

A SUMMARY OF Ofsted's PE Research Review

WHAT IT MEANS TO 'GET BETTER AT PE'



PE FOR ALL

It is important for **all children** to receive a high-quality PE education, regardless of their starting points or experience outside of school. Every pupil - especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds or with SEND - has an entitlement to physical education and 'PE for all' should flow through the essence of a school's curriculum. PE should reduce inequalities and provide all pupils with the knowledge to be able to participate in physical activity.

COMPETENCE

The aim of high-quality PE is not to prepare elite athletes but to enable children at every stage of their education to flourish. Competence is strongly linked to motivation - pupils are more likely to be engaged and participate if they have a strong sense of self-efficacy.



PROGRESSION AND TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE

Getting better at PE is built upon three pillars of progression: motor competences; rules, strategies and tactics; and healthy participation. Pupils build declarative and procedural knowledge about physical activity. Declarative knowledge is the 'know-what' and procedural knowledge is the 'know-when'. There are many overlaps between types of knowledge and pillars of progression.

MOTOR COMPETENCES

These are a person's ability to make a range of physical actions which include co-ordinating fine and gross motor skills. These are **fundamental** to being able to **participate** in everyday activities as well as in play and physical activity. For some children, PE will be the first time these competences are taught. Pupils require sufficient and well-designed opportunities to practise these competences as well as feedback to know how to improve. There is a positive link between confidence and competence.



FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENT SKILLS (FMS)

In the early years, pupils need to develop a good level of fundamental movement skills which are the basic motor patterns which are not learned naturally. They include locomotor skills (such as running and jumping), stability skills (such as twisting and balancing), and manipulation skills (such as throwing and catching) which are best developed between the ages of 3 and 8.. The curriculum should include progression from these simple movements to more complex movements as children get older.

RULES, STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

Pupils also need to be taught how to move **intelligently** as well as competently. The rules, strategies and tactics which are involved with different types of activity require explicit teaching. Tactics are the decisions people make about how, when and where to move and are closely related to motor competences as they are only successful if pupils can perform the necessary movement. Some physical activities do not have rules or tactics but they do have strategies for success. These are less time-dependent than tactics and can have broader relevance beyond playing games.



HEALTHY PARTICIPATION

Pupils need to learn how to participate in physical activity in a healthy way. This can involve having their understanding from outside of school challenged and corrected. For example, public health messages can sometimes be unclear and unhelpful unless pupils understand them in the correct context. Children need to understand how their knowledge of health applies to physical activity so they can participate fully and safely.





VOCABULARY

PE is a vocabulary-rich subject - it contains both **specific terminology** and informal language which can be used to 'chunk' more complex information e.g. the word 'line' referring to a specific situation and action within a game. Building children's vocabulary increases participation in games and prevents children becoming marginalised due to not understanding the language of physical activity. Specific vocabulary can help pupils refer to knowledge with specificity.

CURRICULUM DESIGN

Pupils develop their knowledge within a specific domain. This takes time and relies on clear instruction, and sufficient practice and feedback. Pupils do not naturally transfer their knowledge from one context to another. Any links need to be explicitly taught. It is important that the curriculum provides enough opportunity for pupils to master the intended knowledge and they should not move too quickly from context to another.



CONTENT AND SEQUENCING

The National Curriculum requires a school's PE curriculum to be **broad and ambitious**. It is not possible to teach the full body of content that could be taught and so schools need to make decisions based on the potential of content to enable progression across the three pillars. Content needs to be sequenced so that pupils can develop their schema by building on secure, pre-requisite knowledge. Comparing and contrasting knowledge between two different domains helps children develop a rich and deep understanding.



TEACHER EXPERTISE

Expert teachers possess the subject and **pedagogical content knowledge** to be able to identify and plan to address misconceptions. This enables pupils to make substantial progress. It is common for teachers in primary school to lack subject-specific expertise in teaching PE, which can pose a problem if appropriate CPD is not provided.



TEACHING NOVICES

Most pupils should be treated as **novices** - even those who are high attainers. Novices benefit from explicit instruction broken down into small steps as well as sufficient practice and clear feedback. It is so important for pupils to have the time to consolidate their learning as moving on too quickly can be detrimental to their progress.

MODELLING

Teachers should provide concrete examples when demonstrating what success looks like. Novices need accurate demonstrations which clearly show the movements they need to imitate. Checking for understanding throughout this process is also important. Teachers can break more complex movements down into smaller segments - and make partial demonstrations - to reduce the cognitive demand on pupils. It is important to aim for pupils to develop a clear mental model of how they need to move.



PRACTICE

Practice is essential for pupils to get better at PE - the more time spent practising, the more learning that occurs. Practice needs to be precise and sequential and move from the simple to the more complex, with pupils increasing their independence. Pupils require lots of repetition to learn the intended movements and should not move on too quickly. To provide additional challenge, teachers can change the context or constraints of a task, rather than move on to more complex or different domains of knowledge.



FEEDBACK

Pupils benefit from clear and precise feedback which focuses on what they are doing well and how to develop. Negative comments are mainly unhelpful and should be avoided. Pupils benefit from feedback when they have a secure mental model of what they are trying to achieve. The amount of feedback can also affect learning: more competent pupils require less feedback and teachers should focus only on the key elements to avoid 'paralysis by analysis'.



TIME

The Association for PE recommends 2 hours per week of PE and that between 50% and 80% of that time be spent on physical activity. There also needs to be sufficient time for pupils to practise and master their learning to both learn things securely and to reduce the chances of it being forgotten.



PUPILS WITH SEND

Provision and assessment needs to be adapted for pupils with SEND. This may involve making adaptations to the colour or size of equipment, or by providing additional time during sequences of activity or games. The curriculum should never artificially limit what pupils with SEND can achieve. Teachers might find it helpful to discuss how to make enabling adaptations directly with children and they should not treat pupils with SEND as a homogenous group.



EXTRA-CURRICULAR PE

Extra-curricular PE is important for schools but it should never act as a replacement for the formal learning of the PE curriculum. It can be any additional physical activity undertaken before or after school, as well as during playtime and lunchtimes. Extra-curricular activity can provide additional opportunities for pupils to practise, consolidate and apply their learning.

COMPETITION

Competition can be useful in PE but needs careful consideration. Pupils are able to apply their domain knowledge during competitions but this requires them to have secured the content otherwise competition can be counter-productive or even unsafe, and can increase the chances of some pupils, who are not ready to compete, of being marginalised. Used appropriately, competitions can be useful to teach elements such as graceful winning and losing, as well as providing opportunities to assess use of tactics.



ASSESSMENT

Teachers need to use a range of carefully considered assessments to focus on the competences in the content that has been learned. Success criteria for assessment should be shared with pupils as well as other stakeholders, so that there is a clear understanding of what is valued in PE. Most knowledge will be assessed through physical means but this does not have to be the case, especially when checking knowledge of rules. Pupils benefit from receiving information from assessments when they have a clear mental model of what is expected of them.

PERFORMANCE VS LEARNING

It is important to bear in mind that physical performance is not always indicative of the quality of learning. Performance can sometimes appear to regress when pupils tackle more complex movements. In addition, teachers need to provide carefully planned opportunities for pupils to recall and review knowledge to ensure that they do not forget what they have been taught.



OUTSOURCING IN PRIMARY PE

Outsourcing of PE provision to external agencies is sometimes used by primary schools. It is important for schools to quality assure this provision as well as critically evaluate any externally sourced schemes of work. School teachers and TAs should not just observe external partners but instead participate fully in the lessons to focus on the curriculum aims being achieved.

SUBJECT LEADERSHIP

Effective subject leadership enables an ambitious curriculum to come to life: it creates the conditions for teachers to be successful. Subject leaders require time to actively engage in subject matters such as curriculum design, evaluating the implementation of the curriculum and organising appropriate CPD.



CPD

The quality of teachers' content and pedagogical content knowledge positively impacts teacher effectiveness. CPD should be ongoing and matched to the needs of the teaching team, rather than take a 'bolt-on' approach. Careful auditing by subject leaders can reveal what teachers need to get better at teaching PE.

This is a very condensed summary of the research review conducted by Ofsted into high-quality PE curriculums. I have provided a more detailed summary on my website which explores these themes in more detail, though I would definitely recommend reading the entire review and accessing some of the materials on Ofsted's YouTube channel. All links are on my website.

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