



# Improving Physical Education in Primary Schools

A report by HM Inspectorate of Education

# Improving Physical Education in Primary Schools

### Acknowledgement

Rugby and Athletic images on the front cover supplied courtesy of Angus G Johnston.

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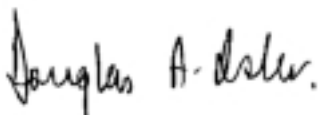
## FOREWORD

This report is the fifth in a series concerned with raising attainment in the 5-14 age range. Earlier reports in this series have consistently stressed the importance of effective teaching, high expectations and an emphasis on achievement. This report continues the same themes. It also stresses the importance of schools working with parents, communities and other agencies to promote physical education in day-to-day living.

The report shows that pupils generally achieved good or very good standards in what their teachers asked them to do in physical education but when matched against the attainment levels set out in national guidelines, there was a clear need to raise expectations of what pupils could achieve. Although the quality of learning and teaching was generally good, only about one-third of schools had very good programmes for physical education. Teachers needed to improve assessment significantly, giving pupils better feedback to improve their performance as around 60% of schools visited had important weaknesses in assessing pupils' work.

Physical education programmes within the school day are insufficient, by themselves, to address concerns about pupils' health and activity levels. The report emphasises the need for headteachers to collaborate with parents, communities and relevant agencies to promote physical education in extra-curricular, sporting and recreational activities. They should also encourage pupils to take part in sport, dance and outdoor activities in the local community to make a positive impact on their lifestyles.

The report will be of interest to a broad range of readers, including educational decision-makers at national level, education authority directorates, senior promoted staff in school, teachers, School Boards and parents. It should also be read in the context of the national debate on physical activity and health and the future report of the Physical Activity Task Force, which will be established by the Scottish Executive, in Spring 2002.



Douglas Osler  
HM Senior Chief Inspector

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In recent decades, studies have highlighted concerns about the fitness and participation in physical activities of young children. A recent study<sup>1</sup> of primary school children aged four to eleven reported a dramatic rise in childhood obesity amongst both boys and girls in Scotland. Physical education is crucial to health, fitness and well-being. It builds strength, maintains mobility, and challenges body and mind. It provides a foundation for active living and, at its best, fosters interests which continue for a lifetime.

1.2 All young people should benefit from a positive experience of physical education. From an early age they need to experience enjoyment and success through physical activity. This will help them to have confidence in their capabilities and to choose activities which match their needs and interests. It will also encourage them to continue to take part in a wide range of physical activities in childhood and beyond. Experience in the primary school years is of critical importance, therefore, to children's development of attitudes and skills.

1.3 Widening opportunities for pupils to take part in physical activities in school and beyond will provide a broad and satisfying experience relevant to a lifetime of physical activity. School programmes are not normally sufficient to sustain healthy and active lifestyles. Generally, pupils need to take part in energetic physical activity more frequently than is possible in their curricular programme. Physical education which aims to develop motivation, competence, excellence and active participation should be central in promoting an active lifestyle.

1.4 Raising achievement in physical education will help more pupils develop their physical talents to the full. High achievement brings personal success and opportunities to apply physical skills in a range of contexts. Success in physical education also enhances achievement in other areas of learning and is closely inter-related with intellectual and social development. It builds self-esteem, motivation, co-operation and concentration, and forms an important part of a balanced curriculum.

1.5 This report draws on extensive evidence from the HMI inspection programme in primary schools between January 1997 and June 2000. It also incorporates evidence from an additional 40 primary schools in 18 education authorities inspected specifically to identify and describe good practice. Since these schools were recommended by their education authorities as examples of good practice in physical education, they are not necessarily representative of all Scottish schools.

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<sup>1</sup> Chinn and Rona - published in the British Medical Journal January 2001

## 2. IMPROVING ATTAINMENT

### Attainment

2.1 The fieldwork for this report took place during the period of implementation of the 5-14 Expressive Arts guidelines. In the general inspection programme, therefore, HMI did not evaluate standards in physical education against national attainment levels as defined in the guidelines. In the schools inspected pupils generally achieved good or very good standards during physical education lessons. However, whilst attainment in the coursework provided was generally strong, pupils were not challenged enough in some lessons.

2.2 In the schools visited as examples of good practice, attainment was evaluated against national attainment levels for physical education and, in a majority of these schools, pupils needed to achieve higher standards.

2.3 In these schools pupils' attainment was best in:

- **Using the body:** for example, in movements such as running, stretching and balancing with increasing control at the early stages, to throwing accurately or varying the rhythm of a dance sequence at the later stages.
- **Applying skills:** for example, in learning to make a controlled landing from a jump at the early stages, to using skills in orienteering at the later stages.
- **Co-operating/Sharing:** for example, in taking turns or sharing apparatus at the early stages, to responding to a partner's movements in a game or dance at the later stages.

2.4 Standards were lower in relation to national attainment levels in:

- **Developing Fitness:** for example, in energetic movement at the early stages, to demonstrating stamina and flexibility at the later stages.
- **Creating/Designing:** for example, in moving imaginatively to music at the early stages, to deciding a strategy for a game at the later stages.
- **Evaluating:** for example, in observing classmates travelling across a bench and commenting on their ideas at the early stages, to using criteria to identify the strengths of a gymnastic sequence at the later stages.



## Raising attainment

2.5 The work of individual schools made a considerable difference to pupils' standards of attainment in physical education. Teachers in the schools with very good standards of attainment had high expectations of what their pupils would achieve. They shared their aims with pupils and expected them to achieve the standards set out in national guidelines. A number of features were common in schools showing the best practice.

- Children's performance in physical education requires varied opportunities to practise and refine techniques in order to develop high standards. Schools with high standards had well-designed physical education programmes. Features of effective programmes in physical education are set out in the next section.
- Schools with high standards developed pupils' physical skills and their understanding. They established basic physical skills as a foundation for more advanced skills and shared with pupils the terminology to review and discuss how skills might be improved. Physical skills can be categorised as:<sup>2</sup>
  - travelling skills;
  - stability skills; and
  - skills used to manipulate objects.

2.6 In the most effective schools, pupils' performance benefited from good opportunities to practise and apply each of these types of skill.

- Constructive feedback to pupils from teachers improved performance. Well-judged and timely intervention with individuals and small groups made a significant impact on progress. Teachers' confidence to provide effective feedback in physical education lessons varied widely. Many felt that their lack of knowledge about skill development hampered them in making useful comments about pupils' performance.

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<sup>2</sup> See page 57 of *Expressive Arts 5-14: National Guidelines*

- The effective use of competition was often associated with high standards of attainment for all participants not just winners. When handled well, competition motivated pupils to try harder and seek new strategies or solutions, thereby raising their levels of achievement. The most successful teachers matched opponents carefully, used a variety of types of competition and placed a strong emphasis on appropriate manners and etiquette. Some negotiated the rules of games with pupils and discussed the purposes of games as well as feelings of success or disappointment. Such approaches developed an ethos where pupils' did their best but accepted that they might sometimes lose a game or competition.
- Performance for an audience recognised pupils' achievements and motivated them to achieve high standards. Care needed to be taken in introducing performance to maintain self-esteem and self-confidence. For example, pupils could perform first to a partner and a small group before a performance for the class.
- Regular opportunities to practise, compete and perform in physical activities after school contributed greatly to pupils' involvement and improved their attainment. In most schools, extra-curricular activities and opportunities outside school were provided mainly for P6 and P7 pupils, developing their skills in physical education and their personal and social skills.

### 3. IMPROVING PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES

3.1 Programmes for physical education were very good in 30% of schools and had more strengths than weaknesses in a further 60%. The remaining 10% of schools had important weaknesses including a few with unsatisfactory programmes.

#### Structure and balance

3.2 *The Structure and Balance of the Curriculum 5-14*<sup>3</sup> recommends a minimum allocation of 15% of curriculum time for the Expressive Arts. Where schools allocated the minimum time to the Expressive Arts, classes often had less than one hour per week for physical education. Some schools used part of the flexibility time to seek to improve standards in physical education. This was done to promote continuity in learning and encourage the habit of frequent physical activity by providing two sessions per week of around 40 minutes to each class, with slightly shorter lessons for younger classes. Some schools promoted extra-curricular activities to increase the available time.

3.3 Some schools used curriculum time to provide extra coaching or practice for school teams. Most schools were careful to ensure such provision did not encroach on the time for the physical education programme for all pupils.

#### Programmes

3.4 Most school programmes were based on a structured course provided by the education authority. A few schools used commercial materials and some supplemented their programmes with specific resources to support games, gymnastics or athletics. In the best practice, teachers adapted education authority courses in the light of their pupils' needs. Features of very good programmes are set out in Box 1.

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<sup>3</sup> The Structure and Balance of the Curriculum 5-14: SOED 1993, updated Learning and Teaching Scotland 2000

1

Very good programmes in physical education:

- were broad and balanced and included games, sports, gymnastics, dance and swimming;
- took account of pupils' prior learning and special educational needs;
- were enhanced by planned inserts in sport, dance and outdoor pursuits including any contribution from a visiting teacher;
- focused clearly on teaching the relevant skills, knowledge and understanding;
- offered opportunities for choice within the programme or through extra-curricular activities;
- provided a clear framework of what was to be covered at each stage to ensure continuity and progression in pupils' learning; and
- incorporated advice about learning and teaching approaches, including direct teaching and learning through purposeful activity.

3.5 Programmes with important weaknesses had some of the following features:

- insufficient time was allocated to cover key aspects of the physical education programme to allow pupils to reach appropriate attainment levels;
- individual teachers' preferences for aspects of physical education resulted in imbalances in the programme;
- swimming was not included or was given insufficient attention;
- activities such as workshops with visiting dance artists or tuition in individual sports from sports development officers were not well-integrated into the planned programme; and
- class teachers were not involved in planning the programme with visiting specialist teachers, reducing opportunities to help pupils make important links with other areas of learning.

## Initiatives beyond the formal school day

3.6 Some schools extended their programme beyond the formal school day to make a greater impact on pupils' physical lifestyles. Such schools provided a variety of extra-curricular activities and after-school clubs which emphasised recreation, public performance or competition. This became part of a rich programme of learning in and through physical activity which helped pupils to develop a range of skills and gain confidence in their abilities. Sport and dance featured prominently and enhanced pupils' personal and social development.

3.7 Only a few schools provided extra-curricular activities for pupils from P1 to P5. In one rural school, most pupils at all stages took part throughout the year in a sports club run by parents and supported by teachers. The attainment of younger pupils benefited from the general programme of activities provided in the club. Older pupils had more specific activities, supervised or taught by qualified coaches and parents with the involvement of their teachers. Schools should consider ways of extending opportunities for extra-curricular activities to younger pupils.

3.8 Schools which adopted this outward-looking approach informed pupils well about local opportunities for physical activities. They encouraged them to take part in taster sessions in sports and dance at local authority sports and leisure centres or provided in school by vetted organisations. A number of schools took advantage of coaching sessions in sports and outdoor activities. For example, dance artists attached to education authorities or theatres led a series of sessions for particular age groups. School sport co-ordinators from secondary schools also promoted and supported physical activities in associated primary schools.

3.9 Headteachers and teachers generally took appropriate steps to satisfy themselves that sports development officers, artists or coaches provided a safe and good quality experience. The most effective schools fostered the same values and standards in these activities as those set by teachers during the school day. This helped pupils, staff and parents to see these experiences as a part of an educational programme.

3.10 Many schools offered P6 or P7 pupils a residential experience of outdoor education. Staff and pupils were almost invariably positive about these visits. Most schools found ways to provide financial assistance where necessary to meet the cost of these visits. Examples of school initiatives to extend their physical education programme are set out in Box 2.

## 2

The following are examples of school initiatives to extend the physical education programme.

- Some schools organised programmes of sport and outdoor education to develop physical skills alongside planned opportunities for personal and social development.
- As part of its programme to promote positive behaviour, one school used the incentive of class visits to sports and leisure centres offering an attractive range of physical activities.
- A small rural school developed a school sports club with a committee of parents to offer pupils of all ages a range of sports and outdoor pursuits. The committee had secured funding from national sports bodies to provide activities.
- Some schools organised 'House Competitions' in sport to generate interest in after-school activities.
- One headteacher offered dance sessions during wet intervals and lunchtimes where pupils were encouraged to teach dances learned at dance classes to other pupils.
- After investigating and ensuring traffic-free cycle routes, an urban school encouraged pupils to cycle to school, following simple but firmly administered safety guidelines.
- Some schools taught pupils traditional playground games or provided equipment to encourage active and enjoyable lunchtime games.
- Some schools encouraged pupils to demonstrate 'street sports', such as using roller boots or scooters, on an activity afternoon to interest other children in taking part.

3.11 The provision of outward-looking physical education programmes demonstrated to pupils and parents the value that schools placed upon physically active lifestyles. Such an approach provided opportunities for teachers to demonstrate their own enjoyment of activities as participants or knowledgeable spectators. Teachers generally encouraged pupils to take part for the enjoyment of the activity as well as for performance or competition.

3.12 Some education authorities and schools funded the development of extra-curricular sports and dance activities on the same basis as supported study in English language and mathematics. This was an important way of demonstrating the high value placed on physical education.

3.13 Few schools planned cross-curricular links involving physical education. Teachers occasionally used physical education to reinforce learning in other curriculum areas. In one school, there were effective links between mathematics and physical education. For example, P7 pupils measured and recorded their performances in athletics for information handling and a P5 teacher used a gymnastics lesson to improve pupils' understanding of shape, position and movement. Such effective links with other curricular areas were, however, uncommon.

## 4. IMPROVING LEARNING AND TEACHING

### Quality of teachers' planning

4.1 Planning in physical education varied considerably from school to school. Box 3 shows features of very good plans for physical education.

3

Very good plans for physical education:

- set out what teachers intended pupils to learn;
- usually matched these aspects to 5-14 levels and strands;
- indicated learning and teaching approaches and the resources to be used;
- described how pupils would be organised during activities;
- indicated the focus for assessment; and
- provided helpful evaluations at the end of a block of work and identified the next steps in pupils' learning.

4.2 Some plans helpfully recorded additional events such as tournaments, festivals, lessons from local sports coaches, or visits from dance artists.

4.3 Schools were increasingly using planning formats provided by education authorities. This approach worked very well where teachers evaluated and adjusted the outline plans in the light of their pupils' needs and attainments. In many schools, the plans were not adjusted to take account of different needs and attainments and few included evaluations of the work covered in the plan.

4.4 Visiting specialists often provided very good support to class teachers in planning. It was common for the specialist to produce an outline plan for the year with more detailed plans for each block of teaching. Good co-ordination between specialist teachers and class teachers was important where planning within a school was shared. For example, in some schools, the visiting specialists prepared a forward plan and class teachers recorded their work between visits. When the specialist returned, the updated plan provided a basis for a discussion with the class teacher. In some schools, teachers became over-dependent on the specialist's input to planning or had insufficient consultation time to plan and review the work of the class.



4.5 Some teachers planned effective ways to share their learning aims with pupils so that the pupils knew clearly what they were striving towards. For example, one teacher showed pupils a short video in the classroom of a game of cricket before going to the gym and beginning their first block of cricket lessons. This gave pupils a clear picture of the game and how it was played at its best.

### The quality of teaching

4.6 The quality of teaching in physical education was generally good. Teachers promoted positive attitudes to physical activity and placed a strong emphasis on practical work. The most successful teachers generated enthusiasm for physical activities and allowed pupils time to play, experiment and learn from their mistakes. Pupils were given ample time to try-out, and rehearse techniques in contexts such as games, dances or gymnastics sequences.

4.7 Effective teachers used an appropriate balance of class teaching, group work and individualised work. Very good physical education lessons had the features shown in Box 4.

#### 4

Very good physical education lessons had the following features:

- Teachers promoted positive attitudes to physical education and showed enthusiasm for physical activity. They used appropriate footwear and clothing for the gym or playing field.
- Good attention was given to discipline and safety.
- Lessons began with an overview in which teachers shared the purpose of the lesson with pupils and set expectations of what they could achieve. There was often a pattern of 'warm up' activities followed by teaching and opportunities for pupils to try out and practise skills. Demonstration, evaluation, discussion and brief reviews of progress were important features.
- There were high levels of sustained, physical activity with little time spent in queuing or setting out apparatus.
- Teachers achieved a good balance between developing particular skills and applying them in contexts such as games, dances or gymnastics routines.
- Pupils were well-motivated and physically and mentally challenged.
- Teachers identified and paid good attention to differences in pupils' needs.
- Teachers observed pupils carefully. They praised pupils' efforts and provided them with clear and constructive feedback.

4.8 In some lessons levels of activity were too low, with pupils spending too much time waiting for their turn or merely watching activities. Some teachers used too many closed questions in their dialogue with pupils, limiting opportunities for pupils to extend their responses. Other teachers spent too much time developing isolated skills and only provided opportunities to apply them in context during the last few minutes of a lesson.

4.9 Where skills were developed within contexts such as games, dances or gymnastic routines, this enabled:

- pupils to experience their application immediately;
- the teacher to observe the class and provide feedback to individuals and groups on aspects of their performance; and
- pupils to learn from each other and to perform at their own level.

4.10 Teachers often used demonstrations very effectively to encourage pupils to share their work and to provide a quick and effective image of the desired performance. They used demonstrations well to:

- introduce a new set of skills or refine a technique;
- set appropriate expectations;
- show work of a high quality; and
- motivate pupils.

4.11 Teachers generally made insufficient use of audio-visual techniques and resources to support learning and teaching in physical education. Good examples included using:

- video cameras to allow pupils to observe and discuss their own performance;
- wall posters of figures to demonstrate warm-up routines;
- images such as 'think of your hand as a Venus fly-catcher' to help pupils visualise catching a tennis ball;
- phrases which pupils could repeat as they practised skills such as, in football, 'stop with your toes, kick with the inside of your foot'; and
- audio-tapes to stimulate pupils' imagination or to relax them at the end of lessons.

### The quality of pupils' learning

4.12 At its best, learning in physical education is a pleasurable activity with rich opportunities for expressive play and for 'doing' and 'feeling'. It provides very good opportunities for independent learning and for pupils to work co-operatively. In the schools visited, pupils were often very well motivated towards physical education. Almost all were keen to be involved and to improve their performance. There were very good levels of participation and most pupils were challenged by the activities observed. Boys and girls worked well together, developing personally and socially as well as progressing in their physical skills. Box 5 sets out features of very good learning in physical education.

## 5

Where learning in physical education was very good, pupils were given:

- challenging but achievable tasks which provided success and personal satisfaction;
- good opportunities to develop their own ideas, co-operate and share equipment in small groups;
- the chance to compete with one another or against their personal best;
- opportunities to play, practise and perform; and
- positive feedback and opportunities to share their work with the class.

4.13 In the most effective schools, pupils who enjoyed activities beyond the school day were aware of their importance in improving performance and maintaining health. Many pupils were highly involved in extra-curricular activities, festivals or clubs organised or hosted by the school. In some schools pupils had limited opportunities to extend their learning in physical education beyond the school's programme.

### Meeting pupils' needs

4.14 Catering for a wide range of needs and attainment in physical education posed a considerable challenge for teachers. Some pupils were at an early stage in their development of skills and techniques. Others were highly accomplished and had sometimes developed specific skills outwith school. Some pupils had special educational needs because of specific disabilities or because aspects of physical development or skill acquisition had progressed at a slower pace. Teachers needed to be sensitive to the needs of pupils, usually in P4 to P7, who were becoming self-conscious in physical education.

4.15 Some teachers did not adapt lessons from published schemes or programmes sufficiently to take account of the needs of the class. Too often teachers missed opportunities to provide additional support or extend tasks to meet the needs of individuals or groups.

4.16 Although effective teachers often asked the whole class to work at the same level in physical education, they also used a range of approaches to meet pupils' differing needs and provide additional support. Planned differentiation was often observed in swimming where beginners practised confidence-building activities and more advanced swimmers worked on improving and varying their strokes. This approach also worked well in gymnastics when teachers designed graded activities for pupils to practise at different 'stations'. Teachers often provided different levels of support for pupils during tasks or set different expectations of higher achieving pupils. Sometimes, pupils were asked to lead parts of a lesson, such as a dance or a fitness routine or to organise a 'round-robin' tournament. Some teachers encouraged pupils to choose an activity to practise at their own level after demonstrating different ways of completing the activity.

4.17 Features of good practice in meeting pupils' needs are shown in Box 6.

6

Features of meeting pupils' needs effectively included the use of:

- challenging tasks within well-paced lessons;
- effective adaptation of resources (e.g. short badminton/tennis racquets, foam volleyballs, short cricket bats) and activities (e.g. rolling and stopping a ball instead of throwing and catching) to suit individual needs;
- opportunities for pupils to make choices and to take responsibility for their own learning (for example, in small-sided games, creating dance ideas, selecting their own music to dance to, leading partners or small-group activities);
- tasks carefully matched to the needs and abilities of pupils (e.g. pairing pupils for orienteering using criteria such as fitness and map reading skills);
- individualised programmes for pupils with special educational needs, including additional support from special needs auxiliaries;
- opportunities for pupils at all stages (not just P6 to P7) to develop interests and talents through extra-curricular activities and local sports, dance or gymnastics clubs; and
- approaches which include all pupils and promote equal opportunities.

4.18 Not all pupils readily learned basic physical skills. A few had difficulty in moving their bodies efficiently or carrying out physical tasks effectively. Often, these difficulties affected their performance in other subjects or aspects of school life. A few primary schools provided special programmes for pupils experiencing difficulties with mobility and physical skills. One school screened all entrants for signs of delayed development and provided an individual movement programme for some pupils. Teachers co-operated with SEN auxiliaries, occupational therapists and physiotherapists to provide additional support in areas such as handwriting, balance, co-ordination and motor control. As a result, the pupils' motivation towards learning improved significantly. All schools need to make appropriate arrangements for the physical education of pupils with special educational needs, including those with disabilities.

4.19 In a significant number of schools, some pupils, particularly those at P4 to P7 were insufficiently challenged. This led to boredom and at times to poor behaviour. In the weakest lessons, pupils simply followed instructions and were not required to think for themselves. Where organisation was weak or tasks and apparatus were insufficiently varied, the pace became slow and levels of activity were too low.

4.20 Able pupils with particular skills or talents need opportunities for challenging physical activities and coaching to develop their talents. Extra-curricular clubs, local teams and competitions meet some of these needs. Several recent initiatives provide increased opportunities for young people such as those organised by sportscotland and the Scottish Arts Council, the national agencies for promoting and supporting sport and the arts respectively.

### Assessment as part of teaching

4.21 Assessment in physical education requires significant improvement. Even in the schools visited for their good practice in physical education, 60% had some important weaknesses in assessment. Assessment was very good in just over 5% of this sample. Many teachers lacked confidence in assessing pupils' progress and providing useful feedback to pupils. There were considerable variations in record keeping within and across schools and some schools lacked a common format. Many still had some way to go in establishing a manageable, whole-school system of assessment and recording which influenced teaching.

4.22 At the heart of effective assessment is a clear view of what pupils are intended to learn, observation of their responses, and immediate, constructive feedback. Through the planning process teachers will have set out what they intend pupils to learn. They should focus on these intentions in observing pupils' responses and identifying how to improve performance. Feedback during the activity is usually the most effective way of using assessments: beyond the lesson it is often too late.

4.23 In the best examples, teachers assessed pupils carefully during teaching against what they intended them to learn. They adjusted tasks and the level of support provided in the light of pupils' responses. High quality feedback resulted in noticeable improvements in pupil performance. Staff in some of the schools visited were beginning to record more focused comments on pupils' attainment and progress in physical education. Some teachers successfully involved pupils in self and peer assessment during physical education lessons, but this was not common. One of the schools visited shared targets with pupils in large wall displays. Ways of improving assessment in physical education are set out in Box 7.

## 7

To improve the quality of assessment, teachers need to:

- be clear about what they intend pupils to learn and share these aims with pupils;
- ensure that tasks are chosen to reflect the aims and the expected level of performance;
- observe pupils' responses in relation to these aims;
- provide better feedback to pupils and involve them in self and peer assessment; and
- use manageable systems for recording progress, for example by recording the progress of the class through the programme and indicating pupils who make exceptional progress or need particular support.

## 5. ACCOMMODATION, RESOURCES AND STAFFING

### Accommodation

5.1 Schools generally had suitable accommodation for physical education. However, the quality of accommodation varied depending on the size and design of the schools. Those schools with the best accommodation benefited from a separate hall or gymnasium with fixed apparatus and adjacent changing rooms and showers. In these cases, facilities for storage of resources, particularly larger items of equipment, were also spacious and safe. Most schools had access to safe playground areas. Many schools did not provide changing and showering facilities for boys or girls.

5.2 It was common for schools to have difficulties with the safe storage of large items of equipment. Many schools used the hall or stage for storage and a few used changing or shower rooms. In a few cases storage of equipment in the work area presented a hazard for pupils. A few schools had made very good use of devolved finances to make imaginative adaptations to school accommodation in order to improve storage space.

5.3 Some halls were used for activities such as assemblies, drama, music and lunches as well as physical education. Although schools were able to provide the minimum recommended time for physical education in these circumstances, it was difficult for some schools to allocate flexibility time to physical education where halls were fully timetabled. In addition, the design of some schools resulted in disturbances to physical education classes when pupils and staff used the hall as a thoroughfare to other areas of the school.

5.4 Most accommodation for physical education was safe. There were a few instances, however, where ceiling lights and wall-mounted radiators had no safety covers.

5.5 Ways in which school can enhance accommodation are set out in Box 8.



## 8

Examples of enhancing the use of accommodation to improve the programme included:

- using local facilities such as leisure centres, playing-fields, outdoor centres and local swimming pools;
- using photographs and displays showing pupils' work;
- providing notice boards to inform pupils about available physical education activities; and
- painting play areas to stimulate playground games and lining grassed areas with markings for games.

## Resources

5.6 Schools generally had an appropriate range and quality of resources for physical education. Around 50% of the schools visited for good practice were very well resourced and 40% were well resourced. Most schools had good provision of large apparatus, maintained in a safe condition. Some education authorities provided schools with a recommended list of the equipment required to support a good physical education programme. They also ensured that large and fixed equipment was inspected annually.

5.7 Some schools used external funding to purchase physical education equipment. For example, some parent-teacher associations raised substantial funds to buy large apparatus, crash mats and playground games. Some schools made effective use of cluster arrangements to share expensive resources, such as video recorders, electric ball pumps and headband microphones. A few schools needed to replace frequently used equipment such as bats, racquets and balls.

5.8 Where schools had specialist teachers, most headteachers ensured that the specialist was consulted about resources required. In some cases, the school had created an inventory of resources and used it effectively to monitor resource needs. Almost all schools ensured that, within the limits of storage space, physical education resources and equipment were well organised and accessible to both pupils and staff.

## Staffing and deployment

5.9 Most of the additional sample of schools had a visiting teacher of physical education. Most specialists were paid for through the schools' own staffing budgets. Some education authorities funded specialists directly.

5.10 The deployment of these specialists varied. A few schools were able to provide each class with specialist teaching weekly throughout the year. In some schools classes had fortnightly lessons, or input in one or more blocks of the year. A few schools used visiting teachers in areas where primary teachers lacked confidence, mostly in gymnastics and dance. In some schools headteachers deployed the visiting teacher to the maximum number of classes at the expense of consultation time with class teachers and promoted staff. In these cases it was difficult to establish the communication required for effective teamwork.

5.11 In almost all schools where visiting teachers were deployed, they made an effective contribution to the physical education curriculum. They often provided clear support and direction to schools on physical education practice and their teaching provided ongoing staff development for class teachers. Box 9 shows ways that visiting specialist teachers contributed to good practice.

9

Where practice was best, visiting teachers of physical education were deployed in:

- leading co-operative teaching with class teachers in physical education lessons;
- providing advice to class teachers on programmes, planning, class management and lesson content at planned consultation times with teachers;
- contributing significantly to policy development and review and providing expert advice on accommodation and resources to promoted staff;
- contributing to staff development for class teachers at planned activity time and in-service days;
- assisting with the organisation of school sports, dances and festivals;
- offering teachers advice on ways of supporting pupils with movement-related special educational needs;
- keeping schools well informed about physical education activities outside school; and
- contributing to extra-curricular activities.

### Staff development

5.12 Levels of confidence and competence among class teachers varied greatly. Class teachers in only a few schools had recently attended staff development in physical education. There were a few instances of long-serving teachers who had received no formal professional development in physical education throughout their careers. In a few cases, teachers with expertise were well deployed as co-ordinators for physical education or school sport. Sometimes teachers with expertise in physical education exchanged classes with teachers with expertise in other aspects of the curriculum.

5.13 Arrangements for staff development in physical education had important weaknesses in around half of the schools visited. In many authorities in recent years there had been a diminution of the specialist physical education support service. Fewer secondary schools now provided specialist teaching support to their associated primaries.

5.14 One of the most effective forms of staff development occurred when visiting specialists and class teachers engaged in team teaching. Teachers clearly benefited from this 'coaching in context' and used what they had learned when they taught their own lessons. This was particularly helpful in aspects such as gymnastics where teachers, particularly at the P6 and P7 stages, were less confident. Some visiting teachers observed class teachers teaching physical education lessons and provided them with constructive feedback. Visiting teachers also participated in, and contributed to, in-service training days and planned activity times for primary teachers, sometimes producing helpful written guidance to teachers on lesson delivery.

5.15 Some class teachers had taken part in training from education authority staff tutors or development officers for specific sports. These courses were helpful, particularly when they engaged staff directly in the teaching process. One primary school was used as the base for an education authority training video focusing on the assessment of gymnastics. There were many examples of staff undertaking voluntary training with outside agencies in new-image rugby coaching, fitness, creative dance, orienteering and a range of other activities.

5.16 The provision of high quality staff development was a key factor in the successful management of physical education. Where teachers were confident of their role, they felt well-equipped and supported through effective in-service training or regular opportunities for co-operative teaching with a visiting specialist. In effective schools without a visiting specialist, the headteacher had often made good arrangements for education authority advisory staff or secondary specialists to provide support. This frequently involved staff development tailored to teachers' individual needs prior to implementation of a programme.

## 6. IMPROVING MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

6.1 Headteachers and promoted staff played a key role in schools which had successfully established an ethos in which physical activity was valued. The key features of effective management are described in the remainder of this section.

### Effective leadership

6.2 In the schools with the most effective provision, senior managers, and particularly the headteacher, attributed a high value to physical education, sport, dance and outdoor pursuits. Senior managers demonstrated commitment to the importance of participation in physical activity by all pupils. They took an active personal interest in activities by supporting teams, watching rehearsals and taking part as novices or accomplished performers in physical activities. Their personal involvement contributed strongly to the status of physical activities in the life of the school and the motivation of pupils and staff. Curriculum development in physical education and very good pupil attainment was frequently associated with the enthusiasm of an effective headteacher.

6.3 Headteachers and other promoted staff contributed strongly to motivating and inspiring staff. They involved them effectively in development planning and policy-making. They gave a clear lead in communicating high expectations to staff and pupils and promoting staff development. Usually, a senior teacher or other promoted staff member had a clear remit to develop the physical education programme and to provide support and advice to class teachers. In some schools this included high quality input and support from a visiting teacher.

### An outward-looking development of programmes

6.4 Most schools required to look outwards to develop their programmes by forming strong links with parents, community clubs and relevant agencies. Such links often had clearly observable benefits in high attainment in physical education. Features of outward-looking schools included well-managed parental involvement in a wide range of extra-curricular physical activities, high uptake of these activities and recognition of a range of pupils' achievements in celebrations at assemblies. Frequently, these schools were also working towards a culture of active living and healthy lifestyles through, for example, promoting healthy snacks and lunches.

6.5 A number of authorities had worked with sportscotland to take advantage of specific initiatives designed to increase participation in and support for physical education in schools. These initiatives included Active Primary Schools which was designed to encourage higher levels of physical activity and play, and the 'TOP' programmes offering teachers training, equipment and curricular resources related to the teaching of games. Many school sports co-ordinators for secondary schools were working with local primary schools to increase the active participation of pupils in school sport.

### Clear guidance on programmes and teaching

6.6 The teaching of physical education and the quality of pupils' work were at their best where there was a well-managed team approach to planning and teaching. In the most effective schools, managers provided outline programmes which helped to establish high expectations amongst staff for pupils' participation and performance and also encouraged teachers to use their own ideas and skills.

6.7 These programmes were translated into action through concerted staff teamwork. Class teachers benefited from consultation time to discuss the programme and plan co-operatively either with a visiting specialist or with a member of the management team who had responsibility for physical education. In some cases visiting teachers played a key role in promoting teamwork by providing support, advice and enthusiasm. Where teamwork was effective, class teachers were often enthusiastic and confident about delivering the physical education programme.

### Monitoring and evaluation

6.8 Headteachers played a critical role in ensuring the consistent delivery of high quality programmes. Without systematic arrangements for monitoring, headteachers could not be confident about the quality of the physical education programme or that pupils were making appropriate progress from stage to stage. Yet, monitoring and evaluation of physical education had important weaknesses or was unsatisfactory in most primary schools.

6.9 Headteachers often monitored learning and teaching by scrutiny of teachers' forward plans and through short, informal and unplanned visits to physical education lessons, often for another purpose. Most headteachers provided teachers with oral or written feedback on their forward plans but rarely focused on physical education. In the majority of schools, there were either no procedures in place for monitoring and evaluating physical education or they were insufficient.

6.10 In the small number of schools where monitoring and evaluation of physical education provision was well established, teachers evaluated their own teaching and received useful, constructive feedback to improve their teaching and the quality of pupils' learning. In these schools, teachers often regarded the process of monitoring and evaluation as supportive in helping them to deliver the physical education programme and evaluate their own teaching.

### Development planning

6.11 Expressive Arts including physical education was beginning to appear as a priority in school development plans. Where improvements were required, headteachers, in consultation with their staff, needed to make physical education a priority in the school development plan, review their current provision, identify staff development needs and focus on improving learning and teaching and attainment.

6.12 Effective headteachers were proactive in using the development plan as a powerful means of improving the quality of programme for physical education. They involved all teachers in deciding and implementing the priorities and targets in the school development plan. The inclusion of physical education as a development planning priority encouraged a more coherent approach to improvement.

## 7. AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

7.1 This report has identified main areas for improvement which require to be addressed to help schools raise attainment in physical education. These are identified in Box 10.

10

Measures required to raise attainment in physical education.

- raise expectations of what pupils can achieve;
- develop programmes for physical education which maximise opportunities within the school programme and promote sport, dance and outdoor education opportunities beyond the school day;
- improve the effectiveness of learning and teaching;
- make better use of assessment to provide pupils with the kind of feedback that will improve their performance and sustain their motivation in physical education;
- provide clearer advice and better support for teachers to develop their confidence and skills in teaching physical education; and
- improve the management of physical education.

Raise expectations of what pupils can achieve.

7.2 The report shows that pupils generally achieved good or very good standards in what they were asked to do in class. However, standards were weaker in relation to the attainment levels set out in the national guidelines. Achieving the standards in national attainment levels is a challenging but realistic expectation for the immediate future. Areas of weakness in relation to these standards were set out in Section 2 'Improving Attainment'. Staff development, clear advice and well-structured programmes can all help to raise expectations and improve standards.



**Develop programmes for physical education which maximise opportunities within the school programme and promote sport, dance and outdoor education opportunities beyond the school day.**

7.3 Only about a third of schools had achieved very good programmes for physical education. The features of very good programmes set out in section 3 'Improving Programmes and Initiatives' will be of use to schools in reviewing their current practice to ensure breadth, balance and relevance. Schools using education authority guidelines will need to adapt them in the light of pupils' needs.

7.4 Section 3 also described a range of initiatives taken by schools to extend their programme beyond the formal school day to make a greater impact on all pupils' lifestyles and improve their capacity to make informed choices about their interests and activities. The advantages to pupils of promoting an outward-looking approach to physical activity should be fully considered. Using such an approach, schools should seek out opportunities available in the community to complement those offered in school. The findings of the Physical Activity Task Force will be an important reference point for future thinking about appropriate levels of physical activity for primary aged pupils.

**Improve the effectiveness of learning and teaching.**

7.5 In many schools, improvements to planning, the promotion of additional support or extending tasks would have helped meet the needs of individuals or groups. The descriptions of effective practice in Section 4 in planning, teaching, learning and meeting pupils' needs should be helpful to schools in making improvements.

7.6 Teaching and learning were often of good quality. The features of good practice given set out to maximise strengths and to help teachers avoid weaknesses such as low levels of activity or spending too much time on developing isolated skills. Teachers evaluating their provision for planning, teaching, learning and meeting pupils' needs can do so against the features of very good practice in section 3.

**Make better use of assessment to provide pupils with the kind of feedback that will improve their performance and sustain their motivation in physical education.**

7.7 Assessment was a weakness in most schools. Around 60% of schools visited for their good practice in physical education had some important weaknesses in assessment. Teachers lacked confidence and procedures were under-developed. Yet guidance and feedback from teachers could play a key role in promoting pupils' learning and attainment. By supporting teachers in improving their skills in assessment; giving feedback to pupils; and in developing their procedures for recording and reporting assessment, schools and authorities could have an immediate direct effect on pupils' levels of attainment.

**Provide clearer advice and better support for teachers to develop their confidence and skills in teaching physical education.**

7.8 Although teaching was good overall, many teachers, especially class teachers, lacked confidence in their knowledge of physical education. In evaluating their own effectiveness, teachers could make good use of the descriptions of good practice in Section 4. They also need clear advice from headteachers on programmes and teaching approaches in physical education in addition to increased in-service training opportunities.

**Improve the management of physical education.**

7.9 Headteachers and other senior managers who placed a high value on physical education improved the motivation of pupils and were a very positive influence on the contribution of staff. In reviewing their role and effectiveness, headteachers will find the features of good practice described in Section 6 of direct use.

7.10 Monitoring and evaluation had important weaknesses in the majority of schools. Senior managers require to monitor and evaluate learning and teaching and pupils' performance in physical education more rigorously to help ensure that pupils achieve their full potential.

## Issues for Education Authorities.

7.11 Box 11 sets out three key issues for consideration by education authorities.

11

Key issues for education authorities to consider, include:

- ways of supporting schools and teachers through staff development in
  - developing effective programmes
  - teaching and assessment in physical education
  - managing physical education;
- the provision and deployment of visiting teachers of physical education; and
- ways of supporting schools in developing outward-looking programmes for physical education which expand extra-curricular activities and utilise community resources for sport, dance and outdoor education.





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