



Department  
for Education

# **Enhancing physical education provision and improving access to sport and physical activity in school**

**Non-statutory guidance**

**March 2024**

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## Ministerial foreword

The Government is a strong advocate for the benefits that PE, sport, and physical activity bring to children's lives. Beyond the obvious health benefits, regular participation in sport and physical activity develops character, creates a sense of belonging, and supports building personal resilience. Additionally, playing team sports has positive impacts on developing leadership and teamworking skills.

PE and sport have always been an integral part of what schools provide to pupils, and for some children it may be their sole regular physical exercise. This is why high-quality structured PE is vital for pupils so that they can develop the fundamental practical knowledge and skills needed to lead an active healthy lifestyle.

That is why the ambitions set out in the School Sport and Activity Action Plan of 2 hours high quality PE a week, and equal opportunities for all to participate in a range of sports, are the right ones for schools to deliver. They are vital to give pupils inspiration, understanding and appreciation of the effect sport can have on them, and we want all schools to see them as an ambitious but achievable benchmark.

We do though have to be conscious that schools will need support to achieve these aspirations. That is why we have looked to schools themselves to show how it can be done. This guidance brings together a wide range of school examples and ideas on how they have achieved 2 hours high quality PE and equality of access. The guidance demonstrates that making connections with local and national sporting organisations and governing bodies is essential to providing opportunities for pupils to access sports and physical activities they might otherwise miss.

I hope that by reflecting real experiences and solutions, this guidance provides inspiration for all schools to think about the changes necessary to enable all pupils to get this essential grounding to lead healthy active lives.

**Damian Hinds**

**Minister of State for Schools**

## Introduction

A school's approach to delivering physical education (PE), physical activity and extra-curricular sport, and the attitudes and language used by all staff towards these areas, can have a considerable influence on a pupil's attitude towards regular participation in physical activity throughout their adult life.

The Government recognises the importance of being physically active and published an updated School Sport and Activity Action Plan (SSAAP)<sup>1</sup> in July 2023, signifying joint dedication from the Department for Education, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and the Department for Health and Social Care. The SSAAP objective is to integrate sports and physical activity into the school day and extra-curricular programmes, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to meet the Chief Medical Officers' (CMO) recommended guidelines<sup>2</sup> of taking part in moderate to vigorous physical activity for an average of 60 minutes a day. The SSAAP aims to enhance PE quality, promote 2 hours of weekly PE, ensure equality in sports access, increase children's participation in school sports, and meeting curriculum expectations, including swimming and water safety. This guidance offers support to schools to achieve this.

The SSAAP aligns with the Government's Get Active strategy<sup>3</sup>, published by the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport in August 2023, which outlines a blueprint for how a system wide approach, including schools, can get one million more children meeting the CMOs' daily recommended amount of moderate to vigorous physical activity.

The Active Lives Children and Young People's Survey is an annual national sample of five- to sixteen-year-olds conducted by Sport England. The data for the 2022/23 academic year<sup>4</sup> showed that 47% of children and young people are meeting the CMOs' recommended guidelines. The CMOs' guidelines recommend 20 minutes of physical activity for disabled children, a threshold which most disabled children exceed. The annual Active Lives survey is an opportunity to reflect on how we all engage with and advocate physical activity.

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<sup>1</sup> [School Sport and Activity Action Plan \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/121422/school-sport-and-activity-action-plan-2023-2025.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines - September 2019](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/82222/UK_Chief_Medical_Officers'_Physical_Activity_Guidelines_-_September_2019.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [Get Active: a strategy for the future of sport and physical activity - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/121422/get-active-strategy-2023-2025.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [Active Lives Children and Young People Survey data for the 2022-23 academic year](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/121422/active-lives-children-and-young-people-survey-data-for-the-2022-23-academic-year.pdf)

## **Aim of guidance**

This document informs schools how to meet the ambitions of the national curriculum and the CMOs' physical activity guidelines by showcasing case studies of how this has been successfully achieved. The guidance will set out a variety of schools' approaches of embedding PE, physical activity and sport into their culture, ethos, and values, and it will set out how they approach delivering:

- a minimum 2 hours of PE per week during curriculum time, and
- equality of access to PE and extra-curricular school sport and competition.

## **How to use this guidance**

This non-statutory guidance can support school staff, senior leaders, and governors to review their PE and school sport offer. This document can be used to stimulate discussions and generate ideas to create a positive and active school community through PE, school sport and wider physical activities. It is important for schools to reflect on the case studies showcased in this guidance in relation to their own school environment, pupil and staff needs.

## **Context surrounding PE, physical activity, and sport in schools**

PE is a mandatory part of the national curriculum<sup>5</sup> from ks1 to ks4. Maintained schools in England are legally required to follow the national curriculum as a piece of statutory guidance. Academies and free schools have greater freedom and autonomy in how they operate, but they are expected to teach a curriculum that is comparable or equal in breadth, challenge, and ambition to the national curriculum, and many choose to teach the full national curriculum to achieve this.

## **The aim of PE, physical activity, and sport in schools**

Schools should organise and deliver a diverse and ambitious PE and school sport offer which best suits the needs of all their pupils. Factors that might influence that decision

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<sup>5</sup> [National curriculum in England: Physical education programmes of study - September 2013](#)

include the spaces available for sports and physical activity, and available equipment.

The three connected forms of knowledge set out in the Ofsted physical education subject report<sup>6</sup>, published in September 2023, demonstrate what pupils can learn and develop through PE, school sport and physical activity. These forms of knowledge are:

- motor competence: developing a range of movements that become increasingly specific to ensure competency participating in sport and physical activity,
- rules, strategies, and tactics: knowledge of the conventions of participation in different sports and physical activities reducing the risk of exclusion and promoting a sense of belonging through confident and competent involvement,
- healthy participation: knowing how to partake safely and effectively, increasing confidence in participation.

For some pupils, especially those we know are least active such as girls, and children from low socio-economic backgrounds<sup>7</sup>, PE, school sport, and physical activity in school will be their first introduction and potentially their only regular access to sport and physical activity delivered in an organised, controlled, and structured way. PE should therefore be organised to enable all pupils to lead active, healthy lifestyles as this is an aim of the national curriculum.

## **The benefits of pupils taking part in sport and physical activity**

There is robust evidence that regular participation in sport and physical activity can support individuals to have improved physical health and better mental wellbeing. The UK CMOs<sup>8</sup> reported that the evidence to support the health benefits of regularly taking part in physical activity had become more compelling. They stated that performing regular physical activity is associated with improved attainment, concentration, and learning, improved mental health, and a healthier weight status. Wider benefits for young people doing regular physical exercise, reported by the CMOs,<sup>9</sup> included improved learning and attainment; managing stress; self-efficacy; improved sleep; the development of social skills; and better social interaction.

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<sup>6</sup> [OFSTED Physical education Subject Report - September 2023](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Active Lives Children and Young People Survey - Academic year 2022-23](#)

<sup>8</sup> [UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines - September 2019](#)

# Organisations supporting PE, physical activity, and sport in schools

## Advice for equal access

To create opportunities for all pupils to exercise for sustained periods of time, school staff need the knowledge, expertise, and confidence to adapt a wide range of sporting and physical activities to engage a diverse range of pupil interests and abilities. The organisations and resources referenced in this section can provide schools with some of the support needed to improve the planning, organisation and delivery of PE, sport, and physical activity in schools. This includes Government projects such as the inclusion 2024<sup>9</sup> programme which developed support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to access a range of sports, including swimming and water safety. Studio You<sup>10</sup> resources also offer teachers and teen girls support to overcome barriers that are stopping girls from being active. A recent partnership between Studio You and Bodyform, has created resources for teachers to support girls with periods during PE lessons.

## Advice for safety and fairness

The national curriculum provides flexibility for schools to choose the types of sporting and physical activities that best meet the needs of their school community and pupils. Where schools want to provide specific sports, they should consider how to ensure that the sport is safe and fair for the pupils participating. They may choose to draw on information from the relevant National Governing Body (NGB), where schools can find information, curriculum planning support, safety directives and relevant teacher training. In doing so, they should bear in mind that it is schools who hold the responsibility to safeguard their pupils and, therefore, decisions on how to deliver sports safely and fairly, need to be taken to reflect the circumstances of their pupils, rather relying entirely on the NGB advice.

National Governing Bodies of sport set policies for their respective sports which clearly set out at what age mixed sex sport participation must stop on the grounds of safety and

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<sup>9</sup> [SEND Inclusion - Youth Sport Trust](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Bodyform x Studio You | Studio You \(studio-you.co.uk\)](#)



fairness. Where schools separate sporting experiences for boys and girls on the grounds of safety and fairness, they should take the time to ensure this does not undermine their efforts to ensure girls and boys get access to the same sports equally.

The Association for Physical Education (afPE)<sup>11</sup> also offers specific health and safety advice on aspects around PE, school sport and physical activity.

The Government has recently consulted on guidance for schools on gender questioning children<sup>12</sup>. This includes a section on how to take decisions about participation in PE and sport, which can support schools to take decisions in this area. Once the final guidance is published, it will be reflected in wider guidance.

### **Advice on extracurricular competition**

The Government funded School Games website administered by the Youth Sport Trust has a directory of the sports<sup>13</sup> that make up the School Games competitions. Additionally, schools can access a bank of free resources on the Activity Resources Hub<sup>14</sup> which can help navigate the wide range of information for each individual sport and activities.

### **Advice for swimming and water safety**

Swimming and water safety are vital life skills, which are a mandatory element of the PE national curriculum for primary schools. The Ofsted PE report (2023)<sup>15</sup> stated pupils' swimming and water safety attainment in primary schools is mixed. In many schools this is due in part to the cost of transport and access to swimming pools, and partially due to the challenges schools have faced as a result of COVID-19. However, often the evaluation of the swimming and water safety element of the curriculum is limited.

As swimming's national governing body, Swim England<sup>16</sup> provides a wide range of support and advice to schools including guidance documents, resources and the School Swimming and Water Safety Charter<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> [Association for Physical education \(afPE\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Gender questioning children: draft schools and colleges guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Your School Games - Our Sports](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Your School Games - Activity Resources Hub](#)

<sup>15</sup> [OFSTED Physical education Subject Report - September 2023](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Swim England](#)

<sup>17</sup> [School Swimming and Water Safety Charter](#)

Schools can also use the PE and sport premium<sup>18</sup> to raise attainment in primary school swimming and water safety by funding top-up swimming sessions for those pupils that do not meet national curriculum requirements after they have completed core swimming lessons.

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<sup>18</sup> [PE and sport premium for primary schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

## Embedding PE and school sport into the school ethos and culture

### To embed PE and school sport into the school ethos and culture schools have:

- Established a clear rationale for the importance of PE in their timetable and communicated it to everyone within the school community.
- Used evidence from sources such as the UK's Chief Medical Officer's Guidelines to build a strong rationale for pupils needing to access PE and school sport more.
- Identified and incorporated how their PE and wider school sport offer can enhance the values and ethos of the whole school/trust and wider community.
- Written PE and school sport outcomes into their strategic plans to improve accountability.
- Created relationships with their local Active Partnership to develop PE and physical activity within their ethos.

PE and school sport are a vital part of a broad and balanced school curriculum for all pupils. Schools have an opportunity to inspire a healthy lifestyle, and a lifelong love of playing sport and being physically active through their sport and physical activity offer. It is crucial for schools to provide opportunities to promote their pupil's holistic development and achieve the wider associated benefits of PE and school sport such as improved learning, attainment, and mental wellbeing<sup>19</sup>.

Creating a **positive atmosphere and culture** towards being active requires **reinforcement throughout the whole school community** and not only in PE lessons. Senior leaders may benefit from reflecting on the **language, actions and attitudes** surrounding school sport and physical activity across the entire school community, and their potential effects. **Challenging the stereotypes and biases** that surround equal access to sport and physical activities is especially important when reflecting on a school's PE and sport offer. Schools who value all pupils being physically active

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<sup>19</sup> [UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines - September 2019](#)

alongside other important school activities, such as revision and exam preparation, are providing them with the skills to better cope with pressure and maintain good physical and mental health for life.

To demonstrate, Calthorpe Academy, a special school in Birmingham, caters to children aged 2-19. With 440 pupils and 300 staff, with the majority involved in PE and physical activity within the school community, the school emphasises **active learning**, improved external environments, and strong links with community groups. Parental engagement is excellent, and staff CPD is a priority, evident in the well-delivered teaching and support partly funded by the PE and sport premium. The staff development programme provides internal and external opportunities, such as Makaton communication training for PE lessons.

The school's CPD programme ensures that staff receive effective support which leads to learners being more engaged in PE, displaying faster progress, reducing challenging behaviours, and delivering higher pupil satisfaction levels.

The school concentrates on physical and social development to help young people regulate themselves, which are embedded through strategies such as active learning, brain breaks, and sensory circuits. The school's holistic approach extends to intra-school activities, off-site competitions, and promoting physical and mental well-being.

The reward system enhances participation, and learners with limitations contribute positively, showcasing leadership skills.

Additionally, the school have reported that the introduction of equipment at lunchtimes funded by the PE and sport premium has reduced negative behaviour issues, improved pupil's social skills, encouraged greater participation and increased active minutes.

Wave Trust comprises of 11 alternative provision academies and this academic year has a key focus to develop and embed the PE offer for their pupils. The trust acknowledges the various challenges and differences in providing PE within the alternative provision sector. However, they are committed to ensuring that their pupils receive high-quality PE to enhance their physical and mental well-being.

Wave Trust appointed a trust PE lead to support their PE teachers in all settings; prioritised PE training for primary and secondary teachers, brought in external support and National Governing Bodies to support the belief that PE is core in any strong

curriculum model. Through their tailored 'PE in a Box' kit, which is adaptable for both portable and classroom use, specialised training for staff, and dedicated PE timetable allocation, the trust has reported seeing significant improvements in multiple areas including improved attendance, increased engagement, and less incidences of challenging behaviour.

This is also demonstrated in North Cornwall Alternative Provision, where physical activity is not only a part of the timetable; it is woven into the school's culture. The school has access to facilities and equipment sourced by their PE teacher, with much of the equipment being donated.

Recently, pupils enthusiastically demonstrated their skills to visitors, engaging in controlled and respectful competition characterised by gestures such as bowing. The prevailing atmosphere of respect and camaraderie was evident, exemplified by a pupil sharing how a recent conflict was peacefully resolved by another pupil, showcasing the positive impact of sports on pupils' behaviour.

## Establishing a clear rationale for PE

### Summary of ideas presented by schools:

- **Have designated leaders responsible for communicating the purpose of PE to pupils, staff and parents and carers through coherent communications.**
- **Include PE, physical activity, and sport outcomes in the school strategic planning documents.**

The recent Ofsted PE subject report <sup>20</sup> found that in some of the schools they observed between November 2022 and June 2023, the PE curriculum lacked clear direction. This lack of clarity was reported to result in an incoherent series of lessons being delivered to pupils, which made it difficult for pupils to become competent in the skills of PE.

Some organisations have established a **designated leader for PE** in school or across a multi-academy trust, with the knowledge and expertise to deal with some of the stubborn inequalities preventing equal access to sport and physical activity. This could be one way

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<sup>20</sup> [OFSTED Physical education Subject Report - September 2023](#)

of ensuring that schools' PE offers are designed with **clarity** and **purpose** for why all pupils should be accessing the subject.

For example, United Learning created and articulated a clear purpose and value of their PE curriculum and school sport offer. The trust's head of sport was the central driver for establishing clarity, purpose, and high expectations for what pupils should be achieving from school PE and sport. The CMOs' Physical Activity Guidelines offered a robust evidence base to support embedding PE, school sport and physical activity into the school day across United Learning academies.

The Tapscott Learning Trust also appointed a Director of Sport who is the figurehead for ensuring clear and definitive purpose, and setting ambitious standards for what students are expected to accomplish in PE, school sport, and physical activity.

These sport subject leaders have created a subject vision and aims which complement and support achieving the trust's well-defined visions and purposes.

Pheasey Park Farm Primary School's dedication to PE is evident in its **work with secondary school PE subject leaders** during the school year. The school **actively celebrates PE** through newsletters, assemblies, and various displays, showcasing pupils' achievements. Pheasey Park Farm's vision for PE and school sport emphasises instilling a lifelong love of physical activity, encompassing teamwork and communication skills alongside developing fundamental movement skills. The PE subject lead focuses PE, school sport, and physical activity on **holistic development**, promoting inclusivity, breadth, and depth. The school's commitment to learning opportunities is reflected in the pupils' increased confidence, with 98% expressing in their own school survey that they felt confident in PE<sup>21</sup>.

Pheasey Park Farm Primary School prioritises PE on par with core subjects, considering it essential for building cultural capital. Frequent **high quality CPD** funded by the PE and sport premium is delivered to staff, including lunchtime supervisors, and is a critical aspect of the schools focus on PE, school sport and physical activity to **enhance subject knowledge and teaching practices**.

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<sup>21</sup> Please note that this statistic was provided by the school in question and DfE was not involved in the collection or analysis of the data.

## Creating relationships with relevant external bodies

### Summary of ideas presented by schools:

- **Write an outcome into the school improvement plan that focusses on forming relationships with local and national sports bodies which can support delivering high quality PE and extracurricular activities.**
- **Share expertise across multiple schools and have designated champions for particular areas such as competitions, safety, or equality of access.**
- **Use school communications to ask parents and carers what sports clubs and other organisations they are aware of in the local community.**

It can be difficult to know what changes may improve a school's sports offer, particularly if there is not a specialist PE and school sport leader in post. Some schools may benefit from **seeking external advice and expertise** if they are struggling to source it internally, especially smaller schools who rely on smaller staff numbers. Many sporting organisations and local Active Partnerships<sup>22</sup> are able to support schools in this work.

For example, Telford Langley school ran a project with the Rugby Football Union (RFU) across several secondary schools in the area. Firstly, they identified several issues including limited pupil involvement, school staff lacking confidence and knowledge of the sport, disparities between boys' and girls' Rugby Union offerings in schools, a contact-only rugby offer appealing to only a small percentage of young people, and fragmented school-club links.

To address these challenges the school established a youth ambassadors forum which allowed pupils to share their passion for rugby within their schools and influence teaching staff. Consequently, regular after-school rugby clubs for girls began, and games against other schools were organised. Parents of young ambassadors also noted their children's increased enthusiasm for making rugby more accessible and enjoyable in schools.

Furthermore, the school addressed staff CPD needs by organising appropriate training for both primary and secondary school staff. This led to the embedding of rugby into new

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<sup>22</sup> [Active Partnerships | Active Partnerships](#)

schools and an increase in secondary girls' provision and uptake. The school reported this expansion improved attendance and engagement in PE lessons.

The Academy at St James Primary School in Bradford underwent a transformation with new leadership tasked with improving the school's performance. Senior leaders identified that pupil's learning behaviours were a challenge within a classroom setting. Knowing that the local community was an area of high deprivation and had poor health outcomes, the headteacher sought support from the local Active Partnership, Yorkshire Sport Foundation, to embed physical activity into the school ethos and improve concentration in the classroom. The local Active Partnership supported the Academy at St James to become a more physically active environment that supports all pupils to be active, with aim of improving physical and mental health and engagement in learning.

The senior leaders at the Academy at St James Primary School employed a physical activity lead, overhauled its improvement plan and wider strategic thinking to include physical activity outcomes in every aspect of its structure, including travelling to and from school, PE lessons, breaktimes, visits, and other curricular lessons. As a result, the school now sees all pupils participating in PE and wider school sport, and in their latest Ofsted inspection in May 2022<sup>23</sup> they observed that, "physical education is a real strength of the school. Leaders have planned a curriculum that gives pupils an excellent experience of sport and physical activity."

Teacher confidence in planning, delivering, and assessing high quality PE, school sport and physical activity can be a challenge schools face. Senior leadership within the Tapscott Trust identified, through staff surveys, that their primary teachers were lacking confidence in delivering high quality PE. To address this, the trust prioritised creating a supportive structure called the 'Sports Hub.' The 'Sports Hub' employs highly skilled practitioners who support all schools within the trust with planning, training, and organising competitive sport and physical activity. As a result, all the schools in the trust are now rated either Gold or Platinum through the School Games Mark, and over 90% of

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<sup>23</sup> [The Academy of St James Primary School - Ofsted Report, May 2022](#)



their teachers surveyed in their own trust survey say they are now confident teaching PE<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Please note that this evidence was provided by the school in question and DfE was not involved in the collection or analysis of the data.

## School approaches to timetabling at least 2 hours of curriculum PE

### To secure a minimum of 2 hours PE, schools have:

- PE staff who have a strong rationale and justification for including 2 hours of PE in the curriculum which they clearly articulate during whole school negotiations on timetabling.
- Senior leaders who permit the operational structure needed to install 2 hours minimum PE for each year group. Such as ringfencing facilities for the sole use of PE, sport, and physical activity on at least one day per week or reorganising the lesson length duration across the whole school to be 1 hour in length to accommodate 2 hours PE across the school week.
- Hired a primary school PE specialist to raise whole school knowledge and expertise to build all staffs capability of delivering PE to their classes.
- Galvanised whole community support for 2 hours minimum PE time through clear communications to pupils, parents and other staff outlining the positive outcomes for pupils doing a minimum of 2 hours PE per week.

The recent PE subject report published by Ofsted<sup>25</sup> found that most primary schools and around half of secondary schools visited as part of the report were timetabling a minimum of 2 hours PE per week. However, the time allocated to PE was found to be significantly reduced during ks4.

Finding the time for 2 hours of high-quality PE in the weekly timetable, up to and including ks4 can be challenging, but many schools have found solutions to ensure all pupils have equal access to high quality PE that meets this expectation. It is important to note timetabled PE may be the only opportunity for some pupils to be physically active which is especially important during periods of revision and exam preparation when it is vital that pupils maintain good physical and mental health.

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<sup>25</sup> [OFSTED Physical education Subject Report - September 2023](#)

## Developing and communicating a strong rationale for 2 hours minimum PE

### Summary of ideas presented by schools:

- **PE staff need to be aspirational for the subject being included in the school curriculum. No one should be allowed to think PE is a break from the curriculum.**
- **PE leaders and teachers should plan to include messaging on the positive outcomes of doing PE, sport, and physical activity at all major school events across the whole calendar year.**

Developing an **evidence-based rationale for PE**, which can persuade senior leaders and the wider school community, such as parents and carers, to prioritise PE, can be one way to ensure it is sufficiently considered when discussing timetabling. afPE have created a useful information leaflet specifically for parents and carers outlining the importance of children and young people being physically active<sup>26</sup>.

To demonstrate, when the New College Leicester head of PE arrived at the school, they found the attitude towards PE and the expectations of pupils during PE time, especially at ks4 were low. There was no PE kit policy, poor engagement from pupils and an overall lack of respect for the subject, which manifested itself as a lack of support from colleagues, parents, and carers.

Instantly, this head of PE set out a strong, persuasive rationale to senior leaders of why a minimum of 2 hours of high-quality PE was needed and was beneficial to all pupils and the wider school. By using local health data such as life expectancy and obesity rates, which revealed unfavourable health outcomes within the community, the head of PE crafted a rationale for dedicating time to PE in schools as a civic responsibility to educate students on effective physical activity to enhance their well-being.

Girlington Primary School have also been on a journey to review how their timetabled PE offer supports their pupils to sustainably break up extended periods of potentially damaging sedentary behaviours. The school regularly described itself as being a 'sporty' school due to their success at local sport competitions. However, following a review of

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<sup>26</sup> [afPE - The Importance of Being Active Flyer for Parents and Carers.](#)

local health data which showed poor health outcomes for the local community, the deputy headteacher wanted to see how PE was supporting pupils to understand the health implications of inactivity. The school set out to investigate the movement patterns of pupils throughout a school week, including during timetabled PE. Pupils wore movement monitoring devices which demonstrated that on average the majority of pupils were not active and moving for more than 30 minutes of a 6-to-7-hour school day, including on days when they had PE<sup>27</sup>. As a result, the school wrote an outcome into its school improvement plan, planning to increase PE time to a minimum of 2 hours per week, ensuring this time demonstrated and taught pupils how to move effectively. The school believed that the timetabled PE lessons had to be the reference point for all its pupils to gain knowledge of what high quality movement was, which could then support breaking sedentary behaviour habits.

Developing a strong rationale for a minimum of 2 hours PE time can create a strong whole school ethos and culture towards being active. For instance, following Westerton Primary Academy's participation in the Active Lives Survey in 2021, the school identified a need to boost levels of physical activity, integrating it into the daily curriculum. Subsequently, it was integrated into the School Development Plan for the academic years 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 with a focus on incorporating Physically Active Learning into non-PE lessons. The key objectives were discussed with staff, addressing their perspectives and potential barriers. Regular CPD sessions were held, fostering staff collaboration to devise physically active learning strategies and troubleshoot challenges. Subsequently, a pupil survey revealed significant enjoyment of physically active learning (82%) and a positive impact on learning (64%)<sup>28</sup>. Staff dedicated considerable effort to adapting their practices, overcoming initial concerns effectively. Implementation of physically active learning heightened staff awareness regarding the wider benefits of an increasingly active school environment, influencing other aspects of the school's provisions. Westerton Primary Academy's journey was acknowledged during their most recent Ofsted inspection.

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<sup>27</sup> Please note that this information was provided by the school in question and DfE was not involved in the collection or analysis of the data.

<sup>28</sup> Please note that these statistics were provided by the school in question and DfE was not involved in the collection or analysis of the data.

## Senior Leadership creating the operational structure to deliver 2 hours PE

### Summary of ideas presented by schools:

- **Senior leaders and PE staff conduct an audit of the school facilities and assess what physical activities are deliverable in the spaces available.**
- **Senior leaders should look to develop strong relationships with organisations such as local sports clubs, local authorities, leisure centres or independent schools to support improving the access to more sport facilities.**

**Protecting school facilities for PE** on specific days can be one way to ensure PE lessons are able to occur even in poor weather. Due to facility restraints, the Red Hall Primary School, Darlington, were finding it challenging to consistently timetable 2 hours PE for each year group. They decided to dedicate an entire day to PE every week. This means every year group has PE on the same day, with a second lesson timetabled in during another day of the week. On the designated PE day senior leaders protect the indoor and outdoor PE spaces by ringfencing them for sport and physical activity purposes only, which ensures that lessons always happen in all weather conditions.

Senior leaders at St Crispin's secondary school in Wokingham, have created a strong link with a local independent school – Ludgrove. To increase year 7 pupil's accessing more high-quality PE time in swimming, St Crispin's School identifies pupil's as weaker/non-swimmers who are then taught to swim by Ludgrove specialist swimming instructors in the Ludgrove swimming pool. This intervention and relationship between schools ensures that St Crispin School can provide pupils with access to an even broader offer as part of the minimum 2 hours curriculum PE time.

Some schools have implemented flexible **timetabling structures** to secure time for other subjects, which may unintentionally be restricting options to timetable PE. For example, Kensington Primary School in Newham had a policy of maths and English every morning for all year groups. This made it impossible to timetable in 2 hours of PE for all pupils, as they only have one indoor hall space and limited outdoor space. They decided to change the timetable to a more flexible, balanced approach, and are now able to accommodate 2.5 hours PE for every year group in the school without reducing time spent on English or maths. Time available for active movement is maximised during the PE lessons by all

**pupils coming into school wearing their PE kit**, which has also resulted in an increase in lunchtime extra-curricular participation.

For some schools, **rethinking the length of all lesson times** within the timetable may be a viable option to ensure 2 hours of PE for all pupils. The Salford City Academy timetable previously consisted of four × 70-minute lessons in a school day, structured within a two-week timetable. The allocation for PE in ks3 was three periods, averaging 1 hour and a half per week. The school needed to rethink the timetable structure when United Learning reaffirmed the aspiration of 2 hours of PE as a minimum expectation for all their schools. To accommodate the practicalities of delivering 2 hours of PE, and through consultation the school day was changed to 5 × 60-minute lessons. This new configuration enabled the Principal to allocate four lessons to ks3 PE over the two weeks, thus increasing the overall lesson time to 2 hours per week.

## **Staffing structures to support delivering 2 hours high quality PE**

### **Summary of ideas presented by schools:**

- **Use PE expertise in the school to raise whole school standards in delivering high quality PE. This can include having an open-door policy for all staff to observe PE teachers who consistently deliver high quality lessons, team teaching with other PE specialists or planning lessons with peers.**
- **Conduct a staff skills audit to support creating specific and clear job adverts for PE staff that fill the skills and knowledge gaps you have in your school. This can support giving pupils a wider breadth of sporting and physical activities.**

Some schools may find issues timetabling 2 hours of high-quality PE per week due to their staffing. This may include a timetabling issue, lack of confidence teaching the subject and various sports in a broad a challenging PE curriculum.

King Edwin Primary School, in Nottinghamshire, hire a specialist PE teacher who delivers PE to every class at least once a week. The qualified specialist brings the knowledge and skills necessary to plan and deliver a coherent 2-hour weekly PE curriculum offer. They also lead a dedicated team of staff across the school who **support teachers** to plan, organise and deliver at least one more additional hour of high-quality PE per week to all pupils from the early years foundation stage (EYFS) to Year 6.

This dedicated team of PE leaders are on hand to support other individual class teachers, with support including **modelling** PE lessons to other staff, and delivering some PE lessons through a paired teaching approach with constructive feedback delivered afterwards. This well-established whole school support builds individual competence and confidence in all staff being able to progress towards delivering 2 hours of high-quality PE. This provision also extends beyond the school day into delivery of extra-curricular activities.

PE staffing in Salford City Academy increased to accommodate the additional lessons, with those staff also able to bring additional capacity and expertise to the trust's cocurricular programme at United Learning. Pupils are now able to experience greater depth and breadth in their PE curriculum, with a noticeable rise in skill levels evidenced through school assessments. This strategy assisted pupils who had returned to school post-pandemic needing support with their physical development, helping them catch up effectively.

The PE subject leader at Berkswich CE Primary School has embedded regular consultations with teachers, support staff, parents, and pupils to secure 2 hours of curriculum PE per week. **Raising the profile of the subject** and taking the time to plan clear outcomes for PE, has galvanised support from the whole community recognising the need to timetable a minimum of 2 hours PE a week.

St Mary's College, in Hull, meticulously timetable and plan their curriculum across ks3 and ks4 ensuring that every pupil from year 7 to year 11 has access to 2 hours curriculum PE per week. The school, with 2500 students, organises them into eight groups per half year, based on ability and sex, resulting in four groups for both boys and girls. Each activity is structured as a six-week block, following, and adapting established schemes of work for each learning phase, enabling pupils to excel in various areas of PE. PE subject specialists, map the PE curriculum across all five years, guaranteeing a broad, balanced, and engaging experience for pupils. Their curriculum encompasses a variety of activities, exceeding the national curriculum requirements, including fitness, individual and team games, dance, athletics, gymnastics, and outdoor adventurous activities. The thorough planning and diverse, popular offer means the PE faculty are well supported by senior leaders responsible for developing whole school timetables.

## School approaches to ensuring a high level of uptake in extra-curricular sport and physical activity

### Schools have increased the uptake of extra-curricular sport and physical activity by:

- Writing extra-curricular sporting activity outcomes into the school's strategic plans.
- Having innovative sign-up systems or softer intelligence gathering processes such as verbal updates from lunchtime support staff that allow the demographics of the attendees to be regularly reviewed.
- Acting swiftly on what the information (especially pupil voice) informs regarding what will motivate various pupil groups to access sports and physical activities.
- Targeting extra-curricular sport and physical activity programmes at the least active pupils.
- Connecting with local and national sport and physical activity bodies to support with delivery.

We know from the School and College Panel survey covering 2022/23 academic year<sup>29</sup> that many schools offer sports and physical activities during breaktimes, lunchtimes, and before and after school. It is valuable to reinforce the importance to all pupils of participating in extra-curricular sports and physical activities, principally the benefits to physical and mental wellbeing.

The Parent, Pupil and Learner Panel covering the 2022/23 academic year<sup>30</sup> found team sports were available to 73% of pupils outside of their usual classes and 58% of pupils took the opportunity to play a team sport outside of their timetabled PE lessons. Extra-curricular participation in team sports was highest among lower year groups, falling from 66% of pupils in years 7 and 8, to only 46% in year 11.

A strong extra-curricular offer for all pupils including sports can be one way to **develop a sense of community and belonging** for children in school, particularly when it is tailored towards a culture of participation. Encouraging school staff to promote the

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<sup>29</sup> [School and College Panel survey - 2022/23 academic year](#)

<sup>30</sup> [Parent, Pupil and Learner Panel 22/23 Recruitment wave 1 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)



significance of physical activity is crucial in engaging and encouraging pupils, particularly those from targeted inactive groups such as girls. Staff members can offer their time to organise, oversee and contribute to extra-curricular sports clubs, demonstrating enthusiasm and actively motivating students, building a valuable rapport, and fostering a sense of inclusion for all pupils. A regular and dependable extracurricular sport offer may also support schools to deliver wraparound care provision that is supportive for parents.

The Cockermonth School's PE department has actively sought to foster relationships with various staff members across the school, promoting their involvement in extracurricular activities, which includes a new maths teacher now supporting the Year 10 football club. This new teacher initially was experiencing challenges teaching the group in the classroom, this extracurricular sport activity has supported the teacher in developing a positive rapport with year 10 pupils which has seen the behaviour in Maths lessons improve with the year 10 classes. As well as Cockermonth School's head of year leading a weekly running club, a history teacher is coaching girls' football, and a teaching assistant assisting with Key Stage 3 hockey.

The school consistently collaborates with staff to understand their expertise and interests beyond school, integrating these into the extracurricular program. This approach ensures a diverse range of sports activities, extending beyond team sports. These successes stem from the PE staff's investment in cultivating relationships across the school community, generating enthusiasm for sport and physical activity. Staff members have developed strong connections with pupils by facilitating these activities which are shaped through pupil feedback providing opportunities that align with pupil interests.

Schools' existing enrichment and extracurricular offers can interact with, complement, and support delivery of wraparound childcare provision. The Department support and encourage schools to continue to offer enrichment and extracurricular activities and to consider how these activities can be delivered in a way that supports working parents. If these activities were offered in a regular and dependable way, schools could support the delivery of wraparound in combination with enrichment and extracurricular activities.

## Embedding extra-curricular plans and targets into the school's strategy

Stratford Upon Avon School have built extra-curricular opportunities into their targeted outcomes within their school improvement plan. Following the return to school post-pandemic, the school planned to improve pupils' feeling of belonging in the school community. Sports and physical activity clubs were identified as a valuable tool in improving this. The school changed its approach to extra-curricular clubs and made them **concentrate on participation and basic skill** rather than solely on competitive experiences for their pupils. The school established a strong tracking system based on a QR code and Microsoft Forms sign in system, which captured information on attendees accessing extra-curricular clubs. **Capturing extra-curricular attendance data** allowed the school to assess whether their range of activities were reaching a diverse pupil audience. The school adjusts the activities on offer in response to the data to ensure equal access to all pupils.

## Understanding the demand for extra-curricular offers

### Summary of ideas presented by schools:

- **Build in regular pupil feedback through mediums such as surveys, suggestion boxes, student council, voting systems or assemblies.**
- **To improve the equality of access, find ways of monitoring who is attending extracurricular sport and physical activity clubs. Get feedback from those pupils who do not regularly access sport and physical activities at the school.**

Some schools have found that **directly asking pupils what they want** their extra-curricular offer to include can help develop equal access and improve engagement with their programmes. The use of pupil voice, especially getting feedback from pupils who are not accessing PE and school sport is vital in understanding how a school can get more pupils active. Through speaking to pupils, Wright Robinson College discovered many of them wanted extra-curricular opportunities that were different to those incorporated in PE lessons and the traditional competitive sports. Pupils sometimes wanted to be active without the pressure of needing to perform, concentrating on participation rather than quality, therefore the school developed the 'Let's Play' initiative. During the day, there are a minimum of ten 'Let's Play' clubs. The clubs run for thirty minutes, and to avoid the requirement for additional sports uniform the **pupils only need**

**to change into appropriate footwear and remove any jewellery to play.** A variety of **staff** across faculties help to run these clubs, helping create a community feel throughout the school. The influence of 'Let's Play' has changed the culture within the PE faculty; it is now seen as an **accessible** area of school life where all pupils feel they belong rather than an environment for those who excel in sport. Over a thousand pupils attend 'Let's Play' each week. The concept has been so successful that it has been broadened to two free of charge 'Let's Swim' sessions each Saturday morning for families and pupils who attend the College. Clubs that use the 'Let's' concept aim to promote equal opportunities, develop character, and improve the mental health and wellbeing of pupils.

Every school will need to determine the extent of **pupil feedback** that they find helpful and reasonable to incorporate in their school sports offer. Kensington Primary School concentrate on having a flexible, varied offer of extra-curricular sport which is driven by the demand of their pupils. This supports the school to **accommodate the differing needs of individuals**. Sports sessions are run before school, during lunchtimes and after school. This approach maximises the opportunity for pupils who have various needs and face different barriers to access the sessions.

Similarly, at Curwen Primary School, the aim of the school's extra-curricular programme is to run a wide range of different clubs including after school bike clubs, scooter clubs, non-contact boxing, and dance clubs. The school **opens their premises outside regular school hours** for gymnastics and martial arts clubs and have set up a pop-up swimming pool in the playground following a request from their School Council. Cycling also features as part of the curriculum in some of the wider schools in the Tapscott Trust, with staff trained to deliver cycling proficiency lessons. Several schools in the trust have also opened their facilities to encourage family participation in cycling in their **local community**.

## **Collecting and analysing extra-curricular attendance information**

### **Summary of ideas presented by schools:**

- **Regularly check who is attending your sport and physical activity offers and find out why others are not accessing the sports and physical activities.**

Collecting basic information on participant information and reviewing it regularly has helped some schools develop widely engaging extra-curricular offers. Easterside Academy found through tracking their pupils' attendance at extra-curricular clubs, that generally the same children were attending the extra-curricular sport and physical activities on offer. To rectify this, the school underwent a pilot scheme using activity tracking bands, and using the data, developed a programme to target their least active pupils in extra-curricular activities. It was agreed that the information would be used to approach identified inactive children and encourage them to engage in after school clubs concentrated on being active. Once established, this was then **extended to parents and carers** of the children in attendance. As a result, a wider variety of children attended the after-school clubs. Staff who lead the club identified an improvement in the attitudes towards and enjoyment of physical activity in those targeted children. School data also showed an increase in activity levels of some of those targeted pupils. **Parental involvement** was useful in **educating families** on the benefits of physical activity and extending this into their **routines and habits outside of school**.

Certain pupils may benefit from being **directly invited to participate** in the school's extra-curricular offer. For example, Kensington Primary School also run some clubs as targeted boosters and, for these, children are directly invited to attend. Teachers work closely with parents to explain the **purpose and rationale** of the intervention, ensuring engagement and understanding of why attendance at these clubs is important. This has led to far greater engagement, with nearly 90% of children surveyed within the school now attending at least one extra-curricular club during the academic year<sup>31</sup>.

## Connecting with national sport and activity bodies

### Summary of ideas presented by schools:

- **When reviewing the delivery of sports and physical activities in your school, start with the National Governing Body or leading national organisation for the activity.**

Some schools may find that they benefit from **upskilling existing staff through the support available from National Governing Bodies**. This can develop staff

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<sup>31</sup> Please note that this statistic was provided by the school in question and DfE was not involved in the collection or analysis of the data.

understanding of delivering high quality PE and sport and help them better deliver sessions that are equally accessible to girls and boys.

At the start of 2022, The North School did not have any extra-curricular tennis provision and no pupils played tennis outside of school. The school appointed a tennis lead who undertook the Lawn Tennis Association's (LTA) free 'Youth Schools teacher training' and established an all-girls extra-curricular programme. Over 80 girls attended these sessions, initially for year 7 and 8, with additional sessions added due to demand from other year groups. Young Leaders (year 9 and 10) were trained to support with the delivery of the extra-curricular sessions and acted as role models for other pupils involved. Inclusive tennis sessions within the school's SEN provision, including whole class sessions, small group interventions and external visits to LTA Open Court venues were also established.

Within the academic year tennis was fully embedded into the school, with over 300 boys and girls receiving structured 6-week coaching blocks that culminated in 'Competition Week'. Since then, the North School has hosted six large scale intra-school competitions, two inter-school tennis festivals and 16 inter-school matches, plus four community tennis events to encourage new pupils to play tennis in a fun and social atmosphere. The school incorporated tennis as it represents a truly inclusive sport, with opportunities for pupils to compete and to develop their leadership skills, as well as providing numerous opportunities for pupils to play and volunteer in the local community.

Some school communities may be restricted from taking up extra-curricular offers due to external commitments, which schools can consider when planning their timetable to avoid these barriers. For instance, many pupils at Kensington Primary School attend mosque after school, therefore the school have introduced clubs before school and at lunchtimes to provide more accessible options for their pupils.

## **Connecting with the community and increasing access to physical activity and sport**

### **Summary of ideas presented by schools:**

- **Connecting with your local Active Partnership is a good starting point to find organisations in your local area that can support you delivering an ambitious PE and sport programme.**

Active Partnerships are delivering the Opening Schools Facilities Programme<sup>32</sup> (OSF), which sees the local network of 43 Active Partnerships supporting schools in some of the most economically deprived areas of the country to become local hubs for physical activity. A significant driver in making this work for schools is convening the support of the Active Partnership network to connect schools with local and national bodies who can facilitate creating opportunities to be active. Although the initiative is targeting schools in the least active areas, there is learning for all schools on how their facilities can become a hub for local physical activity. Schools can connect with their local Active Partnership to understand the knowledge gained from the initiative and all schools can expect to have access to the 'Opening School Facilities: best practice guidance' which is proposed to be published by Active Partnerships in 2025.

The PE department at Rochester Grammar School foster a strong ethos and culture of pupil's playing sport and being physically active both in and outside of school. The Vice Principal champions the inclusion of school sport outcomes in the school's improvement plan with an **emphasis on how sports can improve their pupil's emotional wellbeing** and contribute to wider school outcomes. **Commitment to PE and sport is evident** in the curriculum, assessment policies, and extra-curricular offer, which results in PE and sport being viewed positively, which is reflected regularly through 'Parent Voice' and through attendance figures of sport and physical activity clubs. This obvious commitment to high standards for PE and school sport is reflected by the strong **community use of the school sport facilities**. These opportunities to use the school facility beyond the school day gives the pupils a feeling of belonging and respect for the school, which the school say leads to increased pupil engagement, improved wellbeing, attendance, behaviour, and academic outcomes.

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<sup>32</sup> [Opening Schools Facilities | Active Partnerships](#)

## Delivering equal opportunity to access PE and sport programmes

### **Schools have developed opportunities for all pupils to access PE, extra-curricular sport, and physical activity by:**

- Having non-negotiable behaviours incorporated into the school's behaviour policies that relate to stereotyping.
- Having a strong culture of pupil voice that allows pupils to confidently communicate their feelings toward the PE, sport, and physical activity accessible at the school and the kit required to take part.
- Taking the time to understand and sensitively plan accordingly for their pupils, for example: to support cultural and social differences.
- Carefully planning their language around adaptations to lessons and activities to be sensitive to the varied needs of pupils, for example: understating that labelling a physical challenge easy when to some pupils it may be extremely challenging can have a negative impact on confidence.
- Engaging the most inactive pupils with sport that is less focussed on results and personal skill development.
- Using attendance, positive behaviour, and attainment assessment information to effectively monitor the impact of PE, extra-curricular sport, and physical activity on pupils' wider school outcomes.
- Assigning a strategic PE, sport, and physical activity lead with specific responsibility for providing equal access to PE, sport, and physical activity.

School PE lessons may be the only opportunity for some pupils to take part in sport and physical activity in a structured and organised manner. The experiences of pupils during PE lessons can have a significant impact on their attitude towards wanting to further take part in more sport and physical activity beyond their timetabled PE lesson. This makes PE a crucial time for girls and boys to understand that sport and physical activity is for all.

In particular the gender stereotypes that we know exist in sport and physical activity<sup>33 34</sup> must be identified by all staff in schools and challenged appropriately. Senior leaders,

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<sup>33</sup> [Literature-Review-Gender-Stereotypes.pdf \(womeninsport.org\)](#)

<sup>34</sup> [Sport, Stereotypes and Stolen Dreams: Why girls still feel they don't belong in sport - Women in Sport](#)

working with PE teachers should be planning for their responses to seeing and hearing negative biased language and actions towards girls from pupils, staff, parents, and carers. For some they may even need to challenge their own beliefs and approaches towards how they portray girls' or boys' participation in sport and physical activity.

Modelling the best ways to tackle and improve the negative implications on girls' participation from gender stereotypes and biases can be difficult when they are deeply embedded into sport. The recent campaign by Women in Sport - Creating a new generation of male allies for girls in sport<sup>35</sup> is a good starting point for schools to start tackling the cultural barriers preventing girls from accessing sport and physical activity.

Offering equal time to doing the same sports for girls and boys is only the start of a journey towards achieving true equality of access and opportunity. Seeing girls on the school field playing with boys can potentially give a false impression that equality has been achieved. The deep-rooted biases and stereotypes, however, could be compounding the negative experiences for girls and putting them off playing sport and doing physical activity in the long term, especially if it makes them feel unsafe.

It is worth all staff considering taking some time to watch and monitor whether biases are occurring during moments of playing sport in your school, for example are girls being told by boys to play in positions that the boys don't want to play in or are boys refusing to pass to and involve girls in the sport, or are boys making negative comments or actions towards girls' performances but then not doing the same to other boys in the same situations.

To embed a culture of equality in PE and school sport the Government has overseen a change to the School Games Mark<sup>36</sup> Equality criteria has been added to the scheme meaning that schools can review their provision and test whether they are overcoming barriers girls and boys may face and listening to the voice of the pupils as part of their planning and delivery of PE, school sport and physical activity. Schools attaining the School Games Mark will be independently verified to ensure they are delivering the equality element of the award scheme. An independent School Games Mark verifier will collate some of the best examples of schools delivering equality of access and the

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<sup>35</sup> [Teachers Resource: Creating Mini Allies - Women in Sport](#)

<sup>36</sup> [Your School Games - School Games Mark](#)



Government and other relevant organisations will disseminate these in the 2024/25 school year.

The SSAAP<sup>37</sup> published in July 2023 set out an expectation for schools to give girls and boys access to the same sports and physical activities. To reach the least active pupils, schools may need to take action on their PE and sport provision based on the needs of their own pupils, which will vary from school to school. This can be achieved by capturing **pupil voice, challenging stereotypes, and bias**, and providing a **broad PE and school sport offer accessible to all** pupils.

## Understanding the needs of the most inactive pupils

### Summary of ideas presented by schools:

- **Use pupil voice to understand their needs and identify how girls and boys perceive PE and sport within school.**
- **Provide equal access to all sports and physical activity within school without restrictions.**
- **Target underrepresented pupils with more informal opportunities initially to understand barriers preventing them from accessing school sport and physical activity.**

Development of an inclusive offer requires a school to understand their own pupils' needs. The Department for Education works collaboratively with the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport and share the ambition set out in their Get Active strategy<sup>38</sup> published in August 2023 that all children should meet the CMOs' guidelines on physical activity, with a target of getting one million more children active by 2030.

Alexandra Park School use pupil feedback to **understand their pupil's needs**. They believe that the success of a school's offer comes from understanding how pupils perceive and receive the sports they are accessing. They discovered through pupil feedback that football in PE and school sport was dominated by boys, with girls feeling excluded from the same opportunities. Staff therefore introduced a year 7 girls' football

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<sup>37</sup> [School sport and activity action plan - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114222/school-sport-and-activity-action-plan.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> [Get Active: a strategy for the future of sport and physical activity - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114222/get-active-strategy.pdf)

team, which on its own gained moderate interest, but Significant change in attitudes and increases in demand from girls to do sport came when PE leaders rooted their PE offer in a simple philosophy – if boys do it, then girls do it too, and vice versa. The Alexandra Park School's approach to gauge pupil attitudes towards PE and sport and understand the needs of those not participating, especially girls has resulted in adapting their provision to better meet the needs of all of their pupils.

**Pupil feedback** is an important aspect of ensuring that the PE offer is delivered effectively for all pupils in a school. Pupil voice is an integral part of Alexandra Park School's offer to continually evaluate whether boys and girls are getting the same opportunities. Through pupil voice the school found subtle ways to **adapt** sport and physical activity which helped improve **pupil engagement** and their **motivation** to be active for sustained periods. For example, girls wanted access to football but were particularly interested in lessons that concentrated on the fitness components of the sport rather than the skills. This example shows that seeking pupil voice and initially adapting sessions to meet pupils needs, e.g. girls' interest in fitness, resulted in improved engagement. This in turn led to increased interest in the skills of the sport, engagement with which grew by continually adapting lessons.

Alexandra Park School concluded that giving the same time for boys and girls to play a range of sports was the basic expectation on all school sport and physical activity. They were keen to ensure that having equal time to play sport did not lead to unintended negative experiences for girls, such as being made to play in positions that the boys did not want to play in. Staff sought and acted upon feedback to ensure pupils were getting the **opportunities they expected**, and which kept them engaged. As the school learnt more about engagement and motivation the **staff were upskilled** to spot and **challenge potentially negative approaches and stereotyping behaviours**.

## Offering a broad range of formal and more informal activities

**Summary of ideas presented by schools:**

- **Use pupil voice to understand their needs and identify how both girls and boys perceive PE and sport within school.**

Schools will need to make their own choices on how best to provide equal access to PE, school sport and physical activity. For example, Palterton Primary School decided to

establish clear fundamental movement expectations for all Key stage 1 pupils, and pupil rewards are shaped around progression, effort, respect, loyalty to teammates, and results through competitions. The school believe that focusing on fundamental movements and attitudes during year 1 and 2 can reduce some of the skill gaps that can emerge between boys and girls through a combination of biological and stereotyping factors. Using the National Governing Bodies safety directives as their guide, the school runs mixed sport sessions and teams. In some instances, the teachers adapted their lessons to include girls only elements with sensitive, appropriate messaging as to why this was happening. The teachers take part in PE delivery training, and regularly reflect on how to adapt activities that may be dominated by boys for a variety of reasons. All adaptations to lessons made by teachers are always delivered to the pupils through a lens of mutual respect, and they enforce a zero-tolerance approach towards any negative gender stereotyping comments.

Orchard Manor school which is a special school with residential provision has designed a wide variety of clubs with some being competitive, non-competitive, focussed on skill development and some focussed on just doing the activity. More informal sports clubs invite the least active girls to attend peer led sessions on a drop-in basis, eliminating the need for formal commitments which the school identified as a barrier. **Peer led activities** are also proving very popular with girls at Djangoly City Academy in Nottingham with activities such as Music of Black Origin dances being led by girls to their peers. The school conduct and promote pupil engagement into their programming by inviting pupil mentors from each year group to share ideas for the extracurricular timetable during a school leadership team meeting. This whole school approach is reported to have positively impacted attendance and behaviour of the students creating a community through sport and physical activity.

City Academy Bristol has an open to all access policy, which ensures pupils feel empowered to select their activity/sport based on their own motivations and interests. For example, girls engaged more with the clubs through a student voice panel operated by underrepresented females from Year 10. This panel created and investigated the requests of physical activity within the school and added a dodgeball session to the timetable from pupil feedback which saw girls' attendance at extracurricular clubs' increase.

## Support from national governing bodies

Schools will need to draw on this guidance and the wealth of resources and expertise offered by National Governing Bodies when deciding how best to provide equal access to PE for their own context. Embedding a sustainable offer for girls and maintaining the offer for boys, is demonstrated in examples from both Alexandra Park School and Windsor Academy Trust. Both organisations appointed strategic leads for girls' football, and they directly established contact with the Football Association (FA) to develop a sustainable approach. The FA established strategic partnerships between the schools and the Barclays Girls' Football School Partnership programme. The Windsor Academy Trust also became a super hub for the programme. This saw teachers in both organisations trained to deliver PE to inactive girls, and groups of girls in the school trained to lead girls only sessions to their peers.

## Guidance on PE uniform

### Summary of ideas presented by schools:

- **Keep the PE kit policy simple and consult with families regularly about how the PE and sports kit requirements of the school are impacting them in terms of finances and participation rates of pupils.**
- **Use pupil voice especially with teenage girls focussing on how the PE kit requirements affect their participation.**

Some pupils' families may have financial concerns which could limit their access to PE and school sport, such as the expectation of a separate sport kit in addition to their everyday school uniform, causing a possible barrier due to the associated cost. In doing so, schools need to think about the total cost of all items of uniform or clothing they are asking parents to provide, including PE kit. They should try to avoid being overly specific in kit requirements for different sports and keep the number of items, particularly the number of branded items, to a minimum. They should also ensure arrangements are put in place for parents to acquire second hand school uniforms (for example through periodic second-hand uniform sales or swap shops).

To mitigate this cost pressure, Wright Robinson College supported pupils and their families by establishing a 'boot room' which is **stocked with graduated pupils' donated kit** and can be loaned to any pupil free of charge. This sustainable option ensures the

continuation of accessibility for pupils who may struggle to continually access appropriate sports kit from home.

It is also important to recognise that PE uniform can cause a barrier to participation for specific groups of pupils, particularly girls. Therefore, schools should be flexible in their approach to PE uniform to encourage equal access to the subject.

The Government has published non-statutory uniform guidance<sup>39</sup> to help schools in developing and implementing their school uniform policy and to consider their equalities responsibilities in relation to uniform policies. The guidance strongly recommends that schools engage with parents and pupils when designing their uniform policy and that their views should be considered in determining the final policy.

In addition, the non-statutory uniform guidance contains a number of recommendations which contribute to supporting pupils, especially girls, to take part in sport and PE, such as; considering how comfortable the proposed uniform will be for pupils; ensuring the uniform is suitable and safe for pupils who walk or cycle to school, for instance, by allowing pupils to wear a coat which they could be visible in when it is dark going home; and choosing a PE kit which is practical, comfortable, appropriate to the activity involved, and affordable.

Marshland High School, a secondary school, has implemented the option of a non-branded PE kit, allowing parents the flexibility to purchase these items from the high street or online. In a proactive move towards sustainability and cost-effectiveness, Marshland High School encourages families to return good-quality items of uniform to school. This initiative enables parents and carers to donate or exchange second-hand items that are in good condition, developing a sense of community and reducing the financial burden on families.

The school also recognises the diverse financial circumstances of pupils' families and offers financial support to those in need. Eligible parents and carers can receive assistance covering up to 75% of the cost of required uniform items, ensuring that financial constraints do not hinder pupils from adhering to the school's dress code. The

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<sup>39</sup> [Non Statutory Guidance: School Uniform - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/non-statutory-guidance-school-uniform)

school emphasises the importance of PE for all pupils, regardless of their ability to participate fully in practical aspects due to reasons such as illness or injury. Therefore, pupils are encouraged to engage in alternative roles, such as becoming an official, coach, or helper during PE lessons.

Similarly, Wickersley School and Sports College in Rotherham, is undergoing adjustments to their uniform policy. The school aims to alleviate financial burdens on families while considering the effect on uniform providers. From September 2023, the PE Uniform policy changed and branded PE t-shirts became the only compulsory purchase for PE. To accompany this, plain black hoodies, or sweatshirts, along with plain black PE shorts or sports bottoms, are acceptable. These modifications have the potential to save the average family £40, contributing to financial relief for parents and carers.

The changes reflect Wickersley School and Sports College's commitment to providing financial relief to families without compromising the relationship with uniform providers. By simplifying the uniform requirements, the school aims to create a more cost-effective and flexible approach, developing a collaborative effort between the school and parents.

## **Equality of access for children with SEND**

### **Summary of ideas presented by schools:**

- **Always maintain ambition for the pupils' outcomes when planning for special educational needs and disabilities.**
- **Access the Inclusion hub and other National Governing Body resources to find adaptations of sports and physical activities.**

Ofsted<sup>40</sup> recently reported that pupils with SEND are supported to achieve well in PE in just over half of the schools they surveyed. They identified three elements that contributed to this success:

- the curriculum end points are clearly defined and ambitious for all.

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<sup>40</sup> [OFSTED Physical education Subject Report - September 2023](#)

- staff (including teaching assistants and unqualified staff teaching PE) are well trained and supported to implement specific strategies for pupils with SEND.
- staff have clear, specific, and actionable information to support them in meeting their pupils' needs in a PE setting.

Mainstream, special and alternative provision settings can access support to provide high quality PE, sport, and physical activity to their pupils with SEND through the new Inclusive Education Hub hosted on the Activity Alliance website<sup>41</sup>. The Hub has been created via collaboration between schools and sector partners and is funded by the Department for Education. Schools can use the self-assessment tool to reflect on their current practice and receive personalised reports recommending resources, actions, and points to consider. The Youth Sport Trust has worked with Lead Inclusion Schools to create a toolkit that supports teachers to understand the motivation, confidence, and competence of girls with autism. The toolkit provides a range of practical ideas to help more girls with autism to benefit from PE and sport's ability to develop social skills, forge friendships and increase confidence and resilience<sup>42</sup>.

Aylesbury High School used pupil voice effectively to identify a specific group of pupils in their school that needed additional support. Through this, the school identified children who were supporting with care duties at home were hesitant to join extra-curricular clubs and lacked a sense of belonging within the school. Collaborating with the school's wellbeing team, staff identified young carers who reached out to wellbeing colleagues, in addition to those who were more reserved, and those lacking confidence to attend sports clubs. The 'Safe Space' club, an invitation-only initiative, was established to encourage a supportive dynamic for those with lower confidence levels.

Each session begins with an innovative check-in using emojis laid out on the gym floor, allowing pupils to stand on the emoji representing their current feelings. Discussions on different wellbeing topics are followed by activities, such as memory challenges or relays with mental health toolkits, lasting approximately 10 minutes. Practical activities, including raising heart rates or yoga, are then integrated, aligning with the session's theme. The session concludes with the emoji activity, showcasing improvement in

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<sup>41</sup> [Inclusion 2024 Inclusive PE hub \(activityalliance.org.uk\)](https://activityalliance.org.uk)

<sup>42</sup> [Supporting Girls with Autism - Youth Sport Trust](#)

emotional states. Although the club currently has about six recurring pupils, there has been a noticeable improvement in their confidence, engagement, and sense of belonging. Teaching these pupils in regular PE lessons has also revealed increased engagement in physical activity when surrounded by peers. A member of the PE team at the school is also training to be a SENCO and to develop their expertise and training is introducing 'Sensory Circuits' in PE which helps better target the pupils' needs.

Many sports and activities have adaptations available to make them more **accessible to a range of pupils**. Shoreham Academy PE staff worked closely with their Inclusion and Learning Support team, who identified a particular group of pupils when they were in year 7. This group included pupils with Muscular Dystrophy, Downs Syndrome, Autism, Speech, Language and Communication Needs, Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs, hearing and vision impairments and a range of Specific Learning Needs. Their strategy was to run a pilot in which these pupils were grouped in the same class with an experienced high performing PE teacher and two teaching assistants. They co-planned to adapt learning activities, while ensuring that these pupils were still accessing the ks3 PE core knowledge and ambitious learning outcomes. The school purchased **new equipment for accessible activities** such as Boccia, Goalball and New Age Kurling with other strategies undertaken simultaneously, all influencing each other such as:

- Arranging CPD from Activity Alliance for the whole department. This included a 3-hour workshop plus follow-up online learning and access to further resources.
- Taking the pupils from the pilot group on a trip to Sussex County Cricket Club's annual Inclusivity Day.
- Sussex Cricket delivering inclusive Table Cricket Sessions with the pilot group to prepare for a tournament at the County ground.
- An additional SEND Inclusion event added to the Primary School Sport Coordinators calendar, led by pupils from the pilot group.

The pupils have been able to access a high-quality PE curriculum and experience success. Many of these pupils have also progressed to extra-curricular clubs, enabling them to enter a range of local competitions.



## Further information

### Other relevant departmental advice and statutory guidance

- [School Sport and Activity Action Plan - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115111/school-sport-and-activity-action-plan-2017-2020.pdf) – Published July 2023.
- [National curriculum in England: PE programmes of study - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115111/school-sport-and-activity-action-plan-2017-2020.pdf)
- [PE and sport premium for primary schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115111/school-sport-and-activity-action-plan-2017-2020.pdf)
- [Get Active: a strategy for the future of sport and physical activity - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115111/school-sport-and-activity-action-plan-2017-2020.pdf)
- [The Cost of School Uniforms - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115111/school-sport-and-activity-action-plan-2017-2020.pdf)
- [Charging for school activities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115111/school-sport-and-activity-action-plan-2017-2020.pdf)

### Other departmental resources

- [Opening Schools Facilities | Active Partnerships](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115111/school-sport-and-activity-action-plan-2017-2020.pdf)
- [Ofsted: Subject report series: PE - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115111/school-sport-and-activity-action-plan-2017-2020.pdf) – Published September 2023.
- [Ofsted: Research review series: PE - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115111/school-sport-and-activity-action-plan-2017-2020.pdf) – Published March 2022
- [Gender questioning children: draft schools and colleges guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115111/school-sport-and-activity-action-plan-2017-2020.pdf)
- [Non Statutory Guidance: School Uniform - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115111/school-sport-and-activity-action-plan-2017-2020.pdf)
- [Health and safety for school children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115111/school-sport-and-activity-action-plan-2017-2020.pdf)
- [Health and safety on educational visits - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115111/school-sport-and-activity-action-plan-2017-2020.pdf)
- [Wraparound childcare guidance for schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115111/school-sport-and-activity-action-plan-2017-2020.pdf)



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