



BERLESDUNA
ACADEMY TRUST

Physical Education Safe Teaching and Management Principles

This Policy to take effect from:	May 2024
This Policy will be reviewed :	2 Years
This Policy will be reviewed on:	May 2026

This guidance is written to complement the tenth edition of 'Safe Practice: in Physical Education, School Sport and Physical Activity' ('afPE 2020). Together with the Trust Health and Safety Policy they provide clear guidance on issues relating to the health, safety and well-being of children during physical education and sporting activities.

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.

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.

Although an adult who does not have qualified Teacher Status (QTS) may be considered competent to work alone, they must always work under the supervision and direction of a qualified teacher.

Control, Discipline, Behaviour and Group-management Skills

Poor discipline, control and behaviour management can adversely affect the standard of safety in any situation. Teachers need to consider:

- regular scanning of the whole group
- their own positioning in order to observe the children
- halting the activity when it becomes potentially unsafe
- that changing group sizes during a lesson needs careful consideration
- the whole school behaviour policy and how it relates to PE lessons.

Risk Management

Managing risk is the key to safe practice. It is the process of applying established safety principles, deciding whether these are sufficient for the situation and, if necessary, applying additional safety measures to ensure the environment and activity are acceptably safe.

This approach is promoting a form of risk-benefit analysis. The benefits of appropriate challenge, progression and improvement can be realised within a safe learning environment where the benefit outweighs the risk of injury.

Risk assessment is central to safe practice. It involves managing the risk, or possibility of injury by:

- deciding what to risk assess – the physical education, school sport and physical activity (PESSPA) programme as a whole or each activity, facility or special event
- identifying the hazards that could cause harm (injury)
- judging whether or not existing safety precautions are sufficient to provide a safe learning environment
- deciding whether any significant risk of harm remains
- identifying who could be harmed by any significant risk
- reducing or controlling any remaining significant risk of harm to an acceptable and reasonable level by some additional form of corrective action or control measure
- recording the findings on a risk assessment and implementing them]informing participants , staff and any other relevant people about changes (additional controls and procedures) that have been implemented to make any situation safer
- reviewing and updating the risk assessment regularly

Footwear – staff and children

The basic principle is the necessity for secure footing whatever the surface or activity involved.

All staff need to 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 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 to whether the mixed footwear would create a likely potential for injury being inflicted on others.

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 Primary Schools

This principle is about ensuring dignity, decency and privacy where needed, be it 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, have 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 e.g. 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.

Religious and Cultural Issues

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

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

Personal effects including jewellery and cultural or religious adornments

Staff need to 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 our 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.

The wearing of jewellery, earrings and ear-studs (metal or plastic) is not permitted on safety grounds during physical education lessons and other sporting activities such as out of hours' school learning or competitive fixtures.

These items represent a potential hazard not only to the wearer but also to other children. Medical advice confirms that any jewellery worn in physical education lessons is an unnecessary risk and should be avoided at all times. Serious accidents have occurred as a result of contact between pupils wearing earrings or studs and other pupils or equipment, thus damaging the ear, or where items of jewellery have caught in apparatus and torn the ear lobe.

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 e.g. 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.

Spectacles

Speak with parents of younger children; older children will know what is best for them. Many children can become disorientated when they are not wearing their spectacles, sometimes judgement of 'depth' becomes a problem when not wearing spectacles and this can be a particular hazard when children are up high and cannot judge where the floor is.

If a child does need to wear spectacles for physical education lessons they should be made of plastic rather than glass and should be secured if they are likely to slip or fall off. A special 'elastic band' can be purchased for this purpose.

There is a risk of injury for children wearing spectacles for games, whether they are contact or non-contact games. For competitive game situations it is of course advisable for soft contact lenses to be worn.

Hearing Aids

Advice must be taken from parents or guardians; usually hearing aids are worn during physical education lessons except for swimming activities

Health and Safety

A range of individuals in schools can suffer injuries or be taken ill. It does not matter whether the injury or illness happens in school or elsewhere, it is important to give immediate attention and call an ambulance in serious cases.

In schools it is the responsibility of the employer to make sure that the Health and Safety (first aid) regulations 1981 are met. These require employers to provide:

- a sufficient number of trained first-aiders (where 25 or more people are employed, one such person should be provided)
- appropriate first aid equipment, kits and facilities
- a system for incident and accident reporting

Equipment

Equipment should **be used for the purpose for which it is designed**.

Improvisation is rarely necessary due to the range, quality and quantity available in schools. Where a decision is made to use an item for a purpose for which it is not actually designed, the member of staff would need to have a very strong justification for deciding to improvise. Modification can cause safety features to be undermined.

It is generally recommended that equipment is not adapted without manufacturer guidance. One common example is benches being turned on their side for use in indoor games of five-a-side football. Benches are not designed for this purpose so should not be used in this way due to the increased risk of tripping.

Programme Management

Well-prepared, structured lessons contribute to safe learning situations. There is clear evidence that there are more injured in unstructured situations than structured ones. Planning is therefore essential to safe practice, using whatever method the individual teacher needs, prefers or is required to use.

Throughout the planning stage, staff should think through the following process:

- This is what I want pupils to learn. This is how I plan for the learning to take place. **Is this learning experience safe?**
- If something happened to make the learning experience unsafe, what could I do to maintain the safety of the pupils?
- If I cannot introduce a safe alternative, I will have no option but to abandon or further adjust the learning experience.