

Safety in Physical Education and Sport

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1. INTRODUCTION

Safe practice in physical education should be an integral feature of all aspects and in all phases of education, from the very early years of playgroup and reception through to adult, further and higher education.

Teachers, lecturers and others in positions of responsibility have a *duty of care* for those in their charge to ensure that planning and implementation include recognition of safety as an important element.

Young people should learn about the principles of safety as applied to themselves and to the care and wellbeing of others. This should be a planned and intentional aspect of the curriculum.

Comprehensive guidance and advice for schools and outdoor education groups is to be found in the following publication:

'Safe Practice in Physical Education and School Sport' published by the Association of Physical Education (formally BAALPE)

<http://www.afpe.org.uk/physical-education/safe-practice-in-physical-education-school-sport-physical-activity-2016>

2. PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND THE LAW

2.1 Introduction

The Law will reasonably expect that an individual schools' 'code of safe practice in physical education' will reflect it's own particular needs according to it's programmes and premises, in addition to factors which it may have in common with other similar establishments.

The school must declare its own policies and practices which will reduce risks of injury to an acceptable level.

The Head of PE/PE co-ordinator is responsible for ensuring these are brought to the attention of all staff in the School that it is complied with and must co-operate, as appropriate, with the school Health and Safety Co-ordinator in this regard.

2.2 Duty of Care

It is advised that the consent of the pupil's parents or guardians should always be given prior to children taking part in physical education. This applies to all activities within the school curriculum, to extra-curricular activities during or outside normal school hours and whether undertaken on or away from school premises.

Physical education teachers at primary and secondary levels can greatly improve their policy and safe practice in physical education if they examine very carefully all the working environments in which they place themselves and their pupils.

2.3 Risk Assessment

Hazards in PE can be reduced through effective management, i.e. by balancing appropriate challenge and acceptable risk.

Schools must create and maintain a risk assessment for each PE work area. Significant hazards and their control measures should also be included in the schools PE policy. Schools are advised to obtain the risk assessment of the venue for any events they attend outside of school.

3. QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPERVISION

3.1 Qualifications for teaching Physical Education

3.1.1 Competence to teach PE may be defined as having the skills, knowledge, understanding and expertise necessary to effectively and safely plan, deliver and evaluate a programme of activities to a class or group of young people in methods approved through regular and accepted good practice.

Qualified individuals should be experienced, trained, assessed and accredited to a level at which those with responsibility may reasonably express confidence of successful outcomes in the planning and delivery of the activities being undertaken.

3.1.2 There is currently no requirement in law that a teacher or lecturer must hold a specific award before teaching an activity in physical education. However, it behoves all such personnel and it is prudent to be able to show that they are appropriately qualified to undertake the tasks in which they engage with young people. Specialist teachers of PE should have completed appropriate initial teacher training (ITT) and /or professional development courses covering the activities they are required to teach.

Primary school teachers should likewise have experienced physical education appropriate to that age-range during their initial training.

Head teachers should check on the level of initial training of staff involved in teaching physical education and recognise that it is unwise for staff to teach in areas where they lack the appropriate experience and expertise, particularly where there are safety implications.

Where there are specific National Governing Body Certificates available for certain sports or activities, teachers planning or supervising these activities should be certificated as appropriate.

Examples of such activities include swimming, gymnastics, trampolining, contact sports and aspects of outdoor and adventurous activities.

3.2 Adults other than Teachers (AOTT's)

Adults other than teachers are used widely in a variety of ways to support the delivery of physical education and in the extended curriculum to:

- support and work alongside teachers in the delivery of the curriculum
- work alongside and support teachers in the development of school clubs and teams on the school site
- deliver off-site activities

The school governing body has a duty of care that operates for any activity in which pupils are engaged. Teachers cannot transfer this duty and therefore it is advised that AOTT's must work alongside teachers with supervision.

Schools should ensure that stringent checks, including Disclosure and Barring Scheme (DBS) checks, are made before allowing any unsupervised access to children.

Schools should refer to;
'Guidelines for Local Education Authorities, Schools and Colleges' in the use of 'Adults other than Teachers in Physical Education and Sport Programmes', BAALPE.

3.3 Class sizes in Physical Education

In determining the size of teaching groups in physical education, Head Teachers and teachers need to take account of;

- nature of the activity
- age, experience and developmental stage of pupil/students
- requirements of National Curriculum

4.0 GENERAL HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES IN PE

4.1 Manual Handling and Storage of Equipment

Where possible manual handling tasks should be avoided or the risk of handling injury minimised by appropriate task design or the use of handling aids (e.g. trolleys). The layout of storage areas should minimise the need to stretch, reach, bend or twist the body excessively to reach frequently used or heavy items. This can be enhanced by ensuring that storage areas are kept tidy and well organised.

4.2 Apparatus Handling by Pupils

It is an integral part of the subject to involve pupils in apparatus handling, particularly in gymnastics and trampolining. However this must be carried out in such a way as to reduce risk to pupils as far as is reasonably practicable. Schools must have arrangements to enable pupils to learn how to handle equipment safely according to their age and strength.

BAALPE guidance, pages 196 and 199 refer.

4.3 Inspection of Equipment

All PE facilities (gymnasiums, halls, sports halls, multi-gyms etc.) and equipment must be inspected regularly.

Schools must make arrangements with competent contractors to inspect PE equipment at least annually, (a selection of local contractors are listed on HGfL <http://www.thegrid.org.uk/info/premises/equipment.shtml>)

The school premises manager and PE co-ordinator should carry out pre-use visual checks of equipment to identify obvious defects, this includes a visual sweep of playing areas prior to use to ensure any hazardous objects are removed.

Games posts to be kept in good condition, lighter portable posts secured to prevent them falling over free standing posts secured and all posts checked regularly.

4.4 Hazards and Equipment Defects

It is the responsibility of everyone to inform the staff member in charge of any hazards, e.g. defects to equipment, so that appropriate action can be taken.

If the teacher in charge considers a defect to be a significant threat to health and safety, the equipment must be taken out of use until the defect

has been remedied. Such equipment should also be labelled indicating that it is faulty and must not be used.

4.5 First Aid

Schools should have suitable numbers of trained first aiders available. See also the First Aid section of Education Health and Safety Manual and BAALPE guidance, pages 118-24 refers.

A travelling first aid kit and clear, effective procedures for contacting the emergency services is considered to be the minimum requirement.

Procedures to address the needs of injured pupils and the remainder of the group should be anticipated, in particular on visits away from school premises. Managing accidents should be included in PE risk assessments.

4.6 Accident / Incident Reporting

Any injuries to staff arising out of PE or school sports activities and those to pupils resulting in significant injury / first aid attention should be reported on the School Incident Report form. Any incidents that take place during an out of school event should be assisted and recorded by the organisation in charge of the event.

It should be noted that accidents and incidents that happen in relation to curriculum sports activities and result in pupils being killed or taken to hospital for treatment are also reportable to the Health and Safety Executive/local authority.

See [HSE Education information sheet no 1 \(rev1\)](#) for details of information on reporting to HSE in schools.

4.7 Clothing and Footwear

This must be appropriate to the activity.

For indoor activities (dance, gymnastics etc.) it is not acceptable to work in stockinged feet because they do not grip the floor. Bare foot work is acceptable when floor conditions are suitable, i.e. smooth, clean and without splinters. If the condition of the floor does not allow bare feet, then soft soled plimsolls provide the best alternative.

Wherever possible clothing allowing freedom of movement should be worn, appropriate to the activity.

Paras 9.2 of BAALPE guidance refer.

4.8 Personal Effects (Jewellery etc)

Jewellery, i.e. watches, rings, earrings, bracelets, necklaces etc. (including jewellery worn through the ears, nose, eyebrows, lips and other exposed areas of the body) should not be worn whilst participating in PE lessons. In addition belts with metal buckles should not be worn and long hair should be secured as appropriate to the activity. Pupils should be consistently reminded of these requirements and a check carried out to ensure compliance before activity begins.

Schools are recommended to include a section in their prospectus outlining the school policy on this issue

When ears, etc. are newly pierced studs and rings cannot be removed for a period of around four to six weeks while the piercing heals. In such cases BAALPE guidance (paragraphs 9.3.2 to 9.3.4) should be followed, i.e: -

- a) all personal effects should be removed;
 - b) if they cannot be removed, the adult in charge should take action to make the situation safe (e.g. adjust the activity for the individual pupil or group);
 - c) if the situation cannot be made safe, the individual pupil should not actively participate.
- Some pupils may need to wear personal effects such as glasses or hearing aids. In these circumstances, the adult in charge should determine whether it is more hazardous for them to actively participate wearing such items, both in terms of their own safety and that of the other pupils.
 - Taping over ear studs is sometimes used to make the situation safe. However, the adult in charge should be confident that this strategy will be effective.

Teachers must not remove or replace earrings. They cannot be responsible for the consequences of removing or replacing earrings. Parents cannot transfer this responsibility to teachers.

5.0 SPECIALIST ACTIVITIES

5.1 Athletics

Athletics embraces a range of tasks, activities and events for the teaching of coaching children in both primary and secondary. Guidelines for middle/secondary physical education specialists covering the use of equipment, landing areas and facilities can be found in BAALPE guidance Chapter 12.

5.2 Gymnastics

The essence of gymnastics is the development of skilled movement under control, on the floor and using apparatus. A child, who learns to lift correctly, carry, assemble and check apparatus in the gymnasium or hall, is acquiring fundamental knowledge about safe practice which will translate in a general way to safe and competent movement in the wider environment.

A variety of different forms of gymnastics have been developed, however they are largely divided into two groups;

- a) A thematic approach in which tasks are set to which varied individual responses are made and for which support is not generally applicable. (With this approach a teacher will give help and encouragement where appropriate)
- b) A formal approach where provision of support in some activities is essential. (This approach should only be used by the teacher/coach with the relevant knowledge and skills and where appropriate the governing body award)

It is advised that mats are only laid out when jumping activities are taking place to discourage any jumping taking place when it is not part of the lesson. It is also recommended that pupils do not jump at heights that exceed their individual waist levels.

5.3 Games

The strenuous and physical contact nature of games like football and rugby means that safety must be given paramount importance. Teachers

must have a good up to date working knowledge of different invasion games.

It is advisable for teachers/coaches/referees to attend regular staff training opportunities that are offered by local organisations.

5.4 Swimming

The department has produced detailed guidance on the Operation and Maintenance of Swimming Pools '[Safe practice in school swimming](#)' which is available on the Grid. All schools with a pool must comply with its requirements.

In particular all schools with swimming pools must prepare:

- A written normal operating procedure (NOP), setting out the organisation and arrangements for ensuring the users safety.
- An emergency action plan (EAP), which all staff, pupils, parents, visitors and other users of the pool should be familiar with.
- A swimming pool risk assessment

Para 19.1 of BAALPE guidance also refers.

5.5 Trampolining

All teachers of trampolining should ensure that they are knowledgeable on fundamental skills and techniques, including the assembly and dismantling of equipment. Teachers must hold a British Gymnastics trampoline award/ qualification as a minimum and keep themselves apprised of new developments through relevant in-service training.

When not in use trampolines should be secured (e.g. Chained and padlocked) to prevent unauthorised use.

Trampettes and trampolines (indoor and outdoor) should not be utilised within primary school settings due to the specialist nature of the activity and the potential for serious injury that can occur on landing.

BAALPE para 16.2 pg 198 refers

5.6 Outdoor and Adventurous Activities

Good planning is central to Safe Practice out of doors and this presumes good leadership. [HCC offsite visits Manual](#) Part D should be referred to by managers and their staff when planning such activities.

6.0 EARLY YEARS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY (3 – 5 yrs)

6.1 Outdoor Provision

The Outdoor area should be fenced and easy to supervise. It provide space to run and jump and to take part in energetic activities as well as for quieter, more reflective experience.

Further guidance available in 'Physical Activity in the Early Years 3 to 5' available from HES Publications Service.

6.2 Outside Climbing Frames and Play Equipment

Opportunities for balancing, climbing and hanging are essential for the development gross motor skills.

See outdoor play equipment guidance.

Play equipment not recommended for Nursery areas are

- Free standing slides
- Rockers
- Swings
- Roundabouts
- Hanging ropes

6.3 Wheeled Toys

Trikes, bikes and scooters must be purchased from reputable suppliers to ensure they are appropriate for Pre-school and Educational establishments where there is intensive daily use in all weathers and which demands equipment with an exceptional degree of durability, adaptability, safety and variety.

Children must wear a well-fitted cycle helmet if they are using a 2-wheeler bike (including with stabilisers).

6.4 Clothing

For all physical activities children must be suitably dressed to ensure their safety at all times.

For example when using climbing equipment hazards can arise from - unfastened coats, woollen gloves, scarves, ties, etc.

Appropriate footwear must be worn. Hazards arise from - slippery soles, open toed and sling back sandals, heels and untied laces, etc.

Please note that this document is intended as guidance only. Any legal recommendations are taken at your own risk. Should you require further information please contact the Network Team.