

Berlesduna Trust Physical Education Safe Teaching and Management Principles July 2019

This guidance is written to complement the eighth edition of 'Safe Practice in Physical Education, School Sport and Physical Activity' ('afPE 2018). Together these two documents along with The Trust Health and Safety Policy provide clear guidance on issues relating to the health, safety and well-being of children during physical education and sporting activities.

The requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act establish that safe practice must never be compromised. Schools need to aim for meaningful participation and the wellbeing of the children in their care.

Competence

Anyone teaching physical education lessons needs to be competent to do so. Competence to teach physical education may be defined as having the skills, knowledge, understanding and expertise necessary to plan, deliver and evaluate the physical education programme.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) highlights four means of demonstrating competence:

- to hold a relevant qualification
- to hold an equivalent qualification
- to have received appropriate in-house training
- to be competent by experience

These are not totally discrete alternatives. Qualification, experience and training overlap to produce expertise in a particular field or expertise of PE.

Staff are not legally required to hold a specific award in order to teach a physical education activity unless their employer requires such a qualification. However, it is wise for them to be able to demonstrate that they are suitably trained, experienced and qualified to undertake the activities in which they engage with children.

An effective assessment of competence to teach PE establishes that a member of staff:

- understands the importance of considering forethought in their planning
- can teach the relevant techniques, tactics or compositional skills safely, accurately and at a level that is appropriate to the ability, confidence and previous experience of the children involved
- provides appropriate progressive practices to enable and support student improvement
- effectively applies the safety issues relevant to the specific activity
- has a secure knowledge of, and can appropriately apply, the rules if the activity is a sport
- knows the abilities, confidence and particular needs of the students
- has well-developed observational and analytical skills to ensure that what is going on is safe, and amend or stop anything that is deemed unsafe
- has effective class control

Clothing for activity

- children should wear clothing that is fit for purpose according to the activity, environment and weather conditions

- any items worn for gymnastics, including any of cultural significance need to be relatively close fitting or removed for safety reasons
- loose clothing for swimming is not advised
- staff should always be suitably dressed to teach PE. Changing footwear is essential and removal of jewellery should be undertaken

If children attend a session with clothing deemed to be inappropriate, strategies need to be applied to make their inclusion safe, or to limit the extent of the activity element of their participation.

Footwear – staff and children

Security of footing is crucial in all situations. All staff and children need to change into footwear that is appropriate for the lesson location and, ideally, for the activity being taught. This is a requirement for safe participation by children and safe supervision by staff. Staff may need to respond quickly to prevent a potential injury to a student, making effective mobility essential. Children need footwear that is capable of transmitting feel for the movement and the surface they are working on.

All staff must change into appropriate footwear for the lesson location.

Barefoot work is safest in dance and gymnastics whether on the floor or apparatus as it allows the toes to grip.

Wearing only socks on a wooden/vinyl floor can cause slipping and this practice is dangerous for any activity.

Careful thought should be given to an activity where mixed footwear is worn by different children. The premise is, again, secure footing, but consideration needs to be given as to whether the mixed footwear would create a likely potential for injury being inflicted on others.

Personal effects including jewellery and cultural or religious adornments

Personal effects, such as jewellery, (including body piercings), religious artefacts, watches, hair slides, and sensory aids including glasses, should ideally always be **removed** to establish a safe working environment.

Staff should be mindful of their own adornments and remove them prior to teaching physical education for both safety and role-model reasons.

Long hair worn by both staff and children should always be tied back with a suitably soft item to prevent entanglement in apparatus and equipment and to prevent it obscuring vision. Nails need to be sufficiently short to prevent injury to self and others.

Parents can find out about the uniform and jewellery rules in the school prospectus and on visits to the school. By sending a child to the school, parents have implied their acceptance of the rules.

Children are encouraged to leave items of jewellery and earrings at home on days when they have physical education lessons. Children who do wear earrings to school on PE days will be expected to remove them, themselves.

Newly pierced ears can take a period of up to six weeks before sleepers and studs can be removed. Parents are reminded that ears should be pierced at the start of the summer holidays to allow sufficient time for earrings to be safely removed.

Children who are not able to remove earrings (as these may be newly pierced) will not actively participate in physical education for their own and others safety. In this circumstance a pupil will be asked to undertake the role of coach, official or other learning activity that is relevant.

Parents are encouraged to actively work with schools in helping to minimise disruption to the physical education curriculum. Disclaimers from parents about the wearing of any item of jewellery by a child should be declined. Such indemnities have no legal status. The duty of care remains firmly with the school on such matters.

A compromise must be sought and careful discussion with parents usually results in the best outcome. Point out the dangers of not only the wearer being injured but also the possibilities for others to be injured too eg a barefooted child standing on any object is painful but to receive a stud earring in the bottom of a foot is extremely painful.

Medical aid wrist bands

Recent developments in the manufacture of medical aid wrist bands have resulted in products with an acceptably low risk factor (soft materials used, Velcro fastenings). Such items should be acceptable for participation in most activities, largely avoiding the need for removal.

Teeth Braces or Dentures

Children know whether these are allowed to be removed and usually have a special container for them.

Sensory Aids

The decision as to whether it is safe or possible to wear glasses or hearing aids will usually be determined by the nature of the activity. Activities involving physical contact and full game situations may not be appropriate. For example, England Rugby (RFU) allows the wearing of glasses (in non-contact games) up to the under-8 age group, while The Football Association (FA) leaves this to the referee's discretion up to the age of 14.

Where the sensory aid needs to be worn for safe participation by the individual, then the staff, wherever possible, need to amend the activity (such as providing more space and time) or the equipment (such as using a soft ball instead of a harder one) in order to try to make participation while wearing a sensory aid as safe as possible for the wearer and others in the group.

In all cases, where removal of personal effects or making safe an item is not possible, strategies to enable safe participation in the lesson need to be introduced. The child should be involved in all the learning, but adaptations will need to be made in terms of how they take part in the practical aspects of the lesson. The child can contribute to group planning, designing and tactical discussions, but can have different tasks assigned to them during the practical elements of the lesson (eg individual skills practices, peer coaching, observation and feedback tasks, videoing others to analyse at a later stage, or officiating in a games context).

Religious and Cultural Issues

To maximise safe and meaningful participation, staff should use sensitive management when dealing with any concerns arising from the wearing of certain items of clothing specific to religious requirements. Children should be able to experience a broad PE programme whatever their cultural background, while schools must continue to have regard to health and safety and equality legislation.

The most frequent Health and Safety concerns arise from:

- the wearing of certain items of clothing and/or religious artefacts

- the impact of religious/cultural festivals (eg Ramadan)
- cultural expectations relating to prescribed areas of activity
- participation in single or mixed-gender groups
- language issues
- expectations relating to behaviour and conduct

Any religious artefacts should be removed or made safe. Where removal is expressly forbidden (eg the Sikh bangle, the kara), and the article cannot be made acceptably safe by taping, padding or covering, the activity and involvement of the wearer must be suitably modified to mitigate undue risk. Staff should ensure the following:

- any clothing worn to comply with a faith commitment should be appropriate to the activity. Clothing should be comfortable and allow for freedom of movement, while not being so loose as to become a hazard. A tracksuit is perfectly acceptable clothing for Muslim students and is not seen as offending the principles enshrined in Haya relating to modesty and decency
- headscarves (such as the hijab), where worn, should be tight, secured in a safe manner, particularly at the side of the face, and unlikely to obscure vision or catch on anything that may put the wearer at risk. Children can also consider obtaining a sports version of the hijab, for improved suitability. These are available from high street stores and on the Internet
- in swimming lessons, unacceptable exposure of the body should be managed through adjustments in swimming attire to accommodate religious and cultural sensitivities while not compromising the safety of the children concerned. Adapted swimming costumes can be purchased by parents from sports shops

Children who frequently fail to bring his/her kit for activities

When children repeatedly 'forget' their physical education kit, or seem reluctant to change for activities, there are a number of things to consider and investigate. For some children, it may simply be a case of being disorganised, but for others, there may be more deep-rooted concerns, and staff should try to find out what these might be. They could range from difficulties at home to personal, medical or even abuse problems. In the shorter term, to manage the situation in the lessons, there are a number of strategies that staff may adopt:

- depending on the activity, can the child participate in parts of the lesson safely by removing some of their daily clothing (eg removing a jumper, taking part in bare feet)? This might not always be a satisfactory solution (eg if the child is in bare feet, repetitive high impact activities might need to be restricted; if the child is wearing loose clothing or items that are likely to cause slipping, use of gymnastics apparatus would not be acceptable). In addition, compromising on correct kit should not appear as acceptable practice to other children. It is a temporary dispensation
- allow the child to take part in those elements of the lesson that can be carried out while not changed into physical education kit (eg listening to the learning, designing, planning and evaluating, and providing an alternative task during practical parts of the lesson)
- provide the child with 'spare' physical education kit. When schools decide that they make 'spare' kit available to children, they should inform parents, through their policies and other forms of communication, that this will happen, and the format it will take
- undertake a systemic 'conditioning' of the child to engage in PE such as build up the time that a child engages and also how much kit they change into

Liaising with parents throughout this process is essential so that they are aware and are supportive. Children should not be completely excluded from the lesson on the basis of not having the correct kit

(some children may be seeking this outcome). For efficient management, the school should outline clear policies regarding the handling of these situations, and the staff member must make the final decision regarding safe participation.

Special educational needs, disabilities and medical conditions

The Equality Act 2010 makes clear that schools must make reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities, or for an aspect of their disability, that enable them to access as full a programme of education, including physical education, as possible.

Examples might be:

- supplying auxiliary aids and services
- providing additional support staff
- ensuring that changing facilities are suitable

While children may share the same disability or condition, their abilities will vary, as will their needs. To enable suitable and safe participation, and to demonstrate optimum inclusion as appropriate, staff should:

- establish the child's aspirations within PE
- have some knowledge of the specific learning difficulty, disability, medical condition, or emotional or behavioural disorder
- fully understand how the individual's condition affects them
- be aware of any constraints on physical activities as a result of the learning difficulty, disability, medical condition, or emotional or behavioural disorder, or as a result of any medication/treatment the student might be taking
- be able to provide the emergency treatment/action necessary if physical activities exacerbate the learning difficulty, disability, medical condition, or emotional or behavioural disorder
- be aware of any personal and family background knowledge about the student that might be significant
- be confident in their approach to teaching children with SEND
- have the knowledge, techniques and strategies necessary for safe teaching
- notice when a child's condition deteriorates by being alert to changes in their ability, attitude, levels of stamina, or how quickly they fatigue
- be able to adapt tasks, or know when to suggest that the student rests, or requires additional support or medical input

Knowledge of children

It is important that the teacher has relevant knowledge of the children they teach. Where the teacher is not the usual adult responsible, it is essential that the person is provided with key information about individuals within the group being taught.

Key information any teacher working with a group would benefit from knowing includes:

- relevant medical information
- behavioural information
- previous experience of the activity
- confidence and competence of individuals

- any special education needs and disability (SEND), individual need or any specific personal circumstances that may affect the children's performance

Observation and Analysis

Teachers need to constantly check whether the activity that is taking place is safe and, if not, intervene or stop the activity to make it safe. This requires the expertise to know what is safe and what is required to adjust the technique, skill or movement to make it safe. Where teachers feel they do not have this level of expertise, they should discuss the issues with their line manager in order to determine what should be done to maintain safe situations in lessons.

Parental consent

Parents cannot withdraw their child from prescribed curriculum subjects without formal agreement. They can however, choose whether their child can take part in optional activities outside normal lesson times.

Consent forms do not indemnify the teacher should a child be injured and thus no offer of indemnity by a parent should be accepted. A child, if injured, can make a claim for compensation retrospectively in their own right within three years of becoming an adult, thus making the arrangement between teacher and parent meaningless in law.

Changing accommodation management in our schools

This principle is about ensuring dignity, decency and privacy where needed, albeit for reasons of physical development or other individual needs. It remains the case that a great many schools have no changing facilities and are consequently, obliged to make arrangements for changing elsewhere.

Until fairly recently the practice of children changing in their own classroom was accepted as a normal feature of school life and what sensitivities existed were rarely voiced. Current safeguarding legislation and regulation, however, has impacted on our duty of care in this area of children's well-being.

Schools continue to do the best for their children by providing some privacy for older children in what are often restricted facilities. These include using toilets, cloakroom areas, the hall, corridors and classrooms. All have supervision and health and safety implications.

Accepting that the circumstances of each school will vary and that many schools have resolved any changing difficulties to their own satisfaction, the following strategies are offered for consideration:

- girls and boys change within the same classroom, utilising the layout of the room to demarcate separate changing areas, perhaps using existing furniture or display boards to screen off a section of the room
- girls and boys change in different rooms, with supervisory support from another member of staff eg HLTA, TA

It is important first and foremost to be sensitive to the needs of the children. In some schools this issue may not be an obvious problem and the vast majority of children will get changed without any undue concerns. When an issue does arise, and often this can be an individual child, then the school may need to address the changing arrangements for all children at that stage.

Whatever arrangements are adopted it remains critical that parents are kept well informed.