



Estyn

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Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

Physical education for pupils with learning difficulties: Identifying good practice



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



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Estyn's reports follow its guidance for the writing and editing of reports, which is available on the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk). The table below shows the terms that Estyn uses and a broad idea of their meaning. The table is for guidance only.

Nearly all	with very few exceptions
Most	90% or more
Many	70% or more
A majority	over 60%
Half/around half	close to 50%
A minority	below 40%
Few	below 20%
Very few	less than 10%

Introduction and background

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Welsh Assembly Government with advice on the standards and quality of provision within schools for physical education and school sport for pupils with learning difficulties and to identify good practice in this area.
- 2 Relevant in the context of this report is the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to:
 - achieving social inclusion and providing equal opportunities,
 - tackling barriers to learners' high achievements of standards; and
 - making Wales a healthier and better-educated country.
- 3 Also relevant is a more general concern about the health and fitness levels of children and young people in Wales. The National Assembly for Wales and the Sports Council for Wales have responded to these concerns, in part, by promoting the physical education and school sport initiative (PESS; see Appendix 1).
- 4 The evidence base for the report draws on:
 - interviews and lesson observations in 29 mainstream schools (16 primary and 13 secondary schools) including those with attached units and pupil referral units, and six special schools in 16 local authorities across Wales;
 - observation of professional development provision for secondary school teachers;
 - interviews with pupils;
 - interviews with officers of local authorities, including physical education advisers and PESS co-ordinators;
 - interviews with officers from the Sports Council for Wales; and
 - further documentary evidence, including Estyn school inspection reports published between September 2005 to September 2008.
- 5 Around two-thirds of the schools visited have been involved in the PESS initiative and were identified as showing good practice in the provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- 6 The fieldwork covered pupils who have a wide range of learning difficulties and varied special educational needs, including:
 - cognition and learning difficulties;
 - communication and interaction difficulties;

- sensory and/or physical impairment;
- profound and complex needs; and
- social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

7 For some of these pupils, their learning needs require little or no special arrangements for them to access physical education fully, whilst others require a much higher level of differentiated planning and support.

Main findings

- 8 The report includes many examples of good practice in the teaching and learning of physical education for pupils with learning difficulties from schools across Wales.
- 9 In many of the schools visited, most pupils with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress in physical education. Standards in physical education for pupils with special educational needs are good or very good in many of the primary and secondary schools visited. Learners in almost all schools who are, or have been, involved in the PESS initiative make good progress.
- 10 In almost all the special schools visited, where teaching has high expectations, learners achieve very high standards. This means that pupils often make very good progress in relation to their ability and the context in which they learn. Many pupils with special educational needs also respond well to the challenges of outdoor and adventurous activities.
- 11 In a very few schools, pupils with special educational needs are not included enough in the activities of mainstream classes or schools. This means that these pupils do not develop their motor skills or achieve as well as they could in physical education and outdoor and adventurous activities.
- 12 The extent to which pupils in pupil referral units that are attached to mainstream schools are included in physical education lessons is variable. In the best cases, there is full integration of pupils from attached units and for these pupils the experiences in physical education are generally very good.
- 13 In all the special schools in the sample, teachers of physical education are very skilled. In these schools, many teachers set high standards and have high expectations of pupils.
- 14 In the best practice, which was evident in about 40% of all schools visited, teachers have the experience and confidence to make good provision for pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs. However, in a few schools, teachers clearly lack sufficient subject knowledge to plan progressive tasks to challenge pupils effectively. This means that the learning is not productive and pupils lose interest easily. In a very few primary schools, the pace of the lesson is too slow.
- 15 In most schools visited, formative and diagnostic feedback is a feature of most lessons. This helps to raise pupils' confidence and self-esteem. In the very few schools where assessment is poor, there is no policy in place or the policy that exists is not monitored well enough to make sure that it is used consistently. In these same schools, pupils' individual needs are only assessed through Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and pupils are not always given attainment levels at the end of the key stage.
- 16 In the schools visited, there is generally good liaison between schools in a PESS partnership. This means that these schools are able to discuss and share good practice and issues of concern. However, cluster arrangements do not always include special schools that may be near to them. This means that mainstream

schools are not always aware of some of the good practice that exists in physical education in special schools, and special school staff are not aware of good practice in physical education in mainstream schools.

- 17 Generally, the level of resources and equipment for pupils with special educational needs in physical education is adequate. In many cases it has been improved appropriately through involvement in the PESS project. However, not all teachers know about the range of differentiated equipment available and this limits the range of activities that can be offered to pupils.
- 18 In many schools, pupils who usually have the support of a learning assistant in the classroom have this support withdrawn during their physical education lessons. This practice should be reviewed. It means that many pupils with special educational needs do not have additional support in physical education when they need it. As a result, these pupils do not make enough progress.
- 19 There are not enough professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their expertise in teaching physical education to pupils with specific learning needs, for example, how to support pupils in mainstream schools with communication difficulties or challenging behaviour.

Recommendations

The Welsh Assembly Government should:

- R1 consider how best to extend the good practice in provision for pupils with special educational needs in physical education identified in this report.

Local authorities, together with partners, should:

- R2 take steps to cascade the good practice that exists in physical education in special schools to leaders and managers, and teachers of physical education in mainstream schools; and
- R3 ensure that appropriate opportunities for professional development are available to help all staff, including coaches and outside agencies, meet the needs and raise standards of achievement for all pupils with special educational needs in physical education.

Schools should:

- R4 work with local authorities to share the best practice, particularly in special schools, in meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs in physical education;
- R5 ensure that all pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools are integrated appropriately in mainstream physical education classes including, where appropriate, those in units;
- R6 improve the quality of assessment and target setting for pupils with special educational needs in physical education and plan more effectively to meet the specific needs of these pupils, including noting plans in IEPs when pupils have a need in physical education;
- R7 regularly review the resources available for pupils with special educational needs in physical education, including deploying learning support assistants to physical education lessons and the use of differentiated equipment; and
- R8 liaise closely with sports coaches and outside agencies working with pupils in physical education to make sure learning activities are appropriately planned to meet the specific special physical educational needs of pupils.

Achievement

- 20 In many schools visited, most pupils with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress in physical education. Learners in almost all schools that are or have been involved in the PESS initiative make good progress. Many learners, of all ages in all the schools visited, take part successfully in a wide range of physical education activities.
- 21 Pupils achieve very high standards in the special schools visited. This is because there are high expectations of learners, including those with profound and multiple difficulties. As a result, pupils often make very good progress in relation to their ability and the context in which they learn.
- 22 In many schools, pupils make good progress in developing their key skills through physical education, particularly in listening, problem-solving and working together. This helps them make progress not only in physical education but also socially.
- 23 Many pupils with special educational needs attain well in mixed-ability settings and they report that they enjoy taking part in the same activities as other pupils. In one secondary and one primary school visited, pupils work alongside a 'buddy'. In these schools, the pupils with special educational needs are able to work alongside another pupil that they feel comfortable working with in their physical education lessons. This arrangement gives the pupils confidence and the feedback from the 'buddy', who has had some training in this role, helps them improve their skills and performance. In the primary school, pupils also have the opportunity to learn sign language and a few pupils use their new skills to support hearing-impaired children in class.
- 24 Many pupils with special educational needs respond well to challenges in outdoor and adventurous activities such as climbing and abseiling and can make rapid progress, in common with others.
- 25 All schools in the sample are able to identify specific children with special educational needs who achieve success in a variety of different sporting activities, including those who represent the school in team games or gain county, area or national representation honours.
- 26 The following case study shows how the senior and middle managers in one mainstream school in Wales have worked well together to make sure that a pupil with very complex physical and communication difficulties was able to achieve and attain at the very highest level in relation to his ability in physical education.

Case study 1

Context: The school is a comprehensive school attended by boys and girls aged 11 to 18. There are 853 pupils on roll; 26 of these pupils have a statement of special educational needs; a further 223 pupils receive special learning support. The school has above average numbers of pupils with special educational needs. All pupils receive two one-hour lessons of physical education per week and additional lessons are timetabled for those pupils taking external examinations in physical education.

Strategy: The school has a very effective inclusion policy. Pupils are taught physical education in mixed-ability groups. There is good, strong leadership by the head teacher to make sure all pupils have equal access to the curriculum. The school special educational needs co-ordinator, the head of the physical education department and the support assistant plan very well together to meet the needs of learners with special educational needs. A statemented pupil with very complex physical and communication needs has the support of a learning support assistant in physical education.

Action: Senior and middle managers work well together to ensure that all pupils with learning difficulties take a full part in physical education lessons. They meet regularly to review progress, set new goals and discuss the level of support needed for further progress to be made. For example, the pupil with complex physical and communication needs could not swim at the age of 11. The planning and support the school undertook to meet the pupil's needs in swimming included one-to-one support given in the water and at the poolside, appropriate buoyancy aids being purchased and specialist help provided from an experienced learning support assistant.

Outcome: The pupil achieves very good standards in swimming and cross-country running in relation to his abilities and context and makes outstanding progress in the subject overall. The pupil's portfolio of work for the Certificate of Education in physical education has been judged outstanding by the external moderator.

- 27 In many of the schools visited, many pupils with statements of educational needs, or who are on school action or school action plus, participate well in a range of extra-curricular activities, play for school teams and represent the school in sports competitions. In one secondary school, the percentage of pupils with special educational needs who are involved in representing the school is monitored. In this school, there are 19% of pupils involved and this proportion is increasing. In one of the secondary schools visited, a pupil with a profound hearing impairment is an example of outstanding achievement, achieving well in all aspects of the physical education curriculum. He represents the school first eleven football team and has gained sufficient confidence, through outstanding peer support, to travel to away matches without his signer. However, in a very few schools, pupils with special educational needs are not included enough in the activities of mainstream classes or schools. This means that these pupils do not develop their motor skills or achieve as well as they could in physical education and outdoor activities.
- 28 In local authorities that run schemes such as Clwb Dal i Fynd and 'wake and shake' (see glossary) where all pupils perform an aerobic routine daily, the fitness levels of

many primary school pupils with special educational needs have improved. This is due to better quality provision in physical education and other health, fitness and wellbeing programmes. In one school visited, this progress can be exemplified in the improvements made in cross-country running. Here, results of the numbers completing the course and their finishing times have improved for almost all pupils, including those with special educational needs.

- 29 Headteachers in schools involved in the PESS project report that the number of pupils with special educational needs taking part in physical education lessons and related extra-curricular activities has risen.
- 30 Achievement and participation in physical education and in extra-curricular activities is celebrated in school assemblies or presentation events in almost all the sample schools. This recognises the achievement of individuals and groups of learners in the subject and gives the subject status in the school and in the eyes of other pupils.

Identifying good practice

In the schools with the best practice in physical education for pupils with special educational needs, the following features of pupil achievement are evident:

- high expectations of pupils of all abilities and ages, resulting in higher standards of performance in physical education than previously;
- high participation levels in physical education lessons and extra-curricular activities, resulting in greater pupil enjoyment of the subject and higher fitness levels; and
- good development of key skills such as communication, problem solving and working together, in the context of physical education which helps pupils to evaluate their own and other pupils' work and greatly improves their chances of success in their lives beyond school.

Curriculum and planning

- 31 At all key stages, pupils take part in health, fitness and wellbeing activities and other areas of activity suitable to their age and level of understanding, including games, gymnastics, dance, swimming, athletics and outdoor and adventurous activities. This means that all the pupils in the schools visited learn about the value of exercise to their health and wellbeing throughout their school lives and experience an appropriately broad range of physical activities.
- 32 In almost all of the primary schools visited, pupils with special educational needs receive the recommended teaching time allocation for physical education. However, there are inconsistencies in the amount of time allocated and these inconsistencies occur for all pupils, with or without special educational needs. For example, in a few schools, pupils receive two thirty minute sessions per week, while in many schools pupils receive two weekly sessions of one hour. The majority of schools also allocate blocked time for outdoor and adventurous activities throughout the year. This time is almost always additional to the recommended teaching time.
- 33 In all the special schools visited, pupils have additional time for games and outdoor and adventurous activities. These activities include, for example, orienteering and canoeing, and help these learners to improve skills to support them in their daily lives.
- 34 In the secondary schools visited, almost all pupils with special needs experience the same amount of time in physical education lessons as all other pupils. Most key stage 3 pupils receive the recommended two hours of physical education each week and in a few schools they receive three one-hour sessions. At key stage 4, practice varies with many pupils receiving one hour and, in a few schools two hours, per week for physical education. Those pupils following external examinations in physical education have specific additional lessons.
- 35 In mainstream schools visited, the average class size is 26 pupils. Almost all pupils with special educational needs are taught physical education in mixed-ability classes in their mainstream schools, although, in one secondary school visited, pupils are set according to their academic ability. This means that many pupils with special educational needs in lower sets in this school are not fully integrated for physical education with the rest of their year group. This arrangement does not give pupils a sense of belonging amongst their peers and potentially restricts opportunities for these pupils to make appropriate progress.
- 36 In the schools visited, where there is either a special education or a pupil referral unit attached to the school, the extent of integration varies. In a few settings, there is full integration of pupils with special educational needs at every opportunity. However, in many cases, these pupils are not taught physical education alongside mainstream pupils even when they have the ability to join in the lessons. This means that these pupils are not being challenged enough.
- 37 Teachers are generally skilful and plan the broad physical education curriculum well. They are committed to the principle of inclusion. In one setting where the special and secondary schools are on the same campus, there is outstanding inclusive practice.

In this case, the special school pupils are taught alongside mainstream pupils and the most able sit external examinations, such as GCSE. The schools give pupils a full choice of activities, which means that pupils with special educational needs from both schools benefit from working alongside pupils of all abilities

- 38 In almost all mainstream schools, teachers are aware of pupils' general learning needs and abilities. In the schools visited, many pupils with special educational needs do not have learning needs specific to physical education. However, there is very little recorded in pupils' Individual Education Plans (IEPs) in relation to physical education and whether differentiated provision is required or not.
- 39 Almost all schools have clear and appropriate school and departmental policies that include reference to pupils with special needs. In the best schools, regular meetings between the physical education teacher and the special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) are held regularly to discuss individual pupils' needs and progress. Individual learning plans detail the general learning needs of the pupils and, in the majority of primary schools, targets are set for learning through physical education. In one secondary school in north Wales, the SENCO is fully involved in setting targets for pupils with special educational needs in physical education. This means that pupils in this school with special educational needs and their teachers are clear about what is expected of them. However, this does not happen enough in schools across Wales.
- 40 The quality of planning in many schools is good. However, in the primary sector, there are too many schools that rely too much on schemes of work that are produced on a county-wide basis and not adapted appropriately. In these schools, there is too little emphasis on planning to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties who require support in physical education.
- 41 In most secondary schools, the planning is good. However, there is a tendency to place the emphasis too much on skills and plans do not focus enough on how pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding can be developed.
- 42 In all the special schools visited, the physical education curriculum appropriately follows the National Curriculum. Schemes of work and planning are suitably differentiated for a wide ability range and are detailed enough to show the teaching strategy, the expected outcomes, next steps and progression.
- 43 Most of the mainstream schools visited are reviewing schemes of work in physical education to meet the needs of the revised curriculum. However, in most cases schemes of work are not always differentiated well enough to meet the needs of all pupils, especially those with specific needs in physical education, such as communication or gross motor difficulties.
- 44 In the secondary schools visited, pupils with special educational needs have full access to the physical education curriculum. Teachers report that PESS has made a good contribution to inclusive practice in physical education despite the fact that this was not its main focus. This is because PESS involves discussing how to improve provision with other teachers involved in the project, including teachers in cluster primary schools.

- 45 The case study below illustrates the very good standards achieved by pupils and the curriculum provision in one special school.

Case study 2

Context: The school is a special school with 76 pupils on roll aged 2-19 years. The school is situated on the same site as a leisure centre, primary and secondary schools. Over 60% of the school pupils have either severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. The school has been involved in the PESS project.

Strategy: The school adopts an inclusive policy and aims to meet the learning needs of all pupils. Good curriculum planning focuses on outdoor and adventurous activities and developing independent living skills. The school works well with other educational establishments, including schools and private outdoor activity providers, to share facilities and resources.

Action: All pupils at the special school take part in a range of physical education and outdoor and adventurous activities each week. A varied and challenging programme comprises activities that are appropriately adapted, including tree-climbing, canoeing, hill-walking and orienteering.

Teachers work very well as a team and have very high expectations of pupils with severe and multiple special educational needs.

Outcomes Learners respond very well to the challenges of activities. Learners' body awareness, gross motor skills, their confidence and self-esteem are greatly increased by activities which stretch them. All learners' independent living skills and sense of achievement are greatly increased through outdoor and adventurous activities. This occurs when they, for example, use a map, look after equipment and cook for themselves outdoors. Almost all learners achieve very good standards in knowledge of health and safety and they enjoy themselves.

- 46 In all schools visited, it is difficult for teachers, managers and inspectors to assess the direct impact of the PESS initiative on the standards of pupils with special educational needs in physical education. This is because it is difficult to determine from a range of strategies the factors that have had most influence on pupils' achievement and progress.
- 47 While the PESS initiative has helped schools to build on their policies and practice to support inclusive practice, schools do not collect and analyse data well enough to give full consideration to the impact of particular initiatives. Although a few schools have begun to analyse participation rates, generally schools are not always fully aware of the contribution of particular initiatives to standards in physical education or for individuals or groups of learners.
- 48 Most PESS schools use other health-related initiatives such as Dragon Sport, 5x60 and Healthy Schools (see glossary). In these schools, after-school clubs often use PESS materials and there is a healthy tuck shop that sells fruit to pupils at break times. There is also an emphasis on healthy lifestyles in the curriculum and in the themes of school assemblies.

Identifying good practice

In the schools with the best practice in physical education for pupils with special educational needs, the following features of curriculum planning and delivery are evident:

- good inclusive practice for pupils with special educational needs, including those attending on-site units;
- comprehensive policies for physical education for pupils of all abilities;
- clear identification of pupil needs including those with needs in physical education; and
- schemes of work and lesson planning that cover the range of abilities and make reference to how motor skills will be developed, and make good reference to continuity and progression.

Teaching and assessment

- 49 In many mainstream schools visited, teachers are skilled in teaching physical education. In all the special schools in the sample, teachers of the subject are very skilled. Most teaching standards are high and there are high expectations of pupils.
- 50 In the best practice encountered, which is in about 40% of schools visited, teachers have significant experience and the confidence to make good provision for pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs. In most cases, teachers plan progressive tasks that suitably challenge the pupils and this means that pupils make good progress. However, in a few schools, teachers do not have enough subject or activity knowledge to plan progressive tasks to challenge pupils effectively. This means that the learning is not productive and pupils lose interest easily. In a very few primary schools, the pace of lessons is too slow. This means that the needs of a very few special educational needs pupils, in particular those with behavioural difficulties, are not fully met.
- 51 Most teachers are able to adapt their teaching styles to benefit learners. Most also provide accurate and timely feedback to help many pupils make progress and improve their skills. However in a few schools, there is too little intervention by teachers to help pupils with special educational needs increase their understanding and improve their performance in physical education in general, but particularly in gymnastics and dance lessons in primary schools. This is particularly true where pupils have emotional or behavioural difficulties.
- 52 Many teachers of physical education in all types of school adopt a good range of teaching strategies. In many and especially primary schools, staff expertise has been enhanced by involvement in a PESS partnership. For example, primary subject co-ordinators have attended PESS training courses and cascaded information from these courses well to others teaching the subject in their school. Also, the good and sometimes very good impact of the PESS mentoring programme is evident in the quality of teaching observed in many primary schools. Through the mentoring scheme, non-specialist primary teachers report that they have benefited from the input of secondary specialist physical education teachers. Often this mentoring has taken the form of input from specialist secondary staff to deliver specific topics or demonstrate lessons. This has been of distinct benefit to pupils with special educational needs, enabling appropriately differentiated tasks to be set in physical education for pupils. However, there are too few opportunities for primary and secondary specialist physical education teachers to benefit from the expertise of staff in special schools in teaching physical education to pupils with special educational needs.
- 53 In the schools visited, the link to assessment for learning is not clear enough in plans in all types of school. Most plans emphasise skills and performance and do not take enough account of the wider learning context. Also, there is too little reference in plans to resources and equipment to meet the needs of pupils with special needs in physical education.

- 54 Where assessment is good, there is a clear policy in place that staff apply consistently. In most schools visited, formative and diagnostic feedback is a feature of most lessons. This helps to raise pupils' confidence and self-esteem. However, this is only helpful when the feedback is accurate and when the teacher is able to give clear guidance to promote learning and improve performance. In schools where there is good practice, the needs of individual pupils are identified and used to inform planning. This takes place before monitoring and assessment is carried out. In the very few schools where assessment is poor, there is no policy in place or the policy that exists is not monitored well enough to make sure that it is used consistently. In these same schools, pupils' individual needs are only assessed through IEPs and pupils are not always given attainment levels at the end of the key stage.
- 55 In all types of schools, the quality of differentiation in the planning of physical education lessons is generally good in relation to outcomes for learners. However, the use of differentiated tasks, equipment and resources is under-developed in a significant minority of schools. Most teachers, in almost all schools visited, create an inclusive and secure working environment.
- 56 In one primary school pupils, including those with special education needs, are regularly involved in peer and self-assessment tasks in physical education. This ensures high standards from pupils of all abilities in physical education. The school development plan includes a good emphasis on self-assessment and target-setting. Staff ask pupils well-designed questions to help them assess their own and other pupils' progress. Staff also keep systematic and detailed records of pupils' effort, achievement and progress and use them to good effect in planning. Staff use this high-quality assessment process to map pupils' progress effectively through the use of a 'tracking' file. This requires teachers to critically reflect on pupils' progress. Pupils in this school are also formally assessed six times each year. However, a few schools miss opportunities to engage in similar peer and self-assessment activities.
- 57 In all the schools visited, the success of pupils of all abilities is celebrated. This celebration of success is given a particularly high priority in the sample primary and special schools. This helps pupils with special educational needs to value the subject and their successes and acquire greater confidence and self-esteem.
- 58 Sports development staff from the PESS initiative work well with school staff to enhance the physical education curriculum on offer to pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs. However, where sports coaches and outside agencies are involved, the emphasis on performance often means that these coaches do not give enough attention to planning learning activities to meet the need of all pupils. This means that pupils with special educational needs, in particular, do not achieve as well as they might in these extra-curricular activities.
- 59 In a few schools, Dragon Sport coaches are used to deliver physical education lessons. In these lessons, there is an over-emphasis on coaching as opposed to teaching and too great a focus on performance rather than effective learning.

Identifying good practice

In the schools with the best practice in physical education for pupils with special educational needs, the following features of teaching and learning are evident:

- a range of teaching strategies and commitment to inclusive physical education with an emphasis on what pupils can do and not on what they find difficult;
- sound planning and appropriately differentiated activities, based on a detailed knowledge and accurate assessment, to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities, including physical abilities;
- good assessment policies and practices that are applied consistently to ensure pupil progress and achievement;
- effective support from learning support assistants and sports development staff coaches for pupils with special educational needs to improve their skill and understanding; and
- good and sometimes very good support from physical education specialist teachers who are PESS mentors for non-specialist teachers of physical education together with the 'cascading' of knowledge gained on courses to other staff.

Partnerships

- 60 Headteachers in all of the schools we visited were typically working hard to foster a very strong, positive and inclusive school ethos. Headteachers are supportive of the work of heads of department and school subject co-ordinators. They are committed to providing a wide range of opportunities through physical education to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities. They provide good leadership and offer clear direction to staff teaching physical education in all settings.
- 61 All headteachers in the primary, secondary and special schools visited have recognised the importance of physical education to the all-round development of pupils. Many headteachers report that physical education helps to raise pupils' self-esteem as well as meeting their physical development needs.
- 62 In almost all of the schools in the sample, the relationship between the subject co-ordinator, head of physical education and the school's special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) is good and this helps to enhance pupil achievement.
- 63 We found that teachers of physical education in primary and secondary schools almost always liaise well with SENCOs in relation to pupils' general needs. This enhances the provision of high quality experiences for pupils with special educational needs.
- 64 In one school visited, the SENCO identifies early years pupils with motor skills problems and uses a resource provided by the local authority to provide support in physical education lessons. Another primary school works closely with the social services department to provide support and transport for a talented athlete with learning difficulties to attend a local athletics club for specialist coaching.
- 65 Involvement in a PESS partnership has helped to establish good transition arrangements to support pupils who are moving from primary to secondary schools. In many of the schools visited, transition plans make good reference to the needs of pupils with special educational needs in physical education. However, these are not always transferred to IEPs.
- 66 In the schools visited, there is generally good liaison between schools in a PESS partnership. This means that these schools are able to discuss and share good practice and issues of concern. However, cluster arrangements do not always include special schools that may be near to them. This means that mainstream schools are not always aware of some of the good practice that exists in physical education in special schools. There is a need for most schools to develop more formal partnerships with partner or other local special schools.
- 67 All the special schools visited value partnership working and the opportunity for pupils to participate in a variety of sporting events and activities. They value the place that physical education and outdoor and adventurous activities can play in improving outcomes for their pupils. For example, a few pupils from one special school who are taught physical education in a neighbouring secondary school, have out-performed mainstream pupils in physical education external examinations. In another secondary school integrating the physical education curriculum with the special

school nearby has resulted in many of the special school pupils gaining Edexcel qualifications at entry levels 1 – 3. Special school pupils also benefit socially from the close working between their school and the secondary school. Teachers report that the special school pupils have established new friendships through attending mainstream classes in physical education.

- 68 All schools had developed good partnerships with outside agencies. These include links with the local authority, health agencies, including the school nurse, and social services. Those schools involved in the PESS initiative have established good and productive relationships with other schools in their partnership cluster. This is effective in enhancing the quality of provision for pupils. Physical education teachers in all settings make very good links to health, fitness and wellbeing projects. These projects include 5x60, Dragon Sport, and Healthy Schools (see glossary).
- 69 In the best cases, pupils benefit from a close working relationship between the physical education teacher and other colleagues, parents and outside agencies such as health workers and educational psychologists and parents. Often this helps parents appreciate that the curriculum on offer has a greater breadth than in the past. As a result, parents are better placed to encourage their child to take a full part in the subject.

Identifying good practice

In the schools with the best practice in physical education for pupils with special educational needs, the following good features are evident in their partnership arrangements:

- special schools are included in local cluster arrangements;
- primary and secondary schools come together to share good practice and plan transition arrangements to help all pupils including those with special educational needs when they change schools;
- internal partnerships between SENCOs, subject co-ordinators and heads of department are strong and productive; and
- partnership arrangements with sports development staff and professionals from other agencies meet pupils' needs and add value to the curriculum.

Resources

- 70 All the schools visited for this remit have adequate staffing in relation to class size. In all the secondary schools, lessons are taught by specialist physical education teachers. In a minority of primary schools the subject is taught by specialists but all primary schools have a physical education co-ordinator, the majority being specialist or subsidiary trained.
- 71 In many of the schools visited, there is evidence of building developments to support physical education and other activities. For example, many of the secondary and a few of the primary schools visited have recently-built sports halls or school halls. In nearly all the special schools visited, the impact of the support of the local authority, the school governing body and of the headteacher is evident in the high quality fabric of the building and in the very good resources for the subject.
- 72 Facilities for physical education are at least adequate in the primary schools visited. Pupils with special educational needs in all the primary schools visited are taught in appropriate settings and in classes of a reasonable size for physical education. In all cases, pupils have access to a hall suitable for activities such as gymnastics and dance. All the schools visited in north Wales have playground space marked with running tracks. This helps the fitness levels of all pupils, including those with special educational needs.
- 73 All the special schools visited have very good facilities for physical education and for physical therapy.
- 74 Facilities for physical education for pupils with special educational needs in the secondary schools visited are, in almost all cases, good or better. In most schools visited, pupils with special educational needs use local leisure centres for physical education lessons. Many of these are on or near to the school site.
- 75 In most of the secondary schools visited, feeder primary schools can use specialist physical education facilities, such as a sports hall and swimming pool. However, this sharing of facilities does not usually extend to the special school.
- 76 Off-site facilities, including outdoor centres, are used well by primary and special schools for curricular and extra-curricular activities. Involvement in these type of activities helps children with special educational needs become more confident.
- 77 In primary schools with purpose-built outdoor play areas, pupils benefit from additional physical activity by using break and lunch times more creatively. In one primary school in west Wales an outstanding outdoor facility with soft landing areas helps pupils, in particular those with special educational needs, to play safely and with confidence. This helps in the development of motor skills and body management. There are too few of these purpose-built areas across Wales. This means that motor skills may not be being developed as much as they could be across the country.
- 78 For most pupils with special educational needs who have the support of a learning assistant in their physical educational lessons, progress is clear and enhanced by the

close engagement with an additional adult. However, in many schools, pupils who have the support of a learning assistant in the classroom have this support withdrawn from their physical education lessons. This is often because learning support assistants are deployed elsewhere, but it can mean that resources are not being used as well as they could be to promote the learning of pupils with special educational needs, who might still need this additional support in physical education.

- 79 In many primary schools visited the skills of playground leaders in supporting pupils, including those with special educational needs, are being used well. In one primary school in north-east Wales, playground leaders have been trained in leading playground games as part of the 'In the Zone' (see glossary) scheme. This has helped pupils with special educational needs improve their social skills. The headteacher of this school also reports better behaviour at break and lunch times.
- 80 Generally, the level of resources for equipment for pupils with special educational needs in physical education is adequate and, where relevant, has been improved through involvement in the PESS project. However, teachers in a minority of schools lack awareness of the range of differentiated equipment available for purchase. This limits the range of activities that can be offered to pupils with special educational needs in physical education.
- 81 Many primary school teachers are using teaching resources, such as the pictorial cards developed as part of the PESS project for gymnastics, to good effect. These resources help to improve pupils' body awareness and body management. They also help pupils to evaluate their own and other pupils' work. This is particularly significant for pupils who have difficulties with literacy and for those whose first language is not Welsh or English. However, there are not enough resources of this type to help pupils with special educational needs in other aspects of physical education such as dance and athletics.
- 82 Generally, the PESS project has also helped teachers to address the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, in relation to accessing a wider physical education curriculum. More pupils are now being taught gymnastics and dance as well as games and swimming. In addition, pupils in most primary and all special schools benefit from a good and wide range of outdoor and adventurous activities. These include hill-walking and water activities that are often free of charge.
- 83 Although most of the primary and secondary schools, and all the special schools visited have been allocated additional funding to continue PESS developments, concerns were expressed by a few schools as to how they could find enough funding when the initiative finishes for further developments and specialist equipment for pupils with special educational needs.
- 84 All the local authorities and schools visited provide wide ranging professional development opportunities for teachers. While these are good in relation to special educational needs issues in general, teachers report that they do not deal with specific special needs in physical education, for example, communication difficulties or challenging behaviour.
- 85 The best practice in relation to professional development involves a co-ordinated programme for lesson observation among staff. Staff who attend courses cascade

the information to other staff involved in teaching physical education in their school. In the primary sector the impact of PESS dance and gymnastics courses and health-related courses are evident in the quality of planning, especially for progression, as well as in the increased confidence of teachers.

Identifying good practice

In the schools with the best practice in managing resources in physical education for pupils with special educational needs the following features are evident:

- facilities such as a sports hall and swimming pool and specialist equipment are shared amongst school phases to make efficient use of resources;
- learning support assistants are deployed well to support pupil achievement in physical education;
- teaching materials of a good quality have been developed including pictorial materials to help pupils with difficulties in literacy or pupils whose first language is not Welsh or English;
- playgrounds marked for activities such as running and other physical activities and outdoor play areas meet the needs of pupils of all abilities; and
- robust continuous professional development programmes provide opportunities for observation, short-courses and the development of materials to support pupils' specific learning needs.

Glossary

5x60	A Welsh Assembly Government initiative which aims to make secondary pupils in Wales more active through extra-curricular activities
Active Young People (AYP)	Dragon Sport, the PESS initiative and the 5 x 60 initiative under the 'Active Young People' initiative
Behavioural difficulties	Disruptive and disturbing behaviour that can include hyperactivity and a lack of concentration
Clwb Dal i Fynd	A scheme which encourages pupils to keep fit by running
Dragon sport	A Welsh Assembly Government initiative managed by the Sports Council for Wales as part of their Active Young People programme
Gross motor skills	This term refers to movement or motion and the ability required to control the large muscles of the body in activities such as walking, running or climbing.
Hearing impairment	Impairment that can range from those with a mild hearing loss to those who are profoundly deaf
Healthy Schools	The Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes (WNHSS) encourages the development of local healthy school schemes within a national framework. These local partnerships between health and educational services encourage schools in their area to promote healthy eating.
In the Zone	A playground package launched by The Sports Council for Wales. The project provides training for playground supervisors to help pupils become more active.
LEAs	Twenty-two local education authorities work in partnership with the Sports Council for Wales to manage the PESS initiative introduced by the Welsh Assembly Government
PESS	The physical education and school sport initiative. This Welsh Assembly initiative is managed by the Sports Council for Wales and aims to improve opportunities and standards in physical education in schools by developing resources and training teachers to use them well.
PESS co-ordinators	These are appointed by local authorities to manage the initiative working in partnership with the Sports Council for Wales in each local authority. A PESS co-ordinator's role is to establish development centres within the local authority and to support development centre managers in organising and implementation of their operational plans and disseminate good practice.
PESS partnerships	A PESS partnership will involve a cluster of schools, normally based on one secondary school and its main feeder primary schools.
Profound and multiple learning difficulty	Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties have a profound cognitive impairment/learning difficulty,

(PMLD)	leading to significant delay in reaching developmental milestones.
SEN	Special educational needs are defined within the SEN Code of Practice for Wales (2002) and can include disability, learning difficulties or emotional, social and behavioural difficulties.
Sports development staff	Staff employed by local authorities who provide coaching and support in particular sports
Wake and shake	A routine of exercises to music
Wales Curriculum 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single coherent framework for curriculum, assessment and qualifications 3-19 which will help schools to raise standards of achievement and widen educational opportunity • A set of revised Subject Orders which are manageable and reflect whole curriculum characteristics and those of each key stage

Appendix 1

PESS: The Physical Education and School Sport Initiative

The PESS initiative began in 2001 with one of its key aims being to raise standards in physical education in all schools across Wales. Over the past seven years, Estyn's remit evaluations of the PESS initiative have confirmed that it has provided good professional development opportunities mainly to non-specialist primary teachers. This training has influenced teaching strategies and improved teachers' knowledge, commitment to and understanding of physical education.

Four earlier remit evaluations have also confirmed that, generally, standards in physical education have improved in almost all schools involved in the PESS initiative:

- I 'PE and School Sport Initiative – Progress in the implementation in Development Centre schools in Wales 2004-05';
- II 'An in depth look at the progress made in the implementation of the PESS Action Plan' – 2006;
- III 'Progress made in the implementation of the PE and School Sport Action Plan in schools' – March 2007; and
- IV 'Progress in implementing the PE and School Sport Action Plan' (May 2008).

These reports can be found on the Estyn website at www.estyn.gov.uk