



Active every day

Teaching Physical Education in Primary Schools
in the Covid-19 era



The Covid-19 pandemic has produced a massive upheaval across the world, affecting the health and well-being of all parts of society, including our children. Many will have missed months of school time and the associated benefits; not just academic but also physical, emotional, and social.

Children's physical development is just as important as their cognitive development as one is dependent upon the other. If children don't develop their physical literacy, they will fail to develop the skills and motivation to be active and miss out on the associated benefits of being active, including improvements in academic performance and physical, emotional, and social wellness.

Getting children active again will be a key foundation for any school looking to successfully re-integrate their children to school life.

However, teachers and children will be returning to school this autumn feeling uncertain about the prospect, many will be anxious and there will be lots of questions. What are all these new rules I must follow? How will the bubbles work? How close can I be to people? Can I play with my friends? Will I catch Covid-19 from somebody? What if I take it home and my family catch it because of me?

Social distancing measures will mean that getting external staff to cover subjects like physical education will be impossible – how can somebody who was in another school yesterday really be safe to come in to cover possibly multiple year groups and classes?

The good news is the recommendations for pupils to be placed in bubbles, either within a class or within a year group, will enable teachers to teach PE for their own pupils with little difference from previous years. However, this may mean that teachers who have not taught PE for some years, who may not feel confident in teaching PE, or haven't had sufficient training in teaching PE will be required to deliver physical education.

How can teachers who may lack confidence and knowledge be expected to deliver outstanding PE lessons?

Whether you are a head teacher or Physical Education lead concerned how to deliver your PE curriculum or you're a teacher who is being asked to teach PE when you may not feel totally confident - this report is here for support you!

- Maybe you have looked at the PE Curriculum and still feel confused about what to teach.
- You may be thinking that you don't feel confident enough to demonstrate the moves and skills, or you're not sure about how to get the children to play a game or mini-game.
- You may think that you don't know how to structure the lesson and deliver the correct moves and skills that are appropriate for the age and skill level of the children.
- You may also be worried about assessing PE and unsure of the criteria to use for assessment.

In this report, we will take you through 5 steps which will help you deliver PE, either as a teacher with your class, or as a head teacher or PE subject lead trying to deliver the entire curriculum across your school.

The report focuses on 5 key questions which I'm asked time and time again by fellow teachers looking to improve their delivery of PE and which I hope will help you today.

These questions are:

- What topics should I teach in PE this year? • How do I plan my PE lesson?
- How do I prepare for my PE lesson? • How do I deliver my PE lesson?
- How do I assess PE?

You'll find lots of really useful hints and tips you can use with your class, starting with 4 guiding principles we always use when we're leading a PE lesson.

So how can we solve this problem?

Teaching any kind of PE session is much easier than you think!

With quality ideas and resources, good planning, and a bit of preparation, you will feel less stressed and more capable of teaching PE to your children, without any additional workload.



PE also helps whole school improvement! Did you know that the most active schools, which includes having activity-based PE lessons, see an additional year of academic progress across a child's time at primary school? So, don't be scared of PE, embrace it and jump in with both feet!

We believe in 4 Guiding Principles that shape how you plan and deliver any type of PE lesson:



1.

Start simple

Start with the basic skills that the children need for the particular sport, game or discipline.



2.

Practice makes perfect

Give the children lots of opportunities to practice the basic skills in lots of different ways.



3.

Small is beautiful

Allow the children lots of time to use equipment in small groups, reduce waiting times and give everyone a chance to shine.



4.

And finally...FUN FUN FUN!

Make sure each lesson is a fun and positive experience for everyone, teacher included!

Using these Guiding Principles will ensure that you don't get swept away by the lure of a full team game before the children can perform the basic skills and will eliminate a lot of the negative experiences that children (and adults!) have in PE.

The elephant in the room – how can we teach PE when we need to be socially distanced?

In our view the bubbles are key to this where children will be together for over 6 hours a day for 5 days a week. These bubbles will enable children to be in relatively close proximity to each other – as we know children will be anyway – whilst minimising the risk of transmission of the Covid-19 virus.

If PE lessons are delivered in these bubbles, with the teaching staff allocated to those bubbles, we can find no evidence there will be any significant increase in the risk of transmission above and beyond the general classroom environment.

Additionally, the fact that PE is usually taught in halls or outside this risk may be less than in a busy classroom with maybe 30 or more children together for 6 hours a day.

We have created a 5-step approach to teaching PE which will enable you to lead a fun, safe and engaging PE session where the children will learn the correct movements with good technique.

The 5 steps are below, I have put them in an order to help you roll this out effectively.

1. What topics should I teach in PE this year?

Obviously, you'll plan to use your local PE curriculum guidance, but we feel it's important for primary aged children to start with the skills and then move onto the sports – **DON'T** think about the sport and then build the skills.

In Literacy, you wouldn't give a child a novel to read and then use that novel to teach literacy skills such as phonics. You build the skills first and then move on – it's the same in PE!

Once the children have built the basic skills required, it will be much easier for them to focus more on games and sports as they get older.

Younger children (4 to 7 years old) should always start by developing their all-round physical literacy skills such as catching, throwing and running. We would recommend that younger children focus on building fundamental physical literacy skills, dance, gymnastics, and swimming as the core of their PE curriculum.

For children from 7 to 9 years old, the transition to sports should begin where the skills become more advanced and you can introduce game situations and play. Children will want to play the game; this model means they will have practiced the skills required and game play becomes more fun for all rather than a potential negative situation. The emphasis should be on developing skills through practice, often called the drill-drill-game model, and through cooperative learning where they learn from each other whilst practising.

We recommend the following focus areas:



For 9 to 11 year olds, build on the skills they have already developed and begin to introduce games for understanding by adding in game situations or challenges within the game. This could be done by giving them specific game situations and ask them what they could do and get them to practice it. Alternatively, play a short mini game, ask them what went well and what went less so, then the students will go through a skill or tactical activity that will help them perform better. Once completed, pupils return to a game where they will hopefully demonstrate improved skill or tactical execution.

It is easy to fall back on the most popular sports such as football; but remember there are many other activities that can be included in the PE curriculum that will give variety. This means that for children who think sport isn't for them, have an opportunity to find something that might be. These could include activities such as Yoga, Pilates, Martial Arts, Golf, Squash, Cheerleading – the list is endless!

Why not ask the children what they would like to do?



Invasion games can either be focused on a particular sport such as football, or you can build the skills over a range of sports.

Start with the skills in mind and then develop them into the sports and you'll be developing a great PE curriculum!

On the next page is examples of how you can structure your timetable for PE for the whole school for the complete year, followed with a blank timetable for you to print off and use.

Year Group	Term 1A		Term 1B		Term 2A		Term 2B		Term 3A		Term 3B	
Reception	Fundamental Movement Skills	Gym	Fundamental Movement Skills	Gym	Fundamental Movement Skills	Dance	Fundamental Movement Skills	Dance	Multi Skills	Pilates	Multi Skills	Other
Year 1	Fundamental Movement Skills	Dance	Fundamental Movement Skills	Dance	Fundamental Movement Skills	Gym	Fundamental Movement Skills	Gym	Multi Skills	Pilates	Multi Skills	Other
Year 2	Fundamental Movement Skills	Pilates	Fundamental Movement Skills	Dance	Fundamental Movement Skills	Dance	Fundamental Movement Skills	Swimming	Multi Skills	Gym	Multi Skills	Gym
Year 3	Invasion Games	Gym	Invasion Games	Gym	Dance	Pilates	Dance	OAA	Athletics	Net & Wall	Athletics	Net & Wall
Year 4	Invasion Games	Invasion Games	Ball Skills & Drills	Gym	Dance	Gym	Dance	Ball Skills & Drills	Pilates	Striking & Fielding	OAA	Striking & Fielding
Year 5	Invasion Games	Gym	Invasion Games	Gym	Dance	Pilates	Dance	OAA	Athletics	Net & Wall	Athletics	Net & Wall
Year 6	Invasion Games	Invasion Games	Ball Skills & Drills	Gym	Dance	Gym	Dance	Ball Skills & Drills	Pilates	Striking & Fielding	OAA	Striking & Fielding

2 lessons per week

Year Group	Term 1A		Term 1B		Term 2A		Term 2B		Term 3A		Term 3B	
Reception	Fundamental Physical Literacy	Gym	Fundamental Physical Literacy	Gym	Fundamental Physical Literacy	Dance	Fundamental Physical Literacy	Dance	Fundamental Movement Skills	Pilates	Fundamental Movement Skills	Other
Year 1	Fundamental Physical Literacy	Dance	Fundamental Physical Literacy	Dance	Fundamental Physical Literacy	Gym	Fundamental Physical Literacy	Gym	Fundamental Movement Skills	Pilates	Fundamental Movement Skills	Other
Year 2	Fundamental Physical Literacy	Pilates	Fundamental Physical Literacy	Dance	Fundamental Physical Literacy	Dance	Fundamental Movement Skills	Swimming	Fundamental Movement Skills	Gym	Fundamental Movement Skills	Gym
Year 3	Invasion Games	Gym	Invasion Games	Gym	Dance	Pilates	Dance	Ball Skills & Drills	OAA	Net & Wall	Athletics	Striking & Fielding
Year 4	Invasion Games	Invasion Games	Ball Skills & Drills	Gym	Dance	Gym	Dance	OAA	Pilates	Net & Wall	Athletics	Striking & Fielding
Year 5	Invasion Games	Gym	Invasion Games	Gym	Dance	Pilates	Dance	Ball Skills & Drills	OAA	Net & Wall	Athletics	Striking & Fielding
Year 6	Invasion Games	Invasion Games	Ball Skills & Drills	Gym	Dance	Gym	Dance	OAA	Pilates	Net & Wall	Athletics	Striking & Fielding

2 lessons per week



School Year timetable for PE

Year Group	Term 1A		Term 1B		Term 2A		Term 2B		Term 3A		Term 3B	
Reception												
Year 1												
Year 2												
Year 3												
Year 4												
Year 5												
Year 6												

2 lessons per week

2. How do I plan for my PE lessons?

Plan your activities:

As with all subjects, knowing what you're going to do, when and why will give you the confidence to deliver a great lesson. If you have the confidence to develop your own curriculum then that would be ideal, but few teachers have the time to do this. Use a recommended scheme of work which will take you through each lesson in step as part of the overall curriculum. The scheme should break the overall topic down into bite-sized chunks and provide a learning objective for every lesson. So, what do you want your children to be able to do 'by the end of the lesson'?

We recommend that at least 75% of the lesson should see all the children active, the other 25% should include teacher instructions, demonstrations, showcasing and question and answers. The lesson plan should provide you with a toolbox of activities to follow, this takes the worry and stress out of the session and ensures you have lots of activities to keep the children engaged. You don't have to fit in all the activities, it just helps to have lots of ideas ready so that there is no down time where children are waiting or not given something to do, as that is when most problems with behaviour occur.

Plan for opportunities to work in pairs and groups.

Hot Tip:

Teamwork and partner-work are great for less confident children to practise and improve skills. It helps to build social skills and communication skills. It also brings a new level of difficulty to a skill when it is performed in a group rather than as an individual.

Read through the lesson plan and understand what you're trying to achieve. You may not get through everything in the lesson so be prepared to be flexible – much as you would in any other subject area!

Remember there needs to be activities for a warm-up and cool-down; then the activities for the main part of the session where the children will learn and practice the activities or movements that are the main learning outcomes for the session.

You may also need to plan an assessment of skills and achievements against set learning outcomes. (See Section 5. How do I assess PE?)

3. How do I prepare for my PE lesson?

Prepare your equipment.

It is essential that you have the right equipment for the lesson. If there is only 1 football for a class of 30 children practising football skills then there will be lots of waiting around and children will be bored, disengaged and possibly start misbehaving.

We have all heard many horror stories where the teacher has got to the lesson to find the PE equipment cupboard locked and or in such a state that you can't find anything! So, make sure you have enough equipment for each child or 1 between 2 if they are working with a partner. It can be so disheartening when you have a fun and exciting lesson planned and all you can find is 4 beanbags, a shuttlecock, and a deflated football!

Hot Tip:

Prepare yourself: Make sure you have your PE kit or sportswear on and wear trainers or appropriate footwear for the activity. This sets a good example to the children that everyone must wear the correct clothing, even the teacher, and it enables you to demonstrate or model activities if you need to and join in with the activities where necessary.

Prepare for the space you have available.

In an ideal world there would always be lots of open space for the children to take part in activities, however this is often not the case. The space that is available at the time of your scheduled PE lesson may or may not be adequate for the types of activities you have planned, and you may have to have a Plan B in place just in case.

Check if the lesson will be indoors or outdoors? Check if you have the whole space available or will there be obstacles in the way?

Examples of this that we have experienced in the past are:

- A stage set up for a performance of a Nativity or Summer show.
- Chairs set out for an assembly where parents are invited.

4. How do I deliver my PE lesson?

Remember to use our 4 Guiding Principles (on Page 1) to shape your lesson.

So, you have your plan, you know what you're doing, and you've checked the equipment and space are ready to use. You're ready to go!

Prepare the children – expectations and behaviour.

Let's not kid ourselves, PE lessons can often appear chaotic and feel difficult to control. Having the children moving around in a big space or outdoors can add a new level of stress to the normal lesson!

Children need to know what is expected of them, start off by developing the routine you want to follow in each lesson; this will provide consistent expectations for how your PE lesson will start and finish, from lining up, getting changed and the procedures for handling and storing equipment, which all contribute greatly to class control. Safety is paramount so correct outfit and footwear is essential, along with clear teacher expectations and behaviour boundaries. Children also need to understand that getting hot and sweaty and out of breath is a good thing.

Hot Tip:

There are many ways to go about establishing expectations for your class. However, we like to use this very simple set of expectations:

- Always listen carefully to instructions and follow them quickly
- Always respect classmates and the equipment
- Always try your best

Explain the activity first with verbal explanations, pictures or diagrams, or video clips, make this really simple and break it down into manageable chunks. This can be done in the classroom before you get into the larger space, either outside or in the hall. This allows the children to be active throughout more of the lesson itself and gives them lots of opportunity to practise the skills or take part in the activity.

PE kit and appropriate footwear for the activity is the ideal. However, if children continually forget their PE kit or don't have the correct kit, try to accommodate them as it is more beneficial for them to participate in the activity rather than miss out as a punishment. Is there a spare PE kit policy in school or even a long term lost property basket that could be redistributed?

Behaviour management.

Set out your "STOP and LISTEN" command early so that if you are in a large outdoor space the children know when to stop what they are doing and listen for further instructions.

This could be hand claps, a whistle or other instrument that makes a loud and distinctive noise. In smaller spaces you could use a rhyme or poem that the children have practiced.

For example:

Teacher - "1, 2, 3, eyes on me."

Children - "4, 5, 6, eyes are fixed."

or

Teacher - "Hocus pocus, everybody focus."

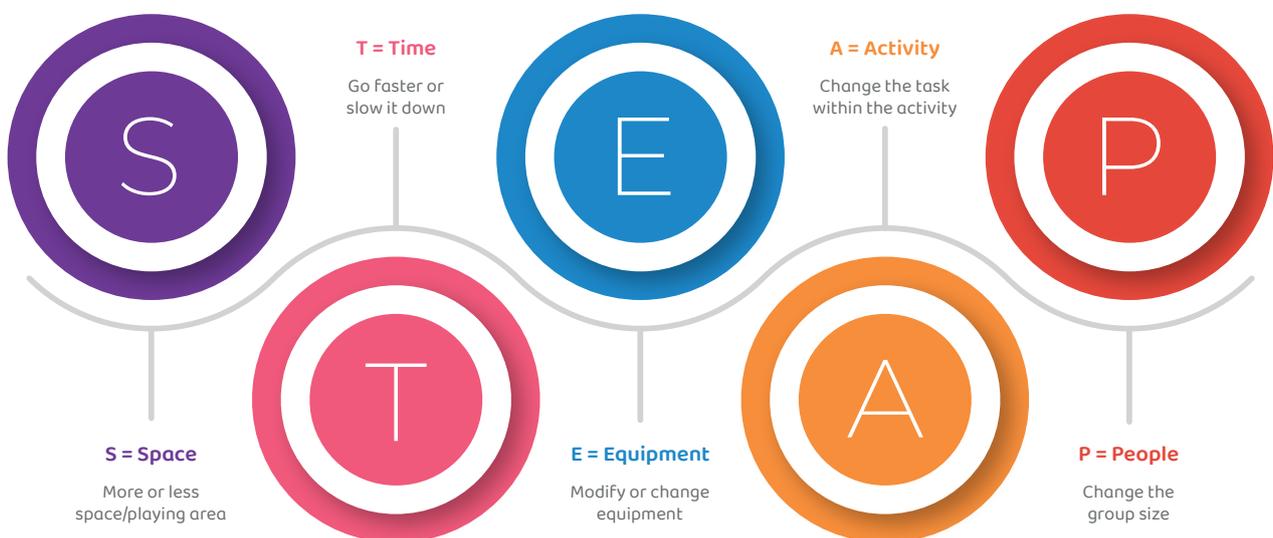
If a specific child or group is causing an issue, then we would:

- Use verbal or non-verbal cues – stand near them or say a general 'we're just waiting for one more person'
- Private discussion – take them to one side and outline the expectations and possible consequences
- Consequence 1 – change the groups or give them an individual task to do
- Consequence 2 - follow the behaviour management policy as you would in any other lesson

How do I make it interesting for different abilities?

Pupils will come in all different ability levels and it's important to keep them all enthused and challenged. It is essential that we acknowledge students as individuals that learn in different ways and that we need to plan for differentiation by setting suitable learning challenges for all.

As teachers, we need to be open to these different levels and the STEAP principle (see diagram) is a useful tool to think about when you're looking to incorporate differentiation into your lessons.



Remember when you're dividing into groups, think about ability levels – do you want a similar ability level group all together so they're acting at the same level?

Alternatively, would you prefer mixed-ability groups with added benefits in improving social, communication and leadership skills.

Using these tools to improve the lesson through using our guiding principles, setting expectations from the start, some simple behaviour management strategies and keeping every pupil engaged through differentiation will lead to far less stressful and more enjoyable lessons for you and the children.

5. How do I assess PE?

A lot of teachers feel that Physical Education assessment is difficult, but it needn't be. Although the ideal would be to assess every lesson, we understand a mix of lack of time and lack of confidence in how to assess Physical Education can lead to it not happening at all!

Rather than assessing every lesson, we believe through a mixture of the right questions in each lesson (formative assessment) to support ongoing student learning and an assessment at the beginning and end of the topic (summative assessment) is enough for high quality assessment to be undertaken.

Hot Tip:

Questioning: A key tool in formative assessment and can be used to check for knowledge and understanding; and to also invite open discussion around the topic. It is important as it involves providing pupils with constructive feedback, diagnosing future learning needs, describing students' progress, and determining their strengths and weaknesses. Make sure you have some questions laid out in your lesson plan - Exactly how you would ask questions in every other subject area!

We often see 3 types of assessment:

Comparative (Norm Referenced)

This compares students within the group. The positive is it's easy and can be part of a lesson (such as who threw the javelin the farthest) but the negative is that it makes less able pupils feel negative toward the activity – sound familiar?

Criteria (Criterion Referenced)

This evaluates pupils' ability against predetermined criteria, eliminating comparison with classmates. The advantage is it gives you a more accurate measure and that every child can be above average, which they can't in norm referenced. It also provides understanding about what needs to be done to reach the next level of achievement.

Progression (Ipsative)

This compares a student's current performance with their previous performance. It enables students to focus on beating their previous achievement and promotes a mastery climate, again eliminating comparison with others. Used in combination with criteria, where the pupils understand what they're trying to achieve, they can self-assess progress which enhances pupils' self-esteem, motivation, and accountability.

We believe assessment using Core Tasks at the beginning and at the end of the block of work, supported by ongoing questioning in each lesson to check for understanding, is the most effective way to assess as it shows the progress the child has made from start to end. It saves time as it only requires 2 assessments and can be done by the children themselves, promoting mastery with a focus on progress rather than outcomes.

How: You could create a very simple checklist for the children to assess themselves and a partner.

The criteria on the checklist could be very basic, as in this example:

	Me 1 st assessment	Me 2 nd assessment	My partner 2 nd assessment	My partner 2 nd assessment
I can copy some basic moves and actions				
I can perform basic actions with control and good technique				
I understand the rules and success criteria for each action				
I can work well with a partner or small group				
I can make suggestions on how to improve my performance				

This can be using age appropriate language such as, for younger children as simple as yes or no; for older children this can be broken down into beginning, developing and mastery using language such as; 'doing it some of the time'; 'doing it most of the time'; and 'doing it all the time'.

These can then be collated into a class level record so you can see how the whole class has progressed over the topic and ultimately year.

Get useful resources

Using great visual tools to show the children the movements will really enhance the learning experience for them and take some of the pressure off the teacher.

Free Activities and Ideas:

If this is your first-time teaching PE, or if you just don't feel comfortable teaching it, it's important to get all the support you can to build your confidence.

Get a selection of high-quality PE resources by creating your own free imoves account – go to [imoves.com](https://www.imoves.com)

Summary

In this report, we have explored the 5 steps which will help you deliver PE, either as a teacher with your class, or as a head teacher or PE subject lead trying to deliver the entire PE curriculum across your school.

We have answered the 5 common questions asked by fellow teachers looking to improve their delivery of PE as we adapt to new Covid-19 guidelines:

- What topics should I teach in PE this year?
- How do I plan my PE lesson?
- How do I prepare for my PE lesson?
- How do I deliver my PE lesson?
- How do I assess PE?

I hope you've found hints and tips really useful and will be something you can use with your class starting tomorrow, including the 4 guiding principles we always use when we're leading a PE lesson.

A final thought from Imogen...

After reading this I hope you're thinking "I can do this!"

You may feel less worried about delivering PE and feel more confident with structuring the lessons and assessing the performance of your children. There's lots high-quality support out there including the free support from imoves which includes tonnes of video-based resources covering active learning, health & mental wellbeing, and PE. You can set up your free account at imoves.com

If you're still reading, I know you'll pull out all the stops to create brighter, happier and healthier kids and help children achieve their amazing potential.

Let me know if this report was useful, or if there are any other activities of your own that you would like me to share with my network of like-minded teachers – it's always great to inspire each other! You can find me at imogen@imoves.com

Best wishes, Imogen.

PS. Don't forget to set up your free imoves account for tonnes of free resources to support you and your children. Go to imoves.com

**Thank you teachers.
We think you are all amazing!**



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