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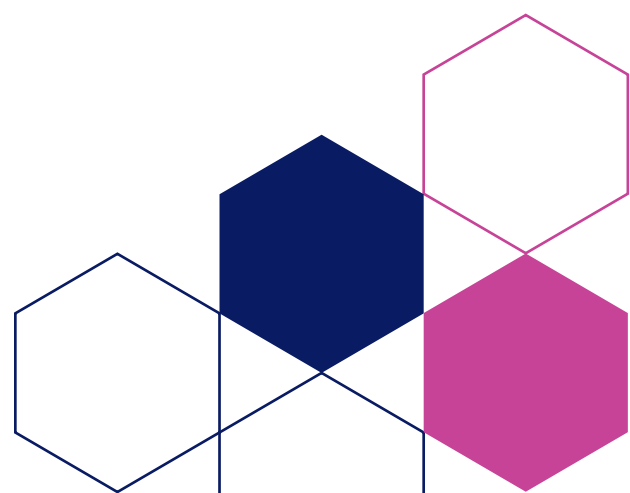
Northern Ireland Curriculum 2028

An entitlement to excellence and equity

Physical Education (PE)

Draft curriculum framework for Public Consultation

This document forms part of a suite of curriculum materials published for consultation





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Vision statement

High-quality Physical Education (PE) helps pupils to participate meaningfully in the social and physical worlds that they inhabit. In PE, pupils participate in physical activity and sport that will promote sustained, healthy and active lifestyles. In PE lessons, pupils spend the vast majority of their time being active. They gain knowledge about the purpose, value and safe practice of varied activities primarily through physical participation.

PE provides access to traditions and forms of movement and activity that may otherwise remain inaccessible, for example, dance and gymnastics. Movement in all its forms – playful, expressive, aesthetic, athletic and competitive – is recognised as legitimate and meaningful knowledge. PE teaches a shared language that connects pupils to local, national and global traditions within our cultural heritage of physical activity, sport, exercise and dance.

The curriculum prioritises the systematic development of fundamental movement skills, regardless of starting points, backgrounds or prior experiences. Pupils develop competence and confidence as movement patterns become increasingly fluent and coherent. They learn how to transfer and improve their movement skills in a variety of contexts, carefully considering how space, purpose and interaction shape decisions about how, when, where and why to move. These foundations are consolidated through more complex and specialised applications in increasingly demanding activity-specific and sport-specific contexts, helping to close proficiency gaps that can limit confidence, enjoyment and participation. PE involves learning how to move intelligently, while also providing a space for creativity and self-expression through movement.

As fluency develops, pupils recognise physical activity as rewarding and enjoyable, building confidence for participation across a wide range of activities and supporting commitment to an active lifestyle. Secure foundations afford pupils freedom to participate in a variety of roles – to play, perform, compete, officiate and discuss.

Through participation, pupils learn the conventions of physical activities, develop the capacity to collaborate, communicate and compete with authenticity, and learn to value fairness, respect, cooperation, self-regulation and empathy. Competition is used as a vehicle for learning to strive, belong and excel with integrity.

The PE curriculum combines rich knowledge expressed through movement with disciplinary understanding. Pupils learn how and why movement works, how the body responds to physical activity and recovers, how participation and performance can be improved, and how physical activity contributes to wellbeing. They learn how physical activity contributes to physical, mental and social wellbeing, enabling them to select, adapt and sustain participation. By

teaching pupils how to participate safely, to recognise the effects of exercise and to promote their own activity in real-life application, PE supports positive physical, mental and social dimensions of health.

PE plays a central role in shaping positive predispositions towards lifelong participation in physical activity and sport. Through high-quality teaching, pupils develop a healthy self-concept and enduring positive attitudes towards active living. The curriculum challenges misconceptions and inequalities that can limit opportunity. It strengthens pupils' understanding of health resources and supports inclusive participation. In this way, PE provides a gateway into physical activity and sport, enabling pupils to practise, enjoy and value activities that enhance health and wellbeing throughout their lives.



Subject-specific categories

Pupils' entitlements in Physical Education (PE) can be organised into three interconnected categories:

- physical movement
- conventions
- physical health

These categories describe complementary aspects of the subject. Together, they support pupils in learning to move and moving to learn. The majority of PE time will be spent in physical movement. Teaching about conventions and physical health should be closely connected to, and where possible, integrated with teaching of physical movement.

Physical movement

Physical movement concerns the development of purposeful, efficient and expressive movement. Pupils learn how to move and how to acquire and refine movement skills. They learn to combine and adapt these skills across different physical activities and contexts.

This category includes fundamental movement skills, activity-specific techniques, coordination, balance, agility, control, rhythm and expression. As knowledge and fluency develop, pupils learn to transfer movement patterns across activities, respond to changing demands and apply movement with increasing confidence, precision and adaptability. Physical movement forms the foundation on which all other learning in PE depends.

Conventions

To learn about conventions is to learn how physical activities are structured and governed. Pupils learn the shared rules, roles, strategies, behaviours and values that make participation meaningful, safe and fair.

This category includes rules and regulations, roles within individual and team activities, communication, decision-making, tactics, officiating and the study of conventions. Pupils learn how to collaborate, compete and perform with integrity, developing respect for others and an understanding of how physical activities operate within wider sporting and cultural traditions.

Physical health

Physical health concerns knowledge about the body, exercise and wellbeing. This is underpinned by knowledge of body systems, components of fitness, principles of training, preparation and recovery, hydration, injury prevention and the physical, mental and social benefits of participation. Pupils learn how physical activity affects the body and how fitness can be developed. Pupils learn to prepare for, recover from and participate safely in physical activity.

As pupils progress, they become more informed and independent in managing their own participation, supporting lifelong engagement in physical activity.



Foundation Stage

The Foundation Stage in PE sees pupils exploring the range of movements that their body can make and introduces them to fundamental movement skills. Through these movement experiences, pupils develop body awareness. They learn how to control, coordinate and apply effective fundamental movement skills in simple and predictable contexts.

Pupils develop an early awareness of the relationship between physical activity and health. They learn how physical participation affects their body, why warming up, rest and hydration matter and how participation strengthens fitness and wellbeing. Pupils also learn how basic physical activities work: the importance of following rules, taking turns, communication and simple decision-making so that movement becomes meaningful and safe.

Throughout Foundation Stage, through practice and through acquiring these various types of knowledge, pupils are supported to move confidently and competently.

Physical movement

Pupils should learn:

- fundamental movement skills:
 - basic locomotor skills (e.g. running, leaping, hopping, jumping, climbing and skipping from one point to another using different levels, directions, speeds and pathways)
 - basic stability skills (e.g. bending, stretching, swinging, rocking and rolling)
 - basic manipulation skills (e.g. object rolling, throwing, kicking, trapping, catching)
- to use fine motor movement, including controlled hand and finger movements
- to handle equipment accurately, developing hand–eye coordination and grip strength, including when manipulating a ball (e.g. rolling, throwing or catching) or striking stationary objects with short-handled implements
- to respond to cues, rhythm and prompts and participate in simple movement sequences

Conventions

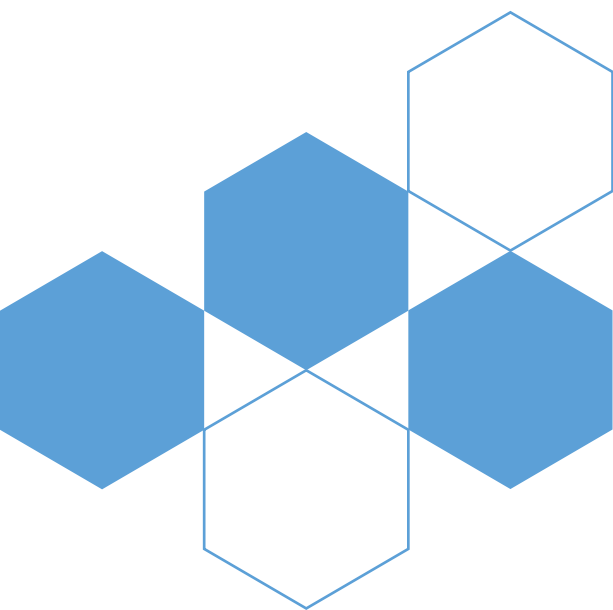
Pupils should:

- explore simple physical challenges (e.g. moving around obstacles, changing direction, stopping safely), making simple movement choices to show basic intentions, strategy and decision-making (e.g. where to move next)
- follow simple rules for taking turns, sharing equipment, and playing safely and fairly
- communicate with peers (including in groups) in simple tasks using words, gestures, signals and actions from a physical activity or game
- learn the basic aims of team and individual activities (e.g. to send, receive, chase, copy, balance, travel)

Physical health

Pupils should learn:

- simple ways to prepare their body for exercise, including a light pulse raiser and simple mobility exercises
- to notice how their body feels before, during and after activity (e.g. heart rate, breathing, warmth)
- to participate safely by using equipment appropriately and stopping when instructed
- that drinking water helps to hydrate the body, and rest helps the body to recover





Key Stage 1

Key Stage 1 focuses on increasing accuracy, control and timing to enable all pupils to move with greater fluency, intention, confidence and enjoyment. Pupils refine and combine fundamental movement skills, they deepen their understanding of how different physical activities are structured and they learn how simple tactics and decisions inform outcomes, moving from participating towards purposeful play.

Pupils also extend their knowledge of how the body works and responds to activity, understanding preparation, recovery, safety and the important role that participation in physical activity and sport plays in both physical health and mental wellbeing.

Physical movement

Pupils should learn to:

- apply fundamental movement skills with improved control, accuracy, balance, coordination and fluency (e.g. using different locomotor skills to move from one point to another using different levels, directions, speeds, pathways and in relation to apparatus [over, under, through], people [near, far, mirroring], or objects)
- link fundamental movement skills together safely (e.g. run-jump-land, roll-balance, throw-move-catch)
- use different speeds, forces, directions and levels to suit the purpose of a movement or activity (e.g. moving lightly to balance, using stronger force to send a ball)
- use spatial and relational awareness to move safely and effectively around others, apparatus and objects (e.g. matching, mirroring, leading/following, moving to create or avoid space, track the path of a ball)
- use fine motor control to handle smaller equipment and perform more complex object-control tasks (e.g. catching and throwing with one hand, striking a moving object with short bats or paddles, or controlling a ball through simple sequences such as roll-trap-throw)
- respond to visual, verbal and rhythmic cues in dance and gymnastics to time and coordinate movement sequences that include relationships with others (e.g. copying and leading)

Conventions

Pupils should learn:

- what constitutes fair and unfair behaviour in physical activities
- to practise tactics such as finding space, staying near an opponent and helping a teammate

Pupils should:

- adopt basic group roles in simple games (e.g. leader/follower, thrower/catcher)
- learn the purpose and structure of different activities (e.g. how games, dance or athletics are organised) and what makes successful participation in them (e.g. the importance of speed, weight and time in dance and gymnastics)
- follow simple activity-specific rules (e.g. starts, restarts, participating within boundary lines)
- create and adapt simple movement ideas to seek solutions in games, dance and other physical challenges

Physical health

Pupils should learn:

- that different types and intensities of activity affect how the body feels (e.g. higher intensity is linked to faster breathing)
- the main role of the heart, lungs, bones and muscles in physical activity
- simple links between warm up for activity and quality of participation, the role of rest in healthy physical participation



Key Stage 2

Key Stage 2 builds on the increasing fluency and control of movement gained in Key Stage 1 and further refines technical accuracy and tactical awareness to enable pupils to participate with increased consistency and intention. Pupils consolidate and refine fundamental movement skills within a small range of activity-specific contexts, combining and adapting them with greater efficiency and effectiveness across increasingly demanding contexts.

Pupils deepen their knowledge of the roles and responsibilities within contrasting individual and team-based activities to enable them to proactively and reactively respond to increasingly strategic play. They support their safe and healthy participation by building secure knowledge of how the musculoskeletal and cardiorespiratory systems work. Pupils will transition from general physical activity to sport-specific movements, equipping them with the knowledge to improve the quality of their participation and sustain engagement.

Physical movement

Pupils should learn to:

- select and apply accurate techniques when throwing, striking or kicking based on distance, time target and/or pressure
- adjust linked movement patterns (e.g. speed, direction, pathway, level) in response to unpredictable changes in task, environment, space or others
- exploit space when attacking or creating movement opportunities
- control objects with parts of the body (e.g. hands, feet) while stationary and on the move
- track moving objects and people accurately to anticipate and initiate a response (e.g. catch, block, trap)
- sequence and perform dance and gymnastics actions that match the context (e.g. floor to apparatus, individual, pair and small group) to a stimulus (e.g. music, picture)

Conventions

Pupils should learn:

- to communicate ideas and narratives through dance and gymnastics by selecting and combining movement actions within different space and time demands

- similarities and differences in rules and objectives across related activities
- to demonstrate with increasing competence and confidence different roles within activities (e.g. attacker, defender)
- simple attacking and defensive principles (e.g. marking, supporting, evading or creating space)
- how following rules and conventions across a range of activities promotes safety, fairness, respect and enjoyment
- to interpret and use basic officiating rules and signals fairly
- to use clear verbal and non-verbal communication during games, practices and group tasks in competitive and non-competitive contexts
- to anticipate simple outcomes of decisions and adjust decisions during play to improve effectiveness
- to transfer simple tactics between similar activities (e.g. creating space in different games)

Physical health

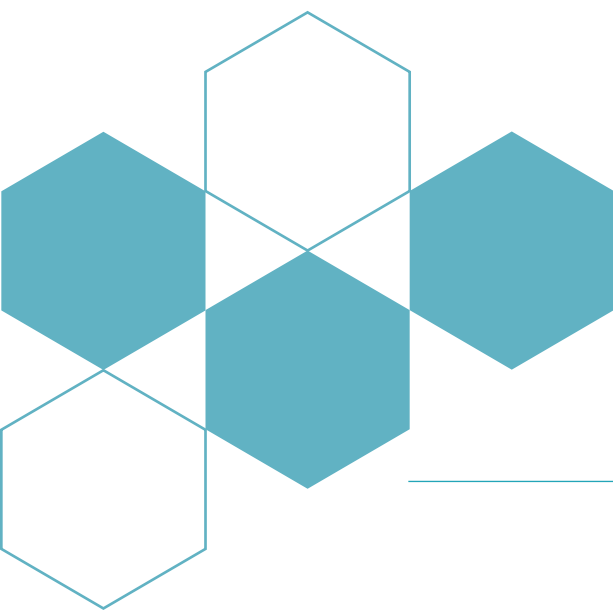
Pupils should learn:

- how different types, durations and intensities of physical activity affect individual participation
- the main components of the musculoskeletal and cardiorespiratory systems and to explain how they work together to support movement and sustain activity
- how regular participation in physical activity can support physical, mental and social health and wellbeing
- that fitness is specific and how different activities contribute to fitness (e.g. running for stamina, stretching for flexibility)
- safe techniques, behaviours and potential risks associated with different activities and environments, the physiological purpose of warm-ups and cool-downs in preparing and recovering the body
- simple hydration and rest strategies before, during and after activity
- practical strategies to manage emotions during performance (e.g. staying focused, trying again, accepting outcomes)
- different types of goals and how to use feedback to identify whether goals have been achieved

Swimming and water safety

Pupils should learn:

- to swim using a recognised stroke – arm action, leg action, body position and breathing
flotation – treading water, star float and rotating from front to back, sculling
- basic pool rules and safety in and around water
- to recognise danger (e.g. signs and flags, on beaches, lakes and waterways)
- the HELP position in a life jacket or with tow float
- safe water entry – sit and slide in, push and glide – on front and back in streamlined stretched position





Key Stage 3

During Key Stage 3, pupils build on the technical competence and confidence and increasingly complex tactical awareness from Key Stage 2. Pupils refine and transfer their movement patterns to meet the demands of each context in which they participate within both competitive and non-competitive activities. They apply fluency and control to movement across varied and unfamiliar settings, adapting to pressure and demonstrating increased individual expression through their movement.

In their growing knowledge and application of conventions, pupils move beyond simple strategy and tactics to demonstrate competent analysis and transfer of principles of play across a range of contrasting activities, developing leadership and ethical responsibility. Meanwhile, and while participating in physical activities, pupils develop their knowledge of specific health- and skill-related fitness components and principles of training, preparation and recovery. Pupils become increasingly independent in their monitoring of their own participation and risk management. Pupils develop the skills and knowledge to enable them to refine and justify the decisions required for lifelong and life-wide participation.

Physical movement

Pupils should learn:

- to demonstrate coordination, agility, balance and spatial awareness to adapt movement type, pattern or pacing in response to stimuli (e.g. opponent, teammate, object, boundary)
- to adapt and transfer movement skills across activities, (e.g. balance in gymnastics, supporting participation in invasion games)
- techniques specific to games, athletics, gymnastics, dance, outdoor learning and the adjustments to techniques to enhance effectiveness and safety
- to consolidate movement patterns to suit performance demands and roles, including footwork and movement patterns such as pivoting, dodging and changing direction with control in competitive situations
- a range of sending skills (passing, throwing, striking, kicking) with increasing accuracy, power and control and timing to meet tactical demands in court and pitch games
- to adjust force, angle and timing to deliver effective passes, throws, kicks, jumps or strikes in varied physical activities

- to receive and control a ball securely using correct body positioning and hand/foot techniques in a range of sports, at varied speeds with increasing pressure from opponents, space or time
- to protect the ball from opponents using appropriate shielding and positioning
- to judge trajectories, weighting and angles to improve effectiveness when shooting or targeting specific zones
- to create and perform increasingly complex and expressive individual and group dance and gymnastic sequences
- to perform in aesthetic activities that incorporate technical, compositional and choreographic techniques, relevant skills and equipment where necessary

Conventions

Through practical participation and officiating, pupils should learn:

- the rules and regulations appropriate to a range of physical activities, including performances in dance and gymnastics, athletic events and individual and team games
- how to adopt leadership roles such as captain or official (e.g. organising players and tactics)
- sportsmanship and ethical behaviour in both competitive and non-competitive settings
- principles of intelligent movement such as spatial awareness, attacking concepts, defensive strategies and transitions in game-based activities
- to refine movement skills and apply increasingly sophisticated and sport-specialised tactics to maintain possession, create scoring opportunities and defend in court and pitch games
- the features of effective and safe tactical decision-making, applying this knowledge to solve movement and tactical problems in specific physical activities and sports (e.g. different ways of manipulating space to receive passes, maintain possession or increase or decrease scoring opportunities) individually, in attacking or defensive units, and as part of a team
- to refine performances based on reflective activities, evaluation of impact on outcomes and feedback
- to adapt and transfer tactics and strategies that have been successful in one activity to another similar one

Physical health

Pupils should learn:

- health- and skill-related components of fitness specific to different activities
- to monitor physical activity intensity, fitness and performance over a period of time using a range of measurement techniques, tracking intensity (e.g. rate of perceived exertion, heart rate zones) and understanding this helps prevent overtraining and reduces injury risk
- to follow established safety procedures and codes of conduct, using equipment and facilities responsibly, and to minimise possible risks
- to plan and lead appropriate warm-up and cool-down activities
- the actions of muscles and bones to describe how sport movement occurs (e.g. the muscles, bones and movements involved in throwing, bowling or pitching actions, and how this differs between sports)
- mental rehearsal strategies to prepare for participation
- signs of fatigue and injury
- about pathways for participation beyond Key Stage 3, including access and engagement within the local community
- about social and cultural influences which shape participation in physical activity, including recognisable barriers to participation and strategies to overcome these (e.g. the influence of family habits, cost and time)

Pupils should:

- participate regularly and positively in a range of physical activities, with the opportunity to build strengths in one or two that they particularly enjoy
- set goals and plan improvements in physical fitness and engagement with specific physical activities and sports



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