

PE and School Sport Initiative

Progress in the implementation in Development Centre schools in Wales 2004 - 2005



BUDDSODDWR MEWN POBL
INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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Introduction

1 The purpose of this report is to respond to the request from the Welsh Assembly Government that Estyn continue to monitor the impact of the PE and School Sport (PESS) initiative during its third full year of operation. The report summarises the main findings from visits to twelve PESS Development Centres during 2004 and early 2005, and discussions with:

- advisers with responsibility for PE in 9 LEAs;
- headteachers, teachers and pupils;
- officers from the Sports Council for Wales; and
- consultants appointed to progress the different strands of the initiative.

2 HMI have now visited and evaluated progress in development centres in every LEA in Wales at least once and have made two visits to six of them. The report makes a number of recommendations for further action to build on the success of the initiative thus far. This initiative will be subject to a detailed evaluation by Estyn in 2005–2006.

Main Findings

3 The PESS initiative is having an increasingly positive impact on the number of opportunities available to children and the quality of provision and standards of achievement in physical education in development centres in Wales.

4 Teachers' access to high quality continuing professional development, particularly in the primary sector, has greatly increased their confidence and competence in teaching PE. As a result, they have higher expectations of pupils' performance. In particular, primary school standards in dance, games and gymnastics have improved considerably. A significant proportion of all this continuing professional development has focused on improving assessment in PE. Even so, many teachers still identify this as an area where they need more training.

5 Continued developmental work on transition from KS2 to KS3 is improving continuity and progression in physical education between the key stages in a number of areas of activity. PE Teachers in comprehensive schools report that pupils have better levels of physical education knowledge, understanding and skills on entry to Year 7 than they had prior to the initiative.

6 The initiative has improved pupils' behaviour and attitudes in primary and secondary schools. This is producing benefits across the curriculum, in lunch and break times, in extra-curricular time and within the wider community.

7 Partnerships with other organisations are flourishing. In particular, cooperative work with Dragon Sport and the Healthy Schools' Scheme is of great value to schools, pupils and the organisations themselves.

8 Given that it is standard practice for schools and departments to plan over both a three-year and a one-year period, the termly release of funding from the Sports Council, and the uncertainty about the level of funding, continue to make forward planning difficult for development centre schools.

9 The initiative is most successful where a specialist physical education adviser works closely with the PESS coordinator to drive progress, provide support in development centre schools and monitor and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the initiative. Where the initiative is managed through local authority Sports Development Units there is still too much emphasis on school sport and extra-curricular activity and not enough on curriculum physical education.

10 The specialists who work with centres, with continuing professional development and initial teacher education and training, continue to work effectively. There has been very good progress on the specialist projects of health related exercise, gymnastics and ICT. Progress on the dance project has been slower to date.

Recommendations

In order to develop and sustain the impact of the initiative on standards in PE:

R1 The Welsh Assembly Government should:

- sustain the initiative, and look for opportunities to extend it so that it can be made available to more schools;
- consider the need for further funding for the Dragon Sport initiative into KS3, to complement and extend the work undertaken by PESS in secondary schools.

R2 LEAs should:

- maintain regular contact with the PESS coordinator to monitor and evaluate the impact of the initiative;
- make sure that the initiative has a clear physical education curriculum focus;
- make sure that schools have access to specialist PE advice and support; and
- not expect PESS coordinators to act inappropriately as specialist PE advisers.

R3 Sports Council for Wales should:

- continue disseminating good practice to all schools in Wales;
- ensure that new funding is distributed equitably to all new development centres in Wales;
- agree annual indicative funding for development centres with LEAs; and
- make sure that all the specialists working with development centres are able to give priority to advice and support rather than management and organisational meetings.

R4 Development Centre Schools should:

- identify ways to sustain the initiative in the longer term.

Implementation of the recommendations of the last report

11 Significant progress has been made in implementing many of the recommendations included in the last report. The Welsh Assembly Government has made funding available to extend the initiative for three years, to the end of 2007-2008. This will benefit more schools in Wales, and ensure that the initiative is inclusive.

12 More LEAs now integrate the management of the initiative with existing plans, programmes and priorities. At the same time, they are in regular contact with their PESS coordinator in order to monitor the effectiveness of the initiative. Most local authorities now manage the PESS initiative through their education departments. Even where leisure departments take responsibility for the initiative, there is an improving focus on physical education.

13 The specialist appointed to progress the initial teacher training strand of the PESS initiative continues to work with teacher training institutions towards agreeing the essential content for all courses. Both the specialists with responsibility for initial teacher training and continuing professional development have worked on identifying and addressing training needs in PE in the first years of professional development. These two specialists, in partnership with the Sports Council PESS managers, facilitate and provide high quality professional development opportunities.

14 Wales now has 2 representatives (through the PESS initiative) who sit on the British association of advisers and lecturers in PE's Professional Development Board. This body provides quality assurance for professional development opportunities across the UK. The Welsh representatives will present PESS continuing professional development opportunities to the board for quality-assurance and kite marking, thus raising the profile both of the individual courses and the initiative.

15 The Sports Council for Wales has raised the profile of the initiative nationally through its PESS website. Many local authorities also have a PESS page on their individual websites. The Council has also issued PESS Coordinators with marketing and press packs to help raise the local profile further. The Council regularly update the Assembly Government on the progress of the initiative

16 Communication with Directors of Education and other stakeholders is now more regular and open than at the time of the previous report. In response to requests from some LEAs, the Sports Council for Wales is beginning to delegate funding and decision-making more directly in an attempt to improve local management and value for money.

17 The Sports Council for Wales is also arranging for the sharing of good practice to all schools in a number of ways. However, there is still much work to be done to ensure that all schools in Wales can benefit from the successes of the PESS initiative. Good practice is currently shared by:

- publication on the PESS website;
- opening development centre courses to all schools in the locality; and

- distributing a 'Playground Package', developed by PESS coordinators, to all LEAs, and providing tutor training to accompany the resource.

The impact of the Development Centres

18 There are now 45 development centres fully operational in Wales, with another 4 preparing to start in during 2005. Further funding of the initiative from the Welsh Assembly Government, with accompanying support from LEAs would allow a total of up to 66 centres across Wales.

19 The experiences of the pilot development centres have enabled subsequent centres to make progress more quickly. The longest established centres have identified the activities that have had the greatest impact, and should now be able to sustain their work whether or not they receive the same level of specific funding. All development centres now share good practice effectively within and between centres in each LEA. This sharing is not restricted to LEA boundaries, but extends across wider geographic regions.

20 Many LEAs see PESS as one of the most successful local and national initiatives. In the best cases, the LEA includes the PESS initiative in its strategic plans. Most local authority Sports Development Units work effectively with PESS coordinators to allow schools access to facilities and coaches.

21 Partnership working in the development centres is well established and successful. The links with the Dragon Sport initiative are particularly strong and effective, and enable pupils to experience an increasingly wide range of activities with well-qualified leaders. PESS and the Welsh Network of Healthy Schools coordinators are also collaborating more closely in order to share the benefits of both initiatives. A group of PESS coordinators has written the healthy schools' Physical Activity assessment tool, and a training day has been held for healthy schools officers and PESS coordinators to share good practice.

22 Headteachers recognise that quality physical education and sport provision have a positive impact on pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem. Behaviour and attitudes to school have improved as a result of the initiative.

23 PESS coordinators manage the growing number of development centres well and deal very effectively with all administrative issues. Most work closely with local managers to ensure that the managers are able to work to best effect on physical education issues. However, a few LEAs need to discuss further with development centre managers and coordinators to agree respective roles and responsibilities. Where this does not happen, some coordinators act independently in ways that are not wholly appropriate.

24 Specialists are attached to groups of development centres across the country. They make an important contribution to the work of the centres. However, the time they can spend with the centres is limited, and they spend too much time in management meetings. Their high levels of expertise should be channelled more effectively into practical advice and support.

25 All development centres recognise the contribution that the application of ICT makes to learning and teaching. Most have identified the contribution that physical education and sport can make to pupils' key skills, in particular to literacy. Some centres have undertaken innovative projects, and have shared the results with other centres and regions.

26 The successful partnership working between Dragon Sport and the PESS initiative has significantly extended pupils' experiences both in the curriculum and in out-of-school-hours-learning clubs and activities. This, along with the development of links with local Sports Development Officers, and the increasingly shared use of partner-schools' and Leisure Centres' facilities has raised the expectations of primary pupils and improved standards in games. Unfortunately, secondary schools cannot sustain these opportunities because the Dragon Sport initiative only operates in primary schools.

Initial Teacher Education and Training

27 The time currently provided for physical education in teacher training institutions across Wales still varies considerably. No other subject carries with it to the same extent the inherent health and safety implications that are found in physical education. It is crucial, therefore, that all institutions in Wales agree and follow the essential components for PE in an initial teacher-training course. Physical education specialists in all higher education institutions in Wales are working hard together to ensure they provide a common, quality experience for trainees, within the time limitations, to ensure consistency in pupils' learning experiences across the country.

28 Recent reports from higher education institutions in Wales indicate that time for physical education, particularly in the primary phase, will be reduced in the next academic year, and that, in some institutions, non-specialists may be involved in delivery. The effects of these decisions remain to be seen, but they are unlikely to improve the preparation of teachers entering the profession.

Continuing Professional Development

29 Professional development opportunities provided by the initiative in its early years have focused mainly on non-specialist primary teachers. Over 2500 teachers have received training, since the initiative began, in more than 250 different training opportunities. This training has influenced teaching strategies, and significantly improved teachers' knowledge and understanding of physical education. The quality of physical education teaching in primary schools has improved appreciably. There has also been a considerable impact on teachers' confidence, enthusiasm and commitment. A significant proportion of all this professional development has focused on improving assessment in PE. Even so, many teachers still identify this as an area where they need more training.

30 As part of the PESS continuing professional development strand, the Sports Council for Wales carried out an audit of continuing professional development needs. This identified the teaching of physical education, to children with special education needs within mainstream classes, as an area of concern to many teachers. The Council has already appointed a special education needs specialist, with a physical

education background, to provide much needed advice and support, and to develop resources for teachers. This will be a major focus for the PESS initiative, and will support the Welsh Assembly Government's inclusion agenda.

31 The Sports Council for Wales, in association with the British association of advisers and lecturers in PE, has produced a Code of Practice for continuing professional development, as part of the PESS initiative, to raise standards throughout Wales. The document clarifies the expectations that teachers and providers of PE should share about professional development opportunities. It sets the standard for continuing professional development PE activities, and supports high quality provision throughout Wales. This will improve the quality of professional development and lead to greater consistency in training across the country.

Specialist projects

Health Related Exercise

32 Selected development centres piloted draft resources for key stages 1 to 4 during this academic year, and a review of the materials took place in mid Wales in November. Following amendments to the content and design of the resources, they were sent to ACCAC, Estyn, Welsh Assembly Government Health Promotion Division and a selection of PE and PSE Advisors for consultation. In addition, advisors, lecturers and healthy schools officers attended a briefing session in Mid Wales in November.

33 In partnership with the Youth Sports Trust, the resource will be published on CD in December 2005. The Sports Council for Wales will then train tutors to support teachers in delivering the resource to all schools in Wales. However, the resources are not user-friendly enough at present, particularly for non-specialist primary teachers. If they are to be used effectively, they will need substantial reduction and refinement before they are produced on CD.

ICT in PE

34 Development centre schools have been working on recommendations for using ICT in PE. These include the use of ICT in PE for:

- organisation of programmes, tournaments and events;
- assessment and recording;
- teaching and learning;
- research and evaluation; and
- pupil performance and analysis using visual imagery.

The pilot schools have shared good practice and recommended a variety of methods of improving the use of ICT in PE.

35 The PESS manager has been investigating the potential use and structure of an interactive web site for PESS. The National Grid for Learning will test a PESS sub-site during the summer term, which will then be open to all schools in September 2005. The suggested content includes:

- a visual image bank;
- templates for worksheets, presentations and handouts;

- a bulletin board for posting information for teachers;
- research, monitoring and evaluation information;
- case studies and sharing of information;
- documents created through development centres; and
- useful contacts and websites.

Both of these initiatives will be of great value to schools in what has been an underdeveloped area in physical education.

36 The Sports Council for Wales organised an interactive ICT conference in March 2005, aimed specifically at secondary school PE specialists, to share the experiences of the pilot schools and to provide first-hand experience of the resources that will be available. Further conferences are planned, including one for primary teachers, to ensure that as many teachers as possible are alerted to the resources emerging from PESS, some of which will enhance the teaching of health related exercise, gymnastics and dance.

Gymnastics

37 The PESS initiative and Welsh Gymnastics have established very good links. The initial focus of their work has been to raise standards and the confidence levels of teachers in primary schools. Gymnastics activities, training and resources have been a priority for many development centres. PE advisors and higher education institution lecturers provided valuable advice on the content of the resources and training. Schools have already benefited from the identification of a number of examples of good practice, new methods of teaching and training, schemes and units of work and classroom materials.

38 The gymnastics specialists have produced a draft framework for KS1 and 2. This is accompanied by teachers' and pupils' resources and has been very successfully tested in schools. The Sports Council for Wales is now investigating potential funding partnerships to enable the resources to be available to all schools.

Dance

39 The recommendations from the National Dance Conference in September 2004 formed the basis for the PESS Dance Action Plan. Recommendations outside the PESS remit were passed to the key dance organisations in Wales. Community Dance Wales organised a follow up session in October. Since then progress has been made on a variety of aspects. PESS coordinators have developed good links with schools and community dance practitioners, with a number of good practice case studies emerging.

40 The Arts Council Wales and the Sports Council for Wales have produced useful guidance notes for development centres and local authorities applying for Arts Council funding towards dance activities. The guidance has been distributed to all interested parties, with a few development centres already receiving grants to extend work within their schools.

Management of the initiative

41 Each LEA PESS coordinator manages at least two development centres. The Sports Council for Wales' PESS manager manages the whole initiative efficiently and effectively. Issues that were identified last year, surrounding the need for effective liaison arrangements with LEAs, have been addressed.

42 PESS coordinators are also working very effectively in supporting local managers and schools in their development centres. However, the Sports Council for Wales should encourage every LEA to undertake continual review and monitoring of the role and work of the coordinator. Despite the highlighting of this issue last year, some LEAs without a PE adviser continue to use the PESS coordinator to provide specialist PE advice and support to schools. If the coordinator has no curriculum PE background, or limited experience, this is wholly inappropriate. It places both the coordinator and the local authority in an extremely vulnerable position.

43 The Sports Council for Wales needs to reconsider alternative ways of releasing funding for development centres. The Council expects development centres to plan over one and three year periods. Yet, centres find this exceedingly difficult because they only know what funding they will receive from the Sports Council on a termly basis. The Council needs to agree indicative budgets for the whole year to enable development centres and schools to plan effectively and efficiently.

Good practice examples

44 The following examples indicate particularly successful outcomes of the PESS initiative.

Management of the Initiative

One LEA in North West Wales has included PESS in its Education Strategic Plan. This makes the PESS initiative a high priority. The initiative has a similarly high priority in the lead comprehensive school in the LEA's first development centre. Here PESS is the third priority area in the school development plan after literacy and numeracy. In this comprehensive school, the senior management team recognises PESS KS2/3 transition plans and practices as examples of best practice and encourages other departments to develop similar curricular links with partner primary schools.

The authority works closely and effectively with the LEA's PE adviser, who reports regularly to senior officers on developments in both of the authority's development centres. The PE adviser works closely with the PESS coordinator, who has previous experience in sports development, to provide high quality professional development to improve the PESS coordinator's knowledge and understanding of curriculum issues. This has increased the PESS coordinator's effectiveness in his work with schools.

The LEA's finance officer manages the budget for the initiative. He sends monthly accounts to both the PE adviser and the PESS coordinator. This has eased the financial planning demands placed on the PESS coordinator, who, in common with coordinators all over Wales, does not have a specialist finance background.

Behaviour, attitudes and partnerships

This junior school in North East Wales is situated in an area of high social deprivation and is a Community First area. The school has fewer than 100 pupils, half of whom are eligible for free school meals. A large majority of these pupils has special educational needs and behavioural problems.

The headteacher is driving the PESS initiative forward. She has organised local schools to focus on particular sports at specific times of the year, so that area festivals can take place after all the schools have completed a half-term of work on a particular activity. In representing the school, pupils at her school now have the same opportunities as pupils in more advantaged areas who have been playing in competitions for some years. It has also resulted in pupils learning to work together better.

An added, and not entirely expected, benefit has been the noticeable increase in the confidence and self-esteem of the children. They carry over the discipline essential in high quality physical education and school sport into the life of the school. This

has given pupils a sense of purpose. As a result, the behaviour and attitudes of disaffected pupils has noticeably improved. Pupils across the ability range are now achieving more than ever across the curriculum.

Parental involvement with the school has also increased because parents attend matches and festivals to support their children. This has not previously been a feature of the school. There are also better relationships between primary schools in the area.

There has been a major breakthrough in links with the local leisure centre, and relationships between the centre and local pupils have improved dramatically. The school now has a better reputation in the community. Children from the school are able to use the facilities free of charge as part of their PE lessons. The headteacher also takes children to the centre for an after school swimming club. Children also use the centre out of school hours, and are encouraging their parents to use the facilities as well.

Sharing good practice

One PE adviser, with responsibility for four LEAs in South East Wales, organised a day, entitled 'Closing the Gap – a celebration of good practice'. The aim of the event was to share the outcomes from the development centres in all the authorities. The adviser invited a representative from each school in the four authorities to the event. A range of exhibitors, who support the PESS initiative, also attended the event. These included ICT software companies, physical education equipment suppliers, Dragon Sport and Fitness Wales.

All the development centres displayed a range of their work. This included practical demonstrations of gymnastics and dance by pupils, teaching and learning resources developed in specific development centres to support their priorities, and portfolios of pupils' ICT work in PE.

The national PESS manager provided a delegate pack for all attendees. This contained information about the national initiative, including the specialist projects. The adviser and the PESS coordinators also provided a local pack with information about the work of all the local development centres. Teachers from development centre schools were on hand to elaborate on their work and to answer any questions.

During the day, teachers took part in a number of group-discussions about the initiative and the potential it provides for all schools. Teachers' were extremely positive about the opportunities to contribute to and debate issues, and many intend progressing selected parts of the initiative in their own schools, without specific funding from PESS.

One of the PE advisers in North Wales will coordinate and host a similar event in July, involving all the North Wales development centres.