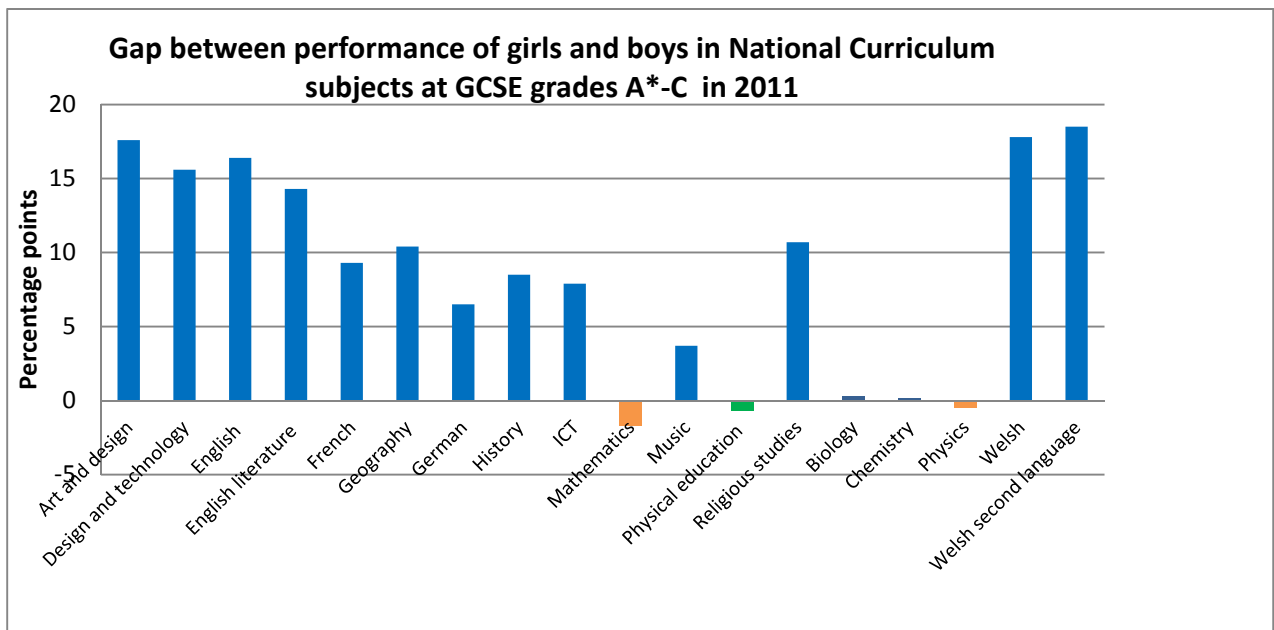
#### GCSE results at key stage 4

- 36 In 2011, the percentage of pupils in Wales entered for examination in GCSE physical education who attained grades A\*-C was 73.1%. This figure was two percentage points above the figure for the UK as a whole and an improvement from 70.1% in 2010. Around a quarter of entries attained the higher grades A\*/A. The percentage of pupils in Wales entering GCSE physical education attaining grades A\*-C has been higher than for the UK as a whole for the last six years although the gap in performance is narrowing.



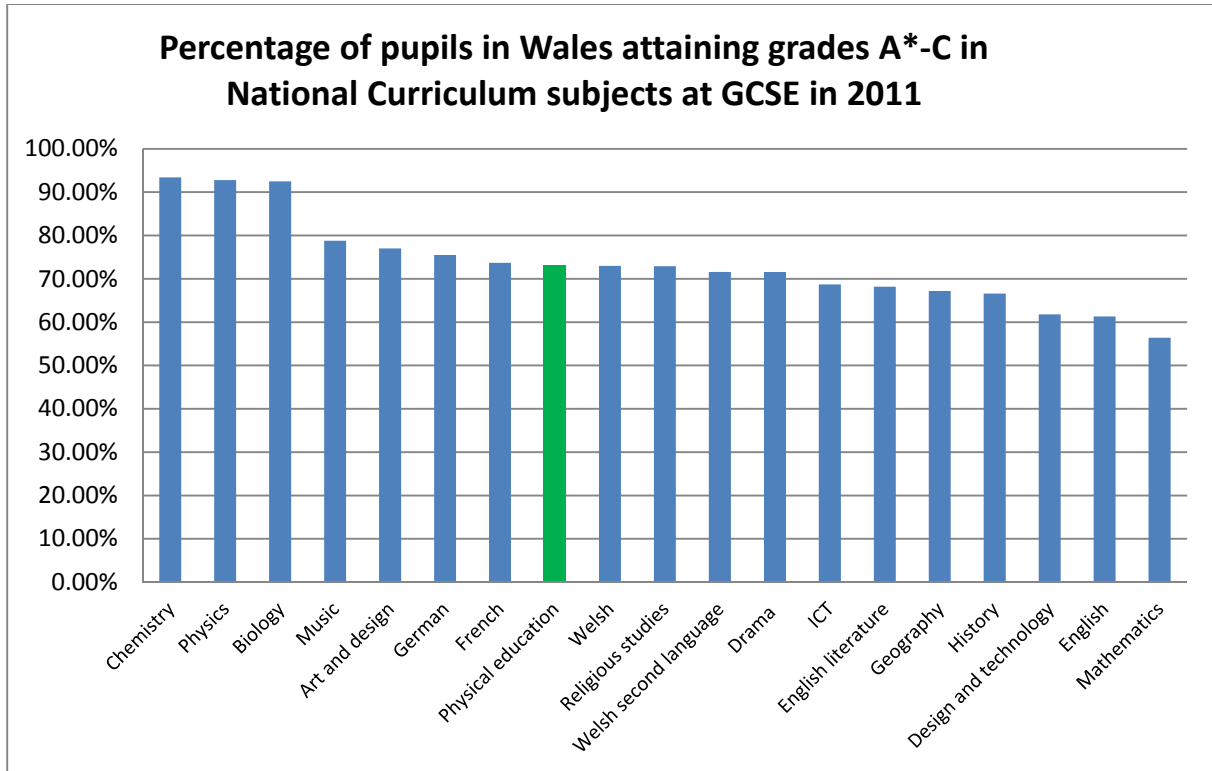
Source: Joint Council for Qualifications – GCSE results 2006-2011

- 37 The number of pupils in Wales entered for GCSE in physical education has fallen from more than 9,000 in 2007 to about 7,400 in 2011. Typically about one-in-five pupils choose to study physical education at GCSE level. In 2011, 63.6% of pupils in Wales entering physical education at GCSE were boys. This is a higher proportion than for almost all other subjects.
- 38 In 2011, a slightly higher percentage of boys who were entered for GCSE in physical education attained grades A\*-C than girls. In the previous five years, girls performed slightly better than boys although the difference between the performance of girls and boys is much smaller than for most other subjects. However, a higher percentage of girls attained grades A\*/A with the gap being around six percentage points in each of the last two years.



Source: Joint Council for Qualifications – GCSE Results 2011

- 39 The percentage of entries attaining grades A\*-C in physical education across in Wales is similar to those for Welsh and religious studies and slightly higher than those for English literature, geography, history, English and mathematics. It is below those for the separate sciences, modern foreign languages, music and art and design.



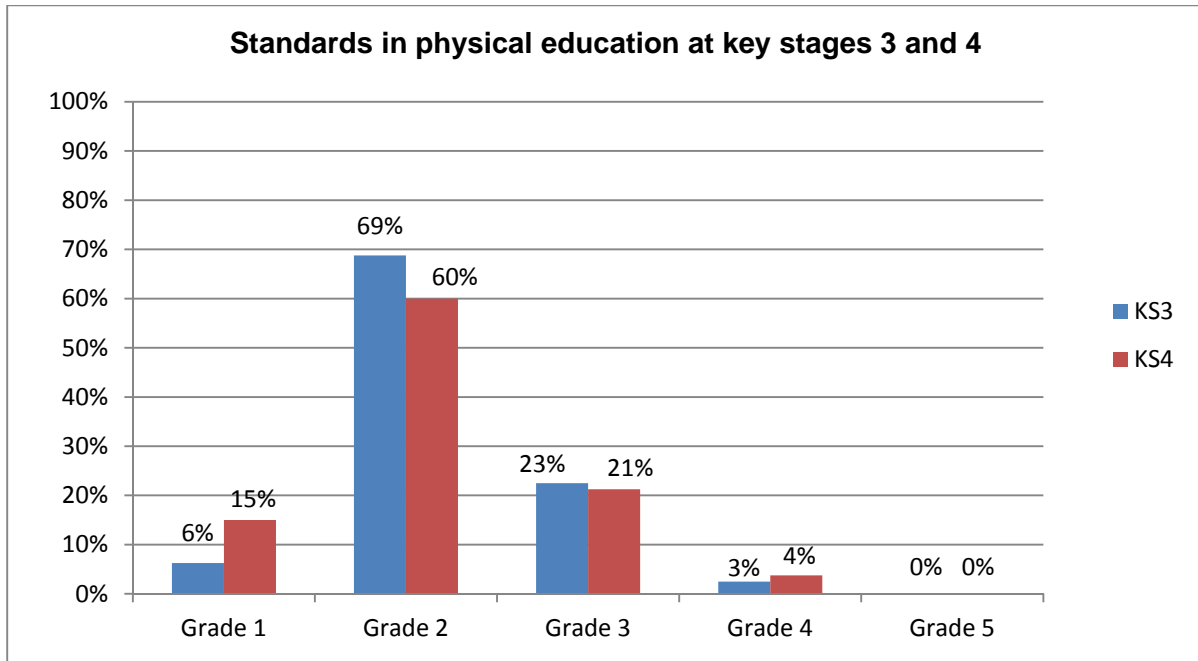
Source: Joint Council for Qualifications – GCSE Results 2011

### Standards of achievement

- 40 Standards were good or better in around two-thirds of lessons observed for this survey and broadly similar across both key stages 3 and 4. In about one-in-three lessons, inspectors identified shortcomings in the standards pupils achieve. In particular, more able key stage 3 pupils do not make as much progress as they could.
- 41 In about two-thirds of schools visited as part of this survey, there was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. In a few schools where boys do not achieve as well as girls, this is partly because they do not develop their evaluative skills as well in the activities they pursue. In GCSE classes, the difference in performance is often because boys' written work is not as good as that of girls.
- 42 During the last inspection cycle from 2004 to 2010, Estyn inspected standards in physical education in 80 secondary schools, representing almost a third of secondary schools in Wales. In these inspections, standards overall were judged to be good or better in 78% of schools.

- 43 The percentage of schools where standards in physical education at key stage 3 were good or better was higher than for most other subjects. However, the percentage of schools with outstanding features at key stage 3 was lower than for most other subjects. At key stage 4, the percentage of schools where standards overall, in both examination and non-examination classes, were judged to be good or better was higher in the majority of other subjects.

### Standards in physical education at key stage 3 (KS3) and key stage 4 (KS4) in secondary inspections 2004-2010



- 44 There was little difference between key stage 3 and key stage 4 in the proportion of standards that were good or better. However, the percentage of schools where there were outstanding features was much higher at key stage 4 than at key stage 3.

### Common strengths

- 45 The aspects of good standards identified in those schools visited for this survey are common to those from the schools inspected between 2004 and 2010.
- 46 In many lessons, pupils have an accurate recall of previous learning and understand key concepts. They make good progress in developing and refining their subject-specific skills and in acquiring greater knowledge and understanding. In about one-in-ten lessons, where standards and progress are particularly good, this is because pupils:
- use previous learning successfully and communicate extremely well with others to tackle challenges and solve problems;
  - improve or refine their performance significantly due to a firm appreciation of key principles; and
  - apply new techniques and strategies very effectively in modified or full-game situations.

### Key stage 3

- 47 At key stage 3, the most common outstanding features are in creative and competitive activities. In creative activities, the most common outstanding features are pupils' ability to:
- execute recognised movements with technical efficiency, excellent control, body tension and precision; and
  - interpret a range of stimuli to create original and refined sequences that are of high quality with particularly good flow and accurate technical execution.

#### **Radyr Comprehensive School, Cardiff – Year 7 Dance**

In a Year 7 dance lesson, pupils worked well in small groups to create and refine a sequence interpreting and exploring the theme of 'laces'. They did this using a wide range of controlled movements, expressions and moods. These pupils showed very good attitudes to learning with more able pupils using sophisticated terminology to describe their work.

- 48 In competitive activities, the outstanding features include pupils' ability to:
- perform specific skills such as passing and receiving a ball with a high degree of accuracy, control and technical efficiency, and to perform complex skills confidently; and
  - apply attacking and defensive principles in invasion games, such as football, rugby and netball particularly successfully, for example using space well to retain possession and build effective attacking situations.
- 49 Pupils also make good progress in health, fitness and wellbeing activities. Many pupils have a sound appreciation of the short-term and long-term effects of exercise on the body. In a few cases, pupils display a well-developed understanding of the key principles that underpin health and fitness.
- 50 Standards and progress are more variable in athletics activities. In a very few lessons, pupils make excellent progress but in about a quarter of lessons, pupils did not improve their performance or extend their knowledge and understanding enough.
- 51 Too often in adventurous activities, pupils make limited progress. This is usually because the nature of the tasks is not demanding or challenging enough, often merely replicating pupils' previous learning experiences.

### Key stage 4

- 52 At key stage 4, the most common outstanding features, mainly seen in GCSE classes, are in pupils' ability to:
- plan, perform and evaluate their own work and the work of others; and
  - apply their knowledge of theoretical principles successfully in practical situations.



- 53 In GCSE classes, where standards are particularly high, pupils use their sound understanding of how specific components of physical fitness are developed to plan well-designed exercise circuits. They analyse critically and perceptively the physical and psychological responses to various activities and provide a variety of appropriate suggestions to improve technique.

**Darland High School, Wrexham – Year 11 GCSE, Skill-related fitness**

As part of their preparation for the GCSE examination, Year 11 pupils applied the key principles and concepts they had acquired during the course to plan well-designed and effective skill-related fitness sessions. These pupils worked very productively in small groups to identify and adapt appropriate activities to reinforce specific skills. Many pupils offered thoughtful and helpful suggestions to identify suitable activities to develop specific components as well as to refine particular aspects of the learning activities. In carrying out this work, most pupils consolidated and extended their understanding well during the lesson.

**Common shortcomings**

- 54 The shortcomings in the standards pupils achieve in about a third of lessons visited for this survey and for schools inspected between 2004 and 2010 are:
- weaknesses in pupils' knowledge and understanding and use of appropriate terminology;
  - pupils' poorly co-ordinated and controlled movements and actions, particularly in activities such as gymnastics where sequence work lacks control, fluency and quality;
  - pupils not establishing new techniques sufficiently well and having difficulty in transferring their skills successfully from practice to game situations;
  - pupils' underdeveloped tactical awareness in competitive games, for example in using space effectively;
  - pupils' lack of confidence in making decisions and developing their own ideas or solutions to problems; and
  - weaknesses in pupils' ability to evaluate their own performance and that of others, and know what they need to do to improve the quality of their work.

**Participation and enjoyment in learning, social and life skills**

- 55 Pupils develop their personal, social and learning skills particularly well in physical education. In about a third of schools visited for this survey and as part of the previous cycle of inspections, inspectors identified outstanding features in pupils' attitudes to learning. In many lessons, pupils are well motivated, participate enthusiastically and apply themselves diligently to learning activities.
- 56 In many lessons, pupils are physically active although the degree of intensity varies according to the nature of the activity. However, in a few lessons, pupils are not active enough and there is a lack of intensity in their work, which leads to a loss of interest.

## Communication and thinking skills

- 57 Physical education can make an effective contribution to the development of pupils' communication and thinking skills. In more than a quarter of schools, pupils make very good progress in developing these skills. This is mainly because pupils work well together in small groups to:
- plan, perform and evaluate outcomes, particularly in creative activities such as dance and gymnastics;
  - devise strategies to counter defensive formations in modified small-sided invasion games; and
  - organise and manage learning activities, such as devising their own scoring systems or developing a fitness circuit.
- 58 In the majority of schools, pupils demonstrate good evaluative skills, particularly in GCSE classes at key stage 4. In these schools, many pupils coach their peers effectively, make thoughtful and reasoned judgements about quality of performance and suggest appropriate ways to improve. Pupils do this most effectively when they have a good model and clear criteria to which to refer.

### **Cwmcarn High School, Caerphilly – Year 8 Athletics**

In a Year 8 athletics lesson on javelin-throwing technique, many pupils achieved good standards and made excellent progress in acquiring a secure appreciation of the key technical aspects.

Pupils worked effectively in small groups of three, with all members of the group active at all times either as a performer, coach or with responsibility as an official to ensure compliance with the basic rules. Teachers ensured that pupils were provided with clear guidance and an effective technical model, which the pupil coach transmitted to other members of the group. In this way, pupils developed a much clearer understanding of the key principles since they were required to explain these to other members of the group. Through progressive, suitably-paced practice drills, helpful peer feedback and a controlled competitive activity, most pupils produced improved throws that showed secure basic technique.

- 59 In a few schools, pupils develop their ability to learn independently and their leadership skills very well, for example in leading warm-up or organising and managing group activities.
- 60 However, in a minority of schools, particularly at key stage 3, pupils do not develop their communication and thinking and skills well enough. They do not lead class or group warm-up sessions or work enough in small groups to solve problems, organise and manage learning activities or analyse their own and others' work.

## Factors affecting achievement

- 61 There are many aspects of a school's work that influence the standards pupils achieve, most importantly the quality of teaching. This section evaluates the impact of teaching, assessment, curriculum arrangements, resources and aspects of leadership on pupils' standards in physical education.

## Teaching

- 62 Teaching was good or better in about three-quarters of the lessons observed for this survey and also in the schools inspected between 2004 and 2010. The quality of teaching was slightly better at key stage 4 than at key stage 3. However, in about a quarter of lessons, teaching was judged to have important areas for improvement. The percentage of lessons (13%) observed for this survey where teaching was judged to be excellent was smaller than that judged to have outstanding features in the previous cycle of inspections (19%).
- 63 In the schools visited, teachers generally display secure subject knowledge and have appropriate expertise. In most lessons, teachers set out clear learning objectives and conduct useful end-of-lesson reviews that test pupils' knowledge and understanding, and reinforce the key concepts and principles introduced during the lesson. However, in a few lessons, these focus too much on simply summarising what has happened rather than evaluating the quality of learning.
- 64 In many lessons, teachers plan learning activities well. These learning activities:
- ensure that pupils are physically active and have opportunities to compete at an appropriate level;
  - build well on previous learning and help pupils to move forward at an appropriate pace;
  - develop pupils' understanding of key principles, terminology and technique;
  - successfully engage more challenging or less enthusiastic pupils; and
  - make good use of resources and stimulus materials to support learning.
- 65 Many lessons provide pupils with good opportunities to make progress in line with their ability. This is particularly true, for example in activities that require a creative input from pupils or help them to develop their ability to learn independently.
- 66 In a few lessons, where teaching is excellent, learning activities:
- have high expectations of what pupils can achieve;
  - provide extensive opportunities for pupils to reflect, evaluate and improve the quality of their work; and
  - prepare pupils particularly well for the requirements of external examinations at key stage 4, for example by drawing clear links between theoretical principles and practical application.

- 67 In the majority of lessons, there is a good emphasis on developing pupils' communication and thinking skills. In more than a fifth of schools visited, this is a strong feature of teaching. It is at its most effective when embedded naturally into all learning activities without detracting from the development of pupils' subject-specific skills. In a minority of lessons, teachers provide helpful opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy or information and communication technology skills. More generally there is less emphasis on developing these skills.
- 68 In about half of the schools visited, overall there are good opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own work and that of others. In a few schools, these arrangements are excellent. Where this approach is most effective, teachers encourage pupils to review and reflect on their work regularly. They provide pupils with clear demonstrations of good performance and focus on specific aspects to help pupils identify strengths and shortcomings.
- 69 In a minority of lessons, pupils have good opportunities to develop their ability to learn independently and their leadership skills. In these lessons, pupils assume a range of roles, for example as an official, peer coach or in leading warm-up activities.

**Maesteg Comprehensive School, Bridgend – Year 10 Core, Leadership**

As part of a Year 10 core programme, pupils carried out the role of a sports leader very effectively. Working in small groups, they developed suitable warm-up programmes showing a good recall of the basic principles underpinning these activities. Through this work, many pupils made particularly good progress in establishing effective leadership skills. For example, they acquired greater confidence in analysing and evaluating the work of others. The majority of pupils offered thoughtful suggestions as to how their peers might improve their communication and organisational skills and were able to identify ways to improve the specific activities each group planned.

- 70 In a minority of lessons, teachers do not plan well enough to ensure that pupils of all abilities make good progress. In these lessons:
- pupils are not physically active enough;
  - learning activities do not develop subject-specific skills or provide good-quality demonstrations to help pupils develop efficient technique;
  - the pace and degree of progression of learning experiences are not appropriate;
  - activities are too teacher-led and do not develop pupils' wider learning skills as well as subject-specific skills; or
  - teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to review and evaluate their work and progress, and clear criteria that help them focus on a few key principles.
- 71 In about half of the schools visited, teachers do not ensure that pupils who cannot participate actively in lessons are being engaged, for example by carrying out roles as officials or coaching their peers.

- 72 Teachers adapt or modify tasks well to match the range of abilities within the class in only a few lessons. In other lessons, more able pupils are not always supported or challenged well enough to achieve the standards of which they are capable. Occasionally lower ability pupils do not have the basic subject-specific skills to be able to make progress in the planned activity.

### Assessment

- 73 In most schools, there are appropriate assessment, target-setting and tracking arrangements for key stage 4 pupils on GCSE and BTEC courses. More systematic and robust target-setting and tracking arrangements have contributed to improved GCSE outcomes. Generally arrangements for assessing and monitoring the progress of key stage 4 pupils following non-examination programmes are weak.
- 74 There is less consistency in the nature and approach to assessment at key stage 3. In about half of the schools visited, assessment, target-setting and tracking arrangements are not systematic or robust enough. As a result, key stage 3 pupils do not have a clear understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. A few teachers are not specific enough when they comment on performance and often praise what is no more than adequate performance.
- 75 Many teachers are uncertain about applying level descriptions at the end of key stage 3. Local authority and WJEC training, the development of portfolios of work, greater emphasis on internal moderation and the impact of external moderation have helped produce greater accuracy and consistency. However, many teachers are not confident about the accuracy and consistency of levelling at key stage 3, especially when awarding higher levels to more able pupils.
- 76 Few schools receive detailed information on pupils' physical education abilities from partner primary schools. Where this information is available, it helps teachers plan learning experiences to meet pupils' needs more effectively. Secondary teachers, who act as mentors as part of a PESS partnership, often acquire a good knowledge of Year 6 pupils in those schools where they are mentoring.

### The Physical Education and School Sport (PESS) initiative

- 77 The Physical Education and School Sport (PESS) initiative has had a significant impact on improving the quality of teaching and raising standards, particularly in stimulating creative and adventurous activities in many primary schools. However, there has been less impact on standards in key stage 3, other than on improving learning resources in some aspects such as creative, adventurous, and health, fitness and wellbeing activities. In a minority of schools, the PESS initiative has led to clear improvements in pupils' standards in creative activities. Pupils in these schools show well-co-ordinated, controlled and precise movements, use subject vocabulary consistently and have a secure grasp of key terminology. Pupils in these schools are more knowledgeable about body systems and the short-term and long-term effects of exercise on the body.
- 78 A few schools have modified the key stage 3 curriculum, for example by including dance for boys and girls, recognising pupils' positive experiences in their primary

schools and the important contribution dance has to developing pupils' physical skills. However, many Year 7 teachers do not plan well enough to meet the needs of all pupils and especially to challenge more able pupils and those who have benefited from particularly effective key stage 2 programmes.

- 79 PESS has led to improvements in the teaching of a minority of secondary teachers. These teachers have been involved in the project, either as mentors or through the extensive training programme. One of the main improvements has been the increased emphasis on peer assessment and peer coaching, and a greater focus on setting targets for pupils.

### **Curriculum planning and the learning environment**

- 80 Learning experiences were judged to be good or better in more than three-quarters of secondary schools visited as part of this survey. The findings from the schools inspected between 2004 and 2010 confirm these overarching findings.
- 81 In many schools, key stage 3 pupils receive two hours of physical education each week. This is generally the case in each year group although, in a few schools, Year 9 pupils have less than two hours a week.
- 82 Generally, at key stage 3, schools allocate a larger proportion of time to competitive activities than to other areas of activity. This is particularly true for boys. However, most schools are increasing the emphasis on creative and health, fitness and wellbeing activities as well as adventurous activities. In many schools, modifications to the curriculum have helped engage girls more successfully. This has been achieved through greater emphasis on creative aspects and health, fitness and wellbeing activities that include activities such as aerobics, pilates and street dancing.
- 83 At key stage 4, very few schools provide two hours of physical education as part of pupils' core provision and entitlement. In almost all schools visited, key stage 4 pupils have just one hour of core physical education each week. This restricts opportunities for these pupils to become informed and competent participants in physical activity.
- 84 Almost all schools include GCSE physical education as an option at key stage 4. Increasingly, schools are offering vocationally-based BTEC sport courses as an alternative to GCSE. In many of the schools that have introduced these courses, there has been an increase in the numbers of key stage 4 pupils taking an accredited sports-related course. There has been considerable growth in the sport and leisure industry in the last decade and a significant increase in the numbers of students studying towards sport or leisure management qualifications in further and higher education institutions. GCSE and more vocationally-based BTEC courses provide a good foundation for pupils who wish to pursue future educational or career pathways in the sport and leisure industry. A few schools have taken the decision to offer only BTEC courses since they believe these courses meet pupils' needs more effectively. While this may meet many pupils' needs, it restricts opportunities for more able pupils to pursue a course that would be more appropriate for them.

**Cwrt Sart Community Comprehensive School, Neath Port Talbot**

**Year 10 BTEC**

The school has developed an initiative that brings together particularly well elements of the BTEC course, the PESS initiative and the Active Young People programme.

As part of the school's Year 10 BTEC programme, pupils operate effectively as leaders organising a range of warm-up activities, small-team games and skill development sessions for Year 6 pupils from partner primary schools. The pupils also organise sports festivals and small tournaments. More able pupils plan activities well and show considerable confidence in managing small groups of children. These leaders reflect thoughtfully on the nature and success of the activities that they organize, and take appropriate steps to modify activities to meet Year 6 pupils' learning needs. Through this work, these pupils are developing their communication and leadership skills extremely well.

Through these arrangements the school has greatly strengthened transition arrangements with its partner primary schools. It is a good example of sustainable cluster work building on the PESS initiative. One particular benefit of this approach is the professional development opportunities for primary class teachers, particularly in the area of competitive activities.

- 85 Among the strategies certain schools have introduced to improve GCSE outcomes has been the inclusion of a wider range of practical activities to allow pupils to benefit from their involvement in local hillwalking, boxing and surfing clubs, occasionally funded as part of the 5x60 initiative.
- 86 The majority of schools are developing their adventurous activities courses in key stage 3 well. These courses generally incorporate elements of orienteering and a range of problem-solving activities. A few schools have begun to create more distinct courses, often making good use of the local environment and facilities to introduce activities such as cycling, canoeing, white-water rafting, sailing and life saving. A few schools make effective use of dedicated activity weeks or residential experiences to provide more challenging adventurous experiences. However, a minority of schools have not developed a sufficiently engaging or challenging adventurous activities programme. In a few cases, orienteering activities largely replicate pupils' experiences in key stage 2 and do not help them to make enough progress.

**Porthcawl Comprehensive School, Bridgend – Year 7 Adventurous Activities**

The Year 7 adventurous activities programme includes an innovative and well-designed surf life-saving course. The local surf life-saving club has supported this initiative well with its facilities and resources. The course has also been supported through the 5x60 initiative. The unit of work includes varied learning activities that develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the basic principles of map reading and use of the compass. The range of activities also contributes to an appreciation of the basic principles of beach safety and awareness of local hazards

as well as broader geographical aspects, while keeping pupils active through mixture of competitive races and team relays. Activities are well planned to promote pupils' problem-solving and numeracy skills.

In the lesson observed, pupils made good progress in acquiring a greater understanding of potential hazards, safety features, tidal dangers and safety warnings. Pupils also gained a secure understanding of the basic principles of orienteering, such as how to use a compass to align a map.

- 87 Most schools offer pupils a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. The 5x60 initiative has been particularly successful in complementing and extending the more traditional, largely team-based programmes that most schools offered. In many schools, there has been a positive response by pupils to this initiative. Activities such as aerobics, street dance, pilates, zumba and boxercise have had a positive impact on girls' participation levels.
- 88 The 5x60 initiative has also contributed well to improving and extending links with local sports clubs and organisations. The success of a particular activity has occasionally led to the establishment of a new community club, for example a tennis, street-dancing or girls' football club, often based at and making use of school facilities. However, too often there has not been a close enough link with local clubs and organisations, which has prevented enthusiastic pupils developing their interests further.
- 89 The majority of schools visited offer pupils opportunities to participate in leadership training such as the Active Young People Organisers Course, which helps them to organise safe, fun and purposeful physical activity for young people. Participation in these courses helps pupils to acquire a better understanding of some important topics covered in their physical education lessons. The work these young leaders often do in organising activities for younger pupils in partner primary schools helps strengthen transition arrangements between the schools.
- 90 Most schools are promoting healthy lifestyles well in their physical education programmes. A few schools have particularly well-designed cross-curricular arrangements to develop pupils' awareness and appreciation of the key concepts and behaviours that underpin healthy lifestyles. However, few schools plan this work systematically to co-ordinate learning experiences across subject areas.

### **Leadership and improving quality**

- 91 In the majority of schools visited as part of this survey, there are systematic arrangements to monitor the work of the physical education department and these schools identify clear priorities and implement an appropriate range of actions to bring about improvement. However, in a significant minority of schools visited and of those inspected between 2004 and 2010, self-evaluation reviews lack detail and do not provide a good basis for improvement. This is mainly because leaders and managers do not analyse standards and the quality of teaching in a sufficiently robust manner and cannot show clearly the impact of actions taken to raise standards in physical education.



- 92 In the majority of schools visited for this survey, professional development arrangements appropriately reflect school and departmental priorities. However, opportunities for teachers to observe and promote best practice are generally underdeveloped. They are not organised systematically enough within schools or across clusters of schools.
- 93 Only a minority of local authorities provide good-quality advisory support for physical education departments. In these authorities, officers or specialist consultants carry out extensive departmental reviews that schools find particularly helpful. However, in a significant minority of schools the lack of a strong advisory support service narrows the context for professional dialogue. These schools do not receive enough information about the good practice that occurs elsewhere in the authority.
- 94 In the majority of schools, accommodation, including playing fields and indoor facilities, is good and provides a suitable setting for effective teaching and learning. However, there are important shortcomings in the quality of accommodation in a significant minority of schools. In about one-in-ten schools, the poor quality of accommodation includes shortcomings, such as limited indoor space, poorly-equipped gymasia, unsuitable changing facilities, and badly-drained or poorly-maintained playing fields, which impede pupils' progress in physical education.
- 95 More than four-fifths of schools have high-quality learning resources that contribute significantly to supporting pupils' progress in physical education. In almost two-fifths of schools, these aspects are outstanding. Teachers use these resources and a range of helpful stimulus materials well to support pupils' learning. Among the most common and useful resources are:
- classroom displays that develop pupils' technical terminology and help pupils develop their physical literacy, knowledge and understanding;
  - adapted equipment that assists those with additional learning needs to make good progress or increases the level of challenge for more able pupils;
  - well-designed prompt sheets that, for example, encourage pupils to think about the quality of their own and other's performance; and
  - information and communication technology software that supports effective peer evaluation.

## Appendix 1: Evidence base

The findings and recommendations in this report draw on visits to 19 secondary schools. This sample takes account of a range of geographical location, socio-economic background, size of school and linguistic contexts. In these visits, HMI:

- observed lessons at both key stage 3 and key stage 4;
- met with representative groups of pupils; and
- held discussions with teachers, senior managers, and Active Young People and local authority officers.

Additional evidence was drawn from:

- inspection reports on secondary schools from the 2004-2010 inspection cycle; and
- GCSE results at the end of key stage 4, and key stage 3 National Curriculum teacher assessments.

### List of schools visited

- Bishopston Comprehensive School, Swansea
- Birchgrove School, Swansea
- Ysgol Brynrefail, Gwynedd
- Cathays High School, Cardiff
- Cwmcarn High School, Caerphilly
- Cwmtawe Community School, Neath Port Talbot
- Cwrt Sart Community Comprehensive School, Neath Port Talbot
- Darland High School, Wrexham
- Ysgol Glan y Mor, Gwynedd
- Hawthorn High School, Rhondda Cynon Taff
- Ysgol Gyfun Llanbedr Pont Steffan, Ceredigion
- Lliswerry High School, Newport
- The Maelor School, Wrexham
- Maesteg Comprehensive School, Bridgend
- Pontypridd High School, Rhondda Cynon Taff
- Porthcawl Comprehensive School, Bridgend
- Radyr Comprehensive School, Cardiff
- Stanwell School, Vale of Glamorgan
- Whitchurch High School, Cardiff

## Glossary/references

**PESS Partnerships** involve a cluster of primary and secondary schools. Normally this will be based on one secondary school and its main partner primary schools. A flexible range of partnership models exists, which include other appropriate agencies that can contribute to the work of the partnership, such as tertiary colleges, further and higher education institutions, leisure centres, special educational needs providers, youth and community service providers.

**Active Young People (AYP)** is an umbrella term that includes Dragon Sport, the PESS initiative and the 5x60 initiative.

**Active Young People Organisers course** provides the opportunity for learners to become an Active Young People Organiser by attending a one day course which helps them to understand and carry out their role; to organise safe, fun and purposeful physical activity for all young people; and to work generally within the aims and philosophy of the Active Young People programme, and the specific aims of the programme for which they will deliver.

**5x60** is a programme managed by the Sports Council for Wales. Its aim is to get secondary school pupils in Wales to take part in extra-curricular sport and physical activity on a regular basis.

**BTEC is an awarding body that provides** work-related qualifications suitable for a wide range of students, designed to accommodate the needs of employers and allow progression to university. These qualifications are commonly known as 'BTECs'. They provide a practical, vocationally-based approach to learning without sacrificing the essential subject theory. BTECs can be taken alongside, or in place of GCSEs and A levels in schools and colleges. For example, the Level 1 Introductory Certificate and Diploma in Sport and Leisure provides a basic introduction to working in the sector and offers opportunities for accessing further study, such as a BTEC First Qualification in Sport.

**Boxercise** is a sport based on the exercises that boxers use to keep fit but does not involve actually hitting anyone or being hit. A typical class may involve shadow boxing, skipping, hitting pads, kicking punch-bags, press-ups, shuttle-runs and sit-ups.

**Zumba** is a Latin-inspired dance fitness programme that involves dance and aerobic elements.

## Explanation of words and phrases used to describe our evaluations

The words and phrases used in the left hand column below are those that we use to describe our evaluations. The phrases in the right hand column are the more precise explanations.

nearly all	with very few exceptions
most	90% or more
many	70% or more
a majority	over 60%
half or around a half	close to 50%
a minority	below 40%
few	below 20%
very few	less than 10%

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