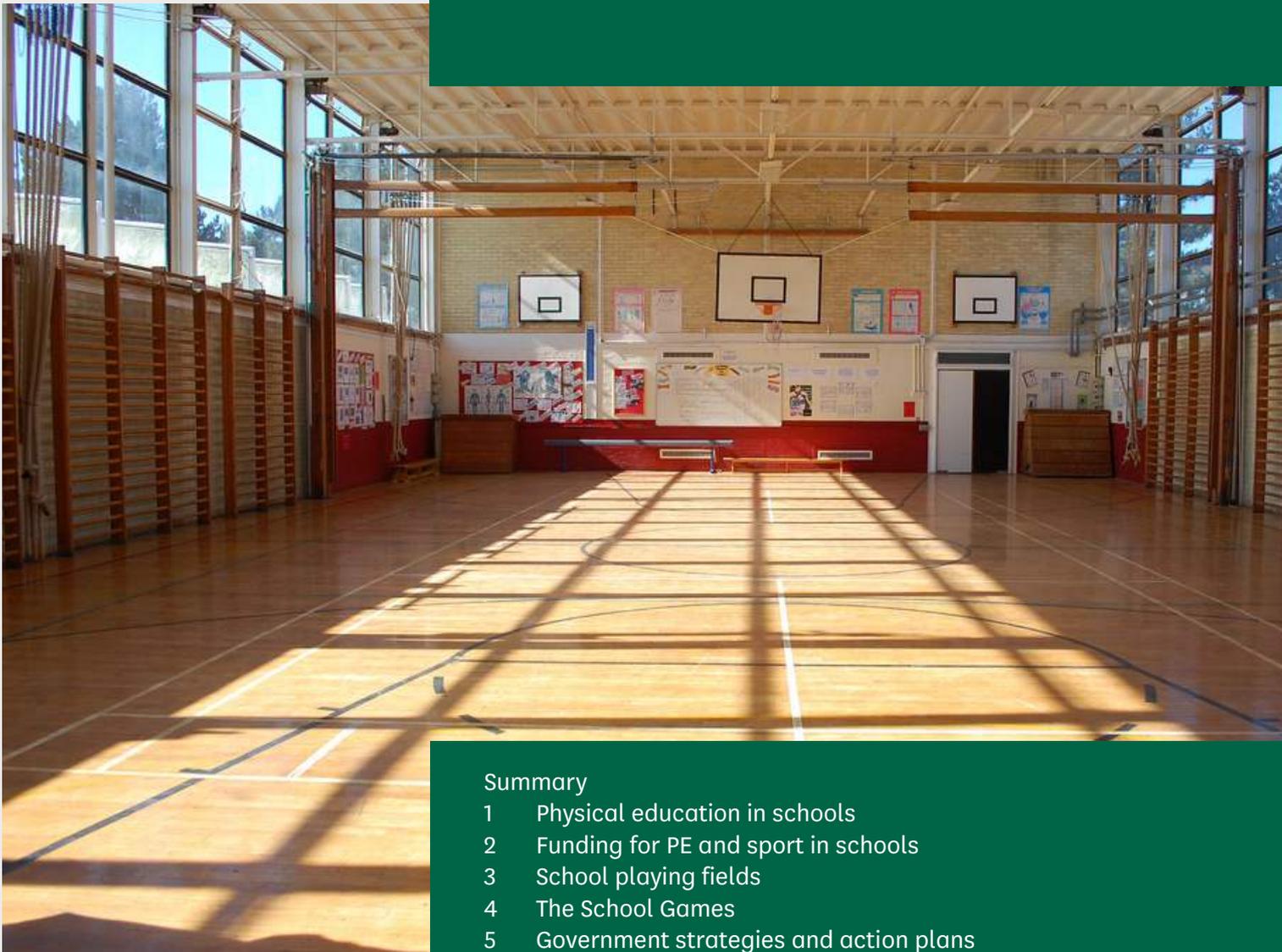


Research Briefing

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# Physical education, physical activity and sport in schools



## Summary

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## Summary

This briefing provides information on policies and practice relating to physical education, physical activity and sport in schools in England.

### PE in the National Curriculum

PE is a compulsory subject under the National Curriculum at all key stages; [National Curriculum programmes of study](#) outline what should be taught at each key stage. Local authority maintained schools are required to follow the National Curriculum; academies and free schools do not have to follow it but are required to provide a broad and balanced curriculum that promotes the physical development of pupils.

### Funding for PE and school sport

Funding for school PE and sport forms part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), which is not broken down by subject or curriculum area.

Since 2013-14, ring-fenced funding outside of DSG has also been provided to primary schools through the Primary PE and Sport Premium. From 2017-18, revenue from the soft drinks industry levy has been used to double the value of the premium from £160 million to £320 million. The Government has committed to providing the funding up to 2021/22.

In February 2017, the Government announced that £415 million of funding from the soft drinks industry levy would be allocated to schools in 2018-19 to “pay for facilities to support physical education, after-school activities and healthy eating.” The funding was referred to as the Healthy Schools Capital Programme. In July 2017, the then Education Secretary announced that the funding available for the Programme would be reduced from £415 million to £100 million to help fund an additional £1.3 billion for the core schools budget in 2018-19 and 2019-20. The £100 million was allocated through the existing arrangements for schools capital funding in 2018-19.

### School playing fields

From October 2012, new [regulations](#) have applied to the provision of outdoor space by schools. These require that suitable outdoor space must be provided

to enable “pupils to play outside” and “physical education to be provided to pupils in accordance with the school curriculum”.

Local authorities and schools must seek the consent of the Secretary of State when seeking to dispose of publicly funded school land, including playing fields. [Guidance](#) on the disposal of school playing fields, which was updated in March 2019, sets out the relevant legislation and procedure relating to the disposal of school land.

## 2015 Sport Strategy

In December 2015, the Government published a new sport strategy, [Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation](#). Regarding school sport, the strategy emphasised the importance of linking together the different stages of education and “more clearly join[ing] up the overall approach”. The strategy also contained a number of specific commitments relating to sport in schools.

## School Sport Action Plan

In July 2019, the Government published a School Sport and Activity Action Plan. The Plan sets out an ambition that all children should have access to 60 minutes of physical activity every day, with at least 30 minutes taking place in schools and the remaining 30 minutes taking place outside school.

The Plan outlines a number of actions and commitments relevant to schools, including (but not limited to):

- In September 2020, the Government will launch a series of regional pilots to trial innovative approaches to increasing activity levels within and outside school.
- The Department for Education (DfE) will provide £500,000 to “test new approaches to improve the strategic direction and delivery of PE and school sport through the use of teaching schools.”
- Sport England will provide £1 million of National Lottery funding to develop a new digital resource for use in schools, to be launched in 2020, with the aim of empowering girls and building their confidence.
- The DfE will look at how to provide schools with a toolkit to support effective use of the PE and Sport Premium.
- The DfE will look at how Initial Teacher Training equips PE teachers to deliver high quality lessons.

The Government has stated it will publish an update to the Plan in 2022.

## Data on children's physical activity levels

In December 2021 Sport England published the latest set of data from its [Active Lives Children and Young People Survey](#). The report summarised the activity levels of 5-16 year olds in England in the 2020/21 academic year.

Among other things, the survey estimated that around 45% of children and young people (3.2 million) achieved the new Chief Medical Officer guidelines of taking part in sport and physical activity for an average of 60 minutes or more a day. An estimated 32% did an average of less than 30 minutes per day. Activity levels were also found to vary by age, gender, family affluence, and ethnicity.

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# 1 Physical education in schools

## 1.1 The National Curriculum

In 2010, the Coalition Government announced that it would revise the PE curriculum to place more emphasis on competitive sports.<sup>1</sup> Under the revised National Curriculum introduced in September 2014, PE remains compulsory at all key stages. Local authority-maintained schools are required to follow the National Curriculum. Academies and free schools do not have to teach it, but are required to provide a broad and balanced curriculum that “promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils.”<sup>2</sup>

The stated aims of the National Curriculum for PE are to ensure that pupils:

- develop competence to excel in a broad range of physical activities
- are physically active for sustained periods of time
- engage in competitive sports and activities
- lead healthy, active lives.<sup>3</sup>

The National Curriculum programmes of study for PE outline what should be taught at each key stage:

### Key stage 1 [ages 5-7]

[...]

Pupils should be taught to:

- master basic movements including running, jumping, throwing and catching, as well as developing balance, agility and co-ordination, and begin to apply these in a range of activities
- participate in team games, developing simple tactics for attacking and defending

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<sup>1</sup> [Education Secretary's letter to the Chair of the Youth Sport Trust](#), October 2010; [New approach for school sports: decentralising power, incentivising competition, trusting teachers](#), Department for Education, 20 December 2010.

<sup>2</sup> *Academies Act 2010*.

<sup>3</sup> Department for Education, [National curriculum in England: physical education programmes of study](#), September 2013; [HC Deb 28 June 2011 c 763-4W](#).

- perform dances using simple movement patterns

### **Key stage 2 [ages 7-11]**

[...]

Pupils should be taught to:

- use running, jumping, throwing and catching in isolation and in combination
- play competitive games, modified where appropriate [for example, badminton, basketball, cricket, football, hockey, netball, rounders and tennis]<sup>4</sup>, and apply basic principles suitable for attacking and defending
- develop flexibility, strength, technique, control and balance [for example, through athletics and gymnastics]
- perform dances using a range of movement patterns
- take part in outdoor and adventurous activity challenges both individually and within a team
- compare their performances with previous ones and demonstrate improvement to achieve their personal best

### **Swimming and water safety**

- All schools must provide swimming instruction either in key stage 1 or key stage 2.
- In particular, pupils should be taught to:
- swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25 metres
- use a range of strokes effectively [for example, front crawl, backstroke and breaststroke]
- perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations

## **1 Support for swimming at school**

The Government's 2015 Sport Strategy, [Sporting Future](#) (see section 5.1) stated that a working group would be established in early 2016 to advise on how to ensure that no child leaves school unable to meet a minimum capability in swimming. The [report](#) of the Curriculum Swimming and Water Safety Review

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<sup>4</sup> Schools are not required to teach the example content in square brackets.

Group was published in July 2017. The report made 16 recommendations aimed at ensuring that “all children leave primary school with an appropriate level of swimming and water safety ability.”<sup>5</sup> In the second annual report on its Sport Strategy, published in January 2018, the Government stated that it had set up a cross-Government implementation group to review and implement the report’s recommendations.<sup>6</sup>

On 25 October 2018, the DfE announced that primary schools would be given extra support to ensure all children reached the expected swimming standard by the end of primary schooling.<sup>7</sup> The support included encouragement for schools to use the PE and Sport Premium (see section 2.1) for extra lessons for children who hadn’t met the expected level after core swimming lessons; extra training for teachers provided by Swim England; extra guidance, also provided by Swim England; and a drive to boost partnerships with independent schools.

From the 2017-18 academic year, as part of their reporting on their use of the PE and Sport Premium, schools have been required to publish the percentage of year 6 pupils who met the National Curriculum requirements relating to swimming.<sup>8</sup>

Statistics from the [Active Lives Children survey 2018-19](#) (see section 6.2), published in December 2019, showed that **78% of Year 7 pupils (first year of secondary school) reported that they could swim 25m**. However, only 44% of children from lower socio-economic backgrounds reported that they could do this, compared to 85% of children from more affluent families.<sup>9</sup> The School Sport and Activity Action Plan (see section 5.3), published in July 2019, states that the Government will work with schools and the sport sector to “identify areas where schools face additional barriers to provide high quality swimming and water safety lessons and provide further support to ensure all pupils learn how to swim and be safe in and around the water.”<sup>10</sup>

### Key stage 3 [ages 11-14]

[...]

Pupils should be taught to:

- use a range of tactics and strategies to overcome opponents in direct competition through team and individual games [for example,

<sup>5</sup> [Swim Group report to improve swimming and water safety in schools](#), Swim England, 24 July 2017.

<sup>6</sup> HM Government, [Sporting Future: Second Annual Report](#), January 2018, p10.

<sup>7</sup> Department for Education, ‘[Drive to ensure all children can swim by end of primary school](#)’, 25 October 2018.

<sup>8</sup> [PE and sport premium for primary schools](#), Gov.uk, 24 October 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Sport England, [Active Lives Children and Young People Survey Academic year 2018/19](#), December 2019, p17.

<sup>10</sup> DfE, DDCMS and DHSC, [School Sport and Activity Action Plan](#), July 2019, p16.

badminton, basketball, cricket, football, hockey, netball, rounders, rugby and tennis]

- develop their technique and improve their performance in other competitive sports [for example, athletics and gymnastics]
- perform dances using advanced dance techniques in a range of dance styles and forms
- take part in outdoor and adventurous activities which present intellectual and physical challenges and be encouraged to work in a team, building on trust and developing skills to solve problems, either individually or as a group
- analyse their performances compared to previous ones and demonstrate improvement to achieve their personal best
- take part in competitive sports and activities outside school through community links or sports clubs

#### **Key stage 4 [ages 14-16]**

[...]

Pupils should be taught to:

- use and develop a variety of tactics and strategies to overcome opponents in team and individual games [for example, badminton, basketball, cricket, football, hockey, netball, rounders, rugby and tennis]
- develop their technique and improve their performance in other competitive sports [for example, athletics and gymnastics] or other physical activities [for example, dance]
- take part in further outdoor and adventurous activities in a range of environments which present intellectual and physical challenges and which encourage pupils to work in a team, building on trust and developing skills to solve problems, either individually or as a group
- evaluate their performances compared to previous ones and demonstrate improvement across a range of physical activities to achieve their personal best
- continue to take part regularly in competitive sports and activities outside school through community links or sports clubs.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Department for Education, [National curriculum in England: physical education programmes of study](#), September 2013.

## 2 GCSE, AS, and A level PE

As part of the [extensive reforms](#) carried out by the Coalition and Conservative Governments, subject content for reformed [GCSE PE](#), and [AS and A Level PE](#) in England was published in January 2015, for first teaching from September 2016.

Both sets of subject content include a list of activities in which students can be assessed as part of the qualifications – the physical education activity list. In October 2018, the Department for Education (DfE) launched a [consultation](#) inviting proposals to add activities to the physical education activity list. The DfE's response was published in September 2019. It listed the new activities that will be added to the physical education activity list, and incorporated into GCSE, AS and A level specifications, from September 2020.<sup>12</sup>

## 1.2

### Time spent teaching physical education

The Education Act 2002 prohibits the Secretary of State for Education from prescribing the amount of time to be spent on any curriculum subject, including PE.<sup>13</sup> The Government also does not set a target for how much curriculum time schools must dedicate to PE.<sup>14</sup>

The Government's [Childhood Obesity Action Plan](#), published in August 2016 (see section 5.2) announced that a new healthy rating scheme for primary schools would be introduced from September 2017, which physical activity would be a key part of. Following delays, the [rating system](#) was launched in July 2019. The section of the scheme concerned with physical activity measures the number of minutes of PE in school by each year group, as reported by schools through the survey.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Department for Education, [Review of GCSE, AS and A Level physical education activity list](#), last updated 10 September 2019.

<sup>13</sup> [HC Deb 15 July 2013 c 518W](#); Education Act 2002, section 87(4).

<sup>14</sup> [PQ 68370](#), 27 March 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Department for Education, [Healthy schools rating scheme](#), 8 July 2019.

### 3 Two hour target

The former Labour Government's Physical Education and Sport Strategy aimed to increase the percentage of school children in England participating in two hours a week of PE.<sup>16</sup> In October 2010, the Coalition Government ended the requirements of the strategy, including the requirement for schools to report how much time was being spent on PE. The then Secretary of State said, however, that he expected "every school to want to maintain, as a minimum, the current levels of provision for PE and sport each week for every pupil."<sup>17</sup> In a February 2013 report, Ofsted recommended that primary schools should spend at least two hours a week on core PE.<sup>18</sup>

In February 2018 the Youth Sport Trust published a [report on PE provision in secondary schools](#). The report was based on results from an online survey of teachers in 487 secondary schools in the UK. The report's findings included that:

- Pupils in Key Stage 3 receive an average of 124 minutes of curriculum PE each week. Pupils in Key Stage 4 receive an average of 98 minutes.
- The average number of curriculum PE minutes had declined over time, with Key Stage 3 minutes declining by 20% over the last five years, and Key Stage 4 minutes declining by 38%.<sup>19</sup>

The annual School Workforce Census records the number of hours taught by qualified teachers in individual subjects in a typical week in state-funded secondary schools. In a typical week in November 2018, 281,572 hours of physical education were taught, a reduction from 333,800 in November 2010.<sup>20</sup>

### Time spent physically active in schools

Looking at physical activity more broadly than just timetabled PE, since September 2019 the UK Chief Medical Officers have recommended that children and young people aged 5-18 should "engage in moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity for an average of at least 60 minutes per day across the week." Prior to September 2019, the advice was that children

<sup>16</sup> Department for Education and Skills and Department for Culture, Media and Sport, [Learning through PE and Sport](#), March 2003, p2.

<sup>17</sup> Department for Education, [Refocusing sport in schools to build a lasting legacy of the 2012 Games](#), press release, 20 October 2010. See also, [The Department comments on school sport target](#), Department for Education, 8 August 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Ofsted, [Beyond 2012 – outstanding physical education for all](#), February 2013, p8.

<sup>19</sup> Youth Sport Trust, [PE provision in secondary schools 2018: Survey Research Report](#), February 2018.

<sup>20</sup> Department for Education, [School Workforce in England](#), November 2010 and November 2018. Also see: [PQ169642](#), 11 September 2018.

should “engage in moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity for at least 60 minutes every day”.<sup>21</sup>

The Government’s [Childhood Obesity Action Plan](#) (see section 5.2) noted the pre-September 2019 advice from the Chief Medical Officers and stated that every primary school child should “get at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity a day”, with at least 30 minutes delivered in school and the remaining 30 minutes supported by parents outside of school time.<sup>22</sup> It added that a new online tool will be made available that will help schools plan at least 30 minutes of physical activity every day. The Government’s [School Sport and Activity Action Plan](#), published in July 2019 (see section 5.3) reiterates this but for all children.<sup>23</sup>

## 4 Single-sex sport in schools

DfE guidance on gender separation in mixed schools states that schools should not generally separate pupils by sex. It explains, however, that section 195 of the Equality Act 2010 contains an exception, which permits single-sex sports. The guidance also makes clear that, where separate teams exist for different sexes it would be unlawful for a school to treat one group less favourably – for example, by providing a boys’ team with better resources than the girls’ team.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Department of Health & Social Care and others, [UK Chief Medical Officers’ Physical Activity Guidelines](#), September 2019.

<sup>22</sup> HM Government, [Childhood Obesity: A Plan of Action](#), August 2016, pp7-8.

<sup>23</sup> DfE, DDCMS and DHSC, [School Sport and Activity Action Plan](#), July 2019, p8.

<sup>24</sup> Department for Education, [Gender separation in mixed schools: Non-statutory guidance](#), June 2018, pp4-6.

## 2 Funding for PE and sport in schools

Funding for school sport and PE forms part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), which is not broken down by subject or curriculum area. Additional funding is, however, also provided outside of DSG.

### 2.1 The PE and Sport Premium

Since 2013, annual ring-fenced funding has been provided to primary schools through the Primary PE and Sport Premium.<sup>25</sup> The Government has committed to continue providing the funding until the end of the 2019-20 academic year, with funding beyond this to be considered as part of the Spending Review.<sup>26</sup>

DfE [guidance](#) provides information on how schools should use PE and Sport Premium funding and how they are held to account for its use. This states that schools must use the funding “to make additional and sustainable improvements to the quality of PE and sport [they] offer.” It should not be used to employ coaches or specialist teachers to cover planning preparation and assessment arrangement, or to teach the minimum requirement of the National Curriculum.

Ofsted assesses how schools use the PE and Sport Premium as part of the inspection process. Schools must also publish details of how they use the funding on their websites, along with the impact it has had on pupils’ PE and sport participation and attainment.

Details of the allocations made to individual schools for 2021 to 2022 and earlier years [are available online](#).

In December 2021, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the DfE, Will Quince, stated in a response to a Parliamentary Question that future funding was being considered by the Government:

**Will Quince:** Physical education remains a foundation subject which is compulsory at all four key stages of the national curriculum. As such, physical education is funded from the core schools’ budget.

The department is considering arrangements for the primary PE and sport premium for the 2022-23 academic year and beyond. We are aware of the

<sup>25</sup> [Primary school sport funding](#), Department for Education, 17 April 2013. [PQ57086](#), 19 December 2016.

<sup>26</sup> [PQ 268532](#), 1 July 2019.

importance of providing schools with sufficient notice of future funding and will confirm the position as early as possible in the new year.

The department is also working to deliver on the nearly £30 million announced in October towards improving and opening up school sport facilities in England, as well as to improve the teaching of PE at primary school.<sup>27</sup> We will continue to work closely with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the Department of Health and Social Care to deliver on the aims of the school sport and activity action plan which we will be updating next year.<sup>28</sup>

## Department for Education research report

Between 20 September and 12 October 2018, the Department for Education (DfE) surveyed a sample of primary schools in England to see how schools are using the PE and Sport Premium; their views on the outcomes it has had; and what if any difference the doubling of the Premium from September 2017 has had.

A [research report](#) on the survey results was published in July 2019. The report emphasised the importance of noting certain limitations with its analysis, including that the data was gathered in response to an on-line survey and the information provided was based on perceptions and had not been otherwise verified.

The report's key findings included that since 2016-17:

- Almost 90% of respondents thought that the confidence, knowledge, and/or skills of all staff in teaching PE had increased a little or a lot.
- More than 80% thought the level of competitive sport being offered had increased a little or a lot. Over 60% thought it had been increased for all pupils.
- Around 80% thought that the proportion of pupils doing 30 minutes of exercise a day in school had increased a little or a lot.
- Over 90% indicated that there was now a broader range of PE and sport being offered to all pupils.
- There had been an increase in the curriculum time spent in PE in around a third of schools.

In terms of the use of the Premium, most commonly schools reported that they used it to buy new equipment or improve facilities, upskill existing staff, and/or increase extracurricular sport.

The main constraints in delivering physical activity were reported as “lack of space or facilities” (half of responses), and a lack of teacher skills and

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<sup>27</sup> Department for Culture, Media, and Sport, [£30 million package to refurbish 4,500 public tennis courts in deprived parts of UK announced](#), 2 October 2021

<sup>28</sup> [PQ 92865 \[Schools: Physical Education and Sports\]. 21 December 2021](#)

experience or confidence (a quarter of responses). Unprompted, a “notable minority” also specified a “lack of curriculum time.”<sup>29</sup>

An earlier research report into the use of the Premium was published by the DfE in November 2015: [The PE and sport premium: an investigation in primary schools: Research report](#).

## Ofsted report

Ofsted’s July 2018 report on physical activity in schools (see section 6.3) noted that schools often used their PE and Sport Premium funding to bring in specialists to support the school in a number of ways, including:

- ongoing continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers
- particular PE teaching in areas the school has identified as weaker
- all or some of the after-school clubs.

The report additionally stated that schools were often using the Premium to fund planning, preparation and assessment cover, which, it noted, government guidance explicitly prohibits.<sup>30</sup>

An [earlier report](#) published by Ofsted in 2014 examined best practice in the use of the PE and Sport Premium based on inspection visits to 22 primary schools known to be performing well in PE.

## APPG report

In February 2019 the All Party Parliamentary Group on a Fit and Healthy Childhood published a report on the Primary PE and Sport Premium.<sup>31</sup> The report argued that there has been “little critical appraisal of the [Primary PE and Sport Premium] funding” and that the report aimed to “begin a necessary process and in doing so, brings together evidence from across the sector to consider the future of the [Primary PE and Sport Premium] post 2018.”

The report identified an increasing tendency for schools to use their Premium funding to employ sports coaches to deliver curriculum PE. Such a shift towards “outsourcing physical education” can, the report said, “compromise the quality of learning and introduce a randomised ‘postcode lottery’ approach to the subject.” It added that schools reliant on “outsourcing the PE curriculum” need to consider how they plan to sustain this model if the funding ceases.<sup>32</sup>

The report also argued that the PE and Sport Premium currently “fails to

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<sup>29</sup> Department for Education, [Primary PE and Sport Premium Survey: Research Report](#), July 2019, pp6-9.

<sup>30</sup> Ofsted, [Obesity, healthy eating and physical activity in primary schools](#), July 2018, p17.

<sup>31</sup> A Schools Week article included a summary of the report with responses from the DfE and Ofsted: [Take PE and sports premium cash off schools that mispend it, urges new report](#), 19 February 2019.

<sup>32</sup> APPG on a fit and healthy childhood, [The Primary PE and Sport Premium](#), February 2019, pp29-30.

encourage the development of programmes that have the capacity to reach all pupils, not just those with sporting talent.” It should, the report recommended, be renamed the Primary Physical Education and Physical Activity Grant to help “liberate head teachers from the (mistaken) mindset that the resources can only be spent on PE or sports lessons.”<sup>33</sup>

Other recommendations made by the report included that:

- Head teachers should be held accountable for the investment, with those who are non-compliant interviewed by the DfE to determine if the funding should be given to a third party to manage for the school.
- The DfE should “end the practice of outsourcing the sampling of school performance to market research companies whose report findings are based upon school self-review without any meaningful on-site inspection of reported standards.”
- An independent organisation should be appointed to review the spend to ensure that an accountability system is in place.
- A statutory evaluation tool for the monitoring of the Premium should be introduced.
- Ofsted should ensure that all inspections include an explicit focus on the effectiveness and monitoring of the Premium.<sup>34</sup>

## School Sport and Activity Action Plan

The [School Sport and Activity Action Plan](#), published in July 2019 (see section 5.3), highlighted the positive outcomes identified by the PE and Sport Premium survey. However, it acknowledged that this is not always the case and that more can be done “to make sure that schools are using the funding appropriately and as effectively as possible.” The Plan stated that the Government would look at how best to build on existing support for schools to ensure that they have “a toolkit to support effective use of the...Premium.” Guidance on the Premium would also be updated, it said, “to reflect the ambitions and actions in this plan, to help schools to understand the outcomes they should be aiming for and ways they could try to reach them.”<sup>35</sup>

## 5 Sport England training for secondary teachers

In September 2018, Sport England announced that it would invest £13.5 million in a teacher training programme, run in partnership with the Teaching Schools Council, to offer free training to 17,000 secondary school PE teachers by 2021.<sup>36</sup> This followed on from a commitment in Sport England’s five year

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<sup>33</sup> As above, pp19-20.

<sup>34</sup> As above, pp7-10.

<sup>35</sup> DfE, DDCMS and DHSC, [School Sport and Activity Action Plan](#), July 2019, p15.

<sup>36</sup> [New Teacher Training to Target Attitudes to PE in Schools](#), Sport England, 24 September 2018.

strategy, [Towards an Active Nation, published in May 2016, to](#) “offer specialist training to at least two teachers in every secondary school by 2020.” The strategy said that the aim of the training would be “to better meet the needs of all children, irrespective of their level of sporting ability, and to involve them in shaping the sporting opportunities that are provided.”<sup>37</sup>

The strategy also stated that Sport England would:

- Improve the experience that children get in school through supporting the effective use of Primary PE and Sport Premium funding and its investment in the School Games.
- Help to ensure that there is a good “sports activity offer” before and after the school day by supporting satellite clubs and exploring Government investment into breakfast clubs.
- Recognise the importance of transitions between primary and secondary school (and then to further education and higher education), with an “increased focus on supporting inactive children and students to take up sport and exercise.”

Measure the engagement of children between the ages of 5–14 outside school through questioning parents in the Active Lives survey.<sup>38</sup>

## 2.2

### Soft drinks industry levy funding

In addition to increasing funding for the Primary PE and Sport Premium (see section 2.1 above), Budget 2016 announced that revenue from the soft drinks industry levy would, among other things, be used to:

Provide up to £285 million a year to give 25% of secondary schools increased opportunity to extend their school day to offer a wider range of activities for pupils, including more sport.<sup>39</sup>

### Healthy pupils capital fund (HPCF)

On 28 February 2017, the DfE announced that £415 million of funding from the soft drinks industry levy would be allocated to schools in 2018-19 to “pay for facilities to support physical education, after-school activities and healthy eating.” It added that schools would be able to use the funding – referred to as the healthy pupils capital fund (HPCF) – to “improve facilities for children

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<sup>37</sup> Sport England, [Towards and Active Nation: Strategy 2016-2021](#), May 2016, p21.

<sup>38</sup> As above, p21.

<sup>39</sup> HM Treasury, [Budget 2016](#), HC901, March 2016, p33.

with physical conditions or support young people struggling with mental health issues.”<sup>40</sup>

A Schools Week article on 1 March 2017 stated that funding originally planned for extending the school day in secondary schools, as announced in the 2016 March Budget, would instead be used for the HPCF.<sup>41</sup> The Government’s announcement on the HPCF stated that the funding “built on” plans for schools to provide a longer school day:

The healthy pupils capital programme will build on the government’s plans for schools to provide a longer school day by changing the focus of the scheme to provide new facilities or improve existing ones to make it easier for a range of extra-curricular activities to be provided.<sup>42</sup>

### Reduction of funding for HPCF

On 17 July 2017, the Education Secretary announced an additional £1.3 billion for the core schools budget across 2018-19 and 2019-20, which would, she said, be “funded in full from efficiencies and savings that I have identified in my Department’s budget.” She went on to explain that “efficiencies and savings” from the Department’s capital budget would release £420 million, £315 million of which would come from the money originally committed for the HPCF:

Efficiencies and savings across our main capital budget can, I believe, release £420 million. The majority of this will be from healthy pupils capital funding, from which we can make savings of £315 million. This reflects reductions in forecast revenue from the soft drinks industry levy. I will be able to channel the planned budget, which remains in place, to frontline schools, while meeting our commitment that every single pound of England’s share of spending from the levy will continue to be invested in improving children’s health; that includes £100 million in 2018-19 for healthy pupils capital.<sup>43</sup>

A subsequent response to a parliamentary question confirmed that £100 million would be invested in the HPCF in 2018-19, with the funding for one year only.<sup>44</sup> The funding for the PE and Sports Premium announced at the 2016 Budget remained unchanged.<sup>45</sup>

The HPCF was allocated through the existing arrangements for schools’ capital funding in 2018-19.

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<sup>40</sup> Department for Education, [New funding to boost schools facilities and healthy lifestyles](#), 28 February 2017.

<sup>41</sup> [Government scraps longer school day pledge](#), *Schools Week*, 1 March 2017.

<sup>42</sup> Department for Education, [New funding to boost schools facilities and healthy lifestyles](#), 28 February 2017.

<sup>43</sup> HC Deb 17 July 2017, [cc563-66](#).

<sup>44</sup> [PQ 107301](#), 18 October 2017.

<sup>45</sup> [PQ 3745](#), 24 July 2017; [HC Deb 17 July 2017, c564](#).

## 6 Funding for breakfast clubs and essential life skills programme

Revenue from the Soft Drinks Industry Levy has also been used to provide funding for initiatives linked to physical activity and healthy lifestyles for children more generally.

In addition to doubling the PE and Sport Premium and providing capital funding for schools, Budget 2016 stated that revenue from the levy would be used to “provide £10 million funding a year to expand breakfast clubs in up to 1,600 schools starting from September 2017.” More information on the funding for breakfast clubs, with £26 million allocated between 2017-18 and 2019-20, was [announced](#) by the Government in March 2018, and in [response to a parliamentary question](#) in July 2018.

£22 million of revenue from levy is also being invested in an Essential Life Skills programme in the 12 Opportunity Areas. The programme is aimed at enabling disadvantaged children to participate in regular extra-curricular activities, including sporting activities.<sup>46</sup>

## 2.3

### Funding for school sport partnerships

In October 2010, the Coalition Government announced that it was ending the previous administration’s PE and Sport Strategy and discontinuing ring-fenced funding for School Sport Partnerships.<sup>47</sup> Originally, the funding was to continue until March 2011 but this was extended to August 2011 following an announcement in December 2010. It was emphasised in the December 2010 announcement that although central Government funding was ending schools could continue, if they wanted, to fund School Sport Partnerships themselves.<sup>48</sup>

Library Briefing Paper 6052, [School Sport Partnerships](#), provides further information.

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<sup>46</sup> [PQ162146](#), 17 July 2018.

<sup>47</sup> [Refocusing sport in schools to build a lasting legacy of the 2012 games](#), Department for Education, 20 October 2010.

<sup>48</sup> [New approach for school sports: decentralising power, incentivising competition, trusting teachers](#), Department for Education, 20 December 2010.

## 2.4

### Conservative Party manifesto 2019

The Conservative Party’s manifesto for the 2019 general election stated that the party wanted “to do more to help schools make good use of their sports facilities and to promote physical literacy and competitive sport.” It added that a Conservative Government would “invest in primary school PE teaching and ensure that it is being properly delivered.”<sup>49</sup> The costings document published alongside the manifesto indicated that the commitment on PE funding would cost a total of £111 million between 2020-21 and 2023-24 (£12 million in 2020-21, £32 million in 2021-22, £33 million in 2022-23, and £34 million in 2023-24).<sup>50</sup> The manifesto did not specifically refer to the PE and Sport Premium, which is currently committed to 2019-20.

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<sup>49</sup> [Get Brexit Done – Unleash Britain’s Potential: The Conservative and Unionist Party Manifesto 2019](#), p13.

<sup>50</sup> [Costings document: The Conservative and Unionist Party Manifesto 2019](#), p4.

## 3 School playing fields

Since October 2012, new regulations have applied to the provision of outdoor space by schools. The previous regulations<sup>51</sup> specified a minimum space to sustain team games, depending on the number and age of pupils, while the current regulations state:

Suitable outdoor space must be provided in order to enable—

(a) physical education to be provided to pupils in accordance with the school curriculum; and

(b) pupils to play outside.<sup>52</sup>

### 3.1 Disposal of playing fields

Local authorities and schools must seek the consent of the Secretary of State when seeking to dispose of publicly funded school land, including playing fields.<sup>53</sup> The DfE publishes a list of approved applications at: [Decisions on the disposal of school land](#).

DfE [guidance on the sale and protection of school land](#) was updated in March 2019.<sup>54</sup> The guidance sets out the relevant legislation and procedure relating to the disposal of school land. Regarding the disposal of school playing fields in particular, the guidance states:

Potential applicants should remember that the Secretary of State wishes to ensure that playing fields continue to be protected. The Department for Education will usually only agree to the sale of school playing fields if the sports and curriculum needs of schools and their neighbouring schools can continue to be met. Sale proceeds must be used to improve sports or education facilities and any new sports facilities must be sustainable for at least 10 years.

The Secretary of State expects applicants to have first investigated and exhausted all other possible sources of funding before considering the sale of school playing fields.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> [Schedule 2 of The Education \(School Premises\) Regulations 1999](#), SI 1999/2

<sup>52</sup> [The School Premises \(England\) Regulations 2012](#), SI 2012/1943

<sup>53</sup> Department for Education, [Disposal or change of use of playing field and school land](#), May 2015, p7.

<sup>54</sup> [Land and property: Sale and protection of school land](#), Department for Education, 23 January 2014.

<sup>55</sup> As above.

Further information, including the criteria used to assess applications to dispose of playing fields, is provided in non-statutory advice published by the DfE, [Advice about the protection of school playing fields and public land](#).

The Government's position on the disposal of playing field land was set out by the then-Minister, Lord Nash, in response to a parliamentary question in November 2016:

Local authorities and schools must by law seek consent from the Secretary of State to dispose of playing field land. The department has a strong policy presumption against the disposal of school playing fields and only provides consent to dispose of playing field land if the criteria set out in the departmental guidance are met; which includes an expectation that proceeds from sales are reinvested in sports and education facilities. The department publishes a list of department decisions on applications for consent to dispose of school playing field land.

It would neither be practical or desirable to artificially curb the sale of school playing fields, when such disposals may represent the most effective use of public assets. Often changes are made to education provision, such as school closures or mergers, which mean it is no longer necessary to retain playing fields for school use. In such cases it is only right that local communities are able to benefit from space that otherwise would not be used. Converting surplus or unwanted assets to invest in school grounds has benefits that extend far beyond the school gates. No operating school has disposed of its entire playing field.

It is therefore right that schools should continue to determine what is suitable for their individual circumstances; subject to strong statutory protections including the Secretary of State's consent and the application of rigorous criteria for what is best for pupils' education and wider school and community life.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> [PQH12535](#), 1 November 2016.

## 4

# The School Games

On 28 June 2010, the then Culture Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, announced plans for a national Olympic and Paralympic-style sports competition for schools. In the statement, Mr Hunt said he wanted the School Games to “boost” the promotion of competitive sport in schools and that the initiative would be a key part of the 2012 Olympic sporting legacy.

There are four levels of competition within the School Games, which take place over the year and culminate in a national event:

- **L4. National multi-sport event** - the most talented young people in the UK are selected to compete in high-performance venues.
- **L3. School Games Festival** - regional or countywide festivals and competitions are usually held twice a year to find the best performers in the area as a culmination of school sport competition.
- **L2. Inter-school competition** - individuals and teams are selected to represent their schools against other local schools in competitions run by School Games Organisers, with the winning teams progressing to a School Games Festival.
- **L1. Intra-school competition** - sporting competition for all students held within their school, culminating in a School Games Day.<sup>57</sup>

## 7 School Games Mark

The [School Games Mark](#) is a Government led awards scheme aimed at rewarding schools in England for their commitment to and participation in the School Games. Schools in England are able to assess themselves across bronze, silver and gold levels, with external validation of the gold level.

The Sport England website provides further information on how the games are delivered at a national level:

- School Games is being delivered through partnerships and the national partnership consists of:

<sup>57</sup> [School Games](#), Sport England website, last accessed 4 January 2017.

- The Department for Culture, Media and Sport, who have overall policy leadership, supported by the Department for Education and the Department of Health
- Sport England, who is the Lottery distributor and is supporting the engagement of sports governing bodies and county sports partnerships, and is a key partner in shaping the strategic direction of the programme
- The British Paralympic Association, who bring the vision and inspiration of the Paralympics to the Games
- The Youth Sport Trust, who is commissioned by Sport England to provide development support to schools, sports and other local partners. Sport England work closely with the Youth Sport Trust to deliver the School Games at Level 1-3 and also the Level 4 School Games.<sup>58</sup>

## 4.1 School Games Review

In its sport strategy, published in December 2015 (see section 5.1 below), the Government stated that it would, along with Sport England and the Youth Sport Trust, “assess the effectiveness and future priorities of the School Games” before the Level 4 Finals in 2016.<sup>59</sup>

The [report of the School Games Review](#) was published in July 2016. The review concluded that the School Games “is well placed to make a strong contribution” to the Government’s sports strategy and made 17 recommendations aimed at maximising the “value and impact of the School Games.”<sup>60</sup>

The report recommended that the mission and focus of the School Games should be updated to ensure that “it is relevant to more children and young people and their lives today.” An appendix to the report sets out an updated mission, vision and characteristics for the Games.<sup>61</sup>

Other recommendations included:

- updating guidance and training to ensure that “the need to engender a sense of competence; promote enjoyment and avoid negative and bad experience will be embedded across all levels”;
- reducing the cost of the level 4 national finals and reviewing the sports and athletes participating in them;
- increasing the number and diversity of children participating in the School Games;

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<sup>58</sup> [School Games](#), Sport England website, last accessed 10 October 2018.

<sup>59</sup> As above, p36.

<sup>60</sup> Sport England, [School Games Review: Executive Summary Report](#), July 2016, p1.

<sup>61</sup> As above, p7.

- strengthening volunteering opportunities across the School Games to enable young people to volunteer after they leave school; and
- widening the criteria for the School Games Mark.<sup>62</sup>

An [update on the review](#) was published in November 2016. This stated that implementation of the recommendations had begun and would be monitored by the School Games Project Board. A brief update concerning each of the 17 recommendations was also provided.<sup>63</sup>

## 4.2

### School Sport and Activity Action Plan

The School Sport and Activity Action Plan (see section 5.3), published in July 2019, highlighted the School Games as “an important part of the UK’s sporting legacy” and stated that Sport England will work with the Youth Sport Trust and sporting bodies to “build on the successful programme.”

The Plan also encourages schools to consider the School Games when exploring platforms for competitive sport.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> As above, pp2-6.

<sup>63</sup> Sport England, [School Games Review November 2016 – update](#), November 2016.

<sup>64</sup> DfE, DDCMS and DHSC, [School Sport and Activity Action Plan](#), July 2019, p20.

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## 5 Government strategies and action plans

### 5.1 2015 Sport Strategy

In July 2015 the Government published a [consultation](#) on a new sport strategy. It set out the following areas the Government wanted to address:

- a. How to make sure that the impact of the PE and Sport Premium is sustainable over the long term – in terms of both:
  - i. improved provision in primary schools
  - ii. continued participation and engagement of current primary school pupils as they progress through to secondary level
- b. How to encourage young people to be active, and the role that schools can play in supporting this;
- c. How to continue to make the School Games relevant both in encouraging competitive sport and as part of the talent pathway;
- d. How to make the sporting offer for children and young people outside of school and school hours as attractive and accessible as possible;
- e. How we can encourage sport participation in further and higher education;
- f. How to ensure that schools, community sports clubs, central government and its agencies work together as effectively as possible to maximise opportunities for young people to take part in sport and be physically active.<sup>65</sup>

#### The Strategy

The consultation closed in October 2015 and the new sport strategy, [Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation](#), was published in December 2015. The strategy stated that the Government was “redefining what success looks like in sport by concentrating on five key outcomes: physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development and economic development.”<sup>66</sup>

Regarding school sport, the strategy emphasised the importance of linking together the different stages of education and seeing them “as part of the

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<sup>65</sup> DCMS, [A New Strategy for Sport: Consultation Paper](#), August 2015, p20.

<sup>66</sup> HM Government, [Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation](#), December 2015, p10.

wider ‘taking part’ strategy”.<sup>67</sup> The strategy also contained a number of Government commitments relating to school sport:

- A working group would be established in early 2016 to advise on how to ensure that no child leaves school unable to meet a minimum capability in swimming (see box 1 above).<sup>68</sup>
- The Primary PE and Sport Premium would be continued.<sup>69</sup>
- The Government would “seek to better understand the barriers and issues around the drop-off in engagement from primary to secondary as well as identify good practice, particularly for those groups who are most affected, such as girls.”<sup>70</sup>
- The Government, along with Sport England and the Youth Sport Trust would “assess the effectiveness and future priorities of the School Games”. This will take place before the Level 4 Finals in 2016.<sup>71</sup> See section 3.1 above for information about the review.

The strategy also announced that the remit of Sport England would be extended so that it would become responsible for sport outside school from age 5, rather than 14. In addition, the Active People Survey, which Sport England used to measure participation in sport and physical activity, would be replaced with a new Active Lives Survey. The strategy stated the Government would consult with Sport England and other stakeholders in the first half of 2016 to develop “the most appropriate extension of the Active Lives method for measuring children’s engagement in sport and physical activity.”<sup>72</sup>

The strategy set out a number of key performance indicators for each output. These included, but were not limited to:

- KPI 2b - Percentage of children (5-15) physically inactive
- KPI 3b - Percentage of children (5-15) taking part in sport and physical activity at least twice in the last month
- KPI 5 – Increase in the percentage of children achieving physical literacy standards.
- KPI 6 – Increase in the percentage of children achieving swimming proficiency.
- KPI 8 – Increase in the percentage of young people (11-18) with a positive attitude towards sport and being active.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> As above, p32.

<sup>68</sup> As above, p33.

<sup>69</sup> As above, p35.

<sup>70</sup> HM Government, [Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation](#), December 2015, p33.

<sup>71</sup> As above, p36.

<sup>72</sup> As above, p33.

<sup>73</sup> As above, p78.

## First annual report on the strategy

The first [annual report](#) on the sport strategy was published in February 2017.<sup>74</sup> As well as outlining the increased funding for the PE and Sport Premium, and the review of the School Games, the report stated that “sport in secondary schools will also benefit from Sport England’s commitment to offer specialist training for at least two teachers in every secondary school by 2020.”<sup>75</sup> It also said that:

- To extend the Active Lives survey to 5-15 year olds, Sport England was “developing a system to measure how children engage with sport and physical activity”, with data collection intended to start in autumn 2017.<sup>76</sup>
- The first data from the Active Lives survey relating to the four KPIs cited above are expected to be published in the 2019 annual report.<sup>77</sup>
- The working group had been set up “to explore ways to ensure that no child leaves school unable to meet a minimum standard of swimming.” The [report](#) of the Curriculum Swimming and Water Safety Review Group was published in July 2017 (see box 1 above).

## Second annual report on the strategy

The second annual report on the sport strategy was published in January 2018. As well as outlining the funding for the PE and Sport Premium and the HPCF, this stated that:

- The [Active Lives: Children and Young People survey](#) had been launched in September 2017. The first set of data was published in December 2018. (see section 6.2 below).
- The Government had set up an implementation group to review and implement the recommendations of the Curriculum Swimming and Water Safety Review Group’s report (see box 1 above).<sup>78</sup>

## Third annual report on the strategy

A report on progress in the third full year of the strategy was provided in a [ministerial written statement](#) by the Minister for Sport and Civil Society, Mims Davies, in February 2019.

The Minister noted the publication of the first year’s results of the Active Lives Children Survey in December 2018 and stated that the data on children’s inactivity levels was a “was a wake up call both for government and the sector, and has prompted a substantial new focus across government on

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<sup>74</sup> HM Government, [Sporting Future: First Annual Report](#), February 2017.

<sup>75</sup> As above, p17.

<sup>76</sup> As above, p16.

<sup>77</sup> HM Government, [Sporting Future: First Annual Report](#), February 2017, p16.

<sup>78</sup> HM Government, [Sporting Future: Second Annual Report](#), January 2018, p10.

improving sport and physical activity for young people.” This will be manifested, she said, through the School Sport and Activity Action Plan to be published in spring 2019 (see section 5.3 below).<sup>79</sup>

## 5.2 2016 Childhood obesity action plan

In August 2016 the Government published [Childhood Obesity: A Plan for Action](#), with the aim of significantly reducing the rate of childhood obesity in England within the next 10 years.

The action plan highlighted the health benefits of physical activity and cited evidence of a link between improved academic performance, and physical activity and participation in organised sports. As set out in section 1.2 above, **the plan stated that every primary school child should “get at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity a day”, with at least 30 minutes delivered in school and the remaining 30 minutes supported by parents outside of school time.**

### 8 Public Health England Guidance on increasing physical activity in schools

In October 2015, Public Health England published [advice for schools](#) on what works in schools and colleges to increase physical activity. The advice includes practice examples and also highlights links to Ofsted inspection criteria and useful sources of support.<sup>80</sup> The School Sport and Activity Action Plan stated that an updated version of the guidance will be available shortly.<sup>81</sup>

With regards to physical activity and sport in schools, the action plan also said:

- Public Health England will develop advice to schools for 2017-18 on how they can “work with the school nurses, health centres, healthy weight teams in local authorities and other resources, to help children develop a healthier lifestyle.”
- County Sports Partnerships have been asked to work with other providers, including National Governing Bodies of sport, “to ensure that from September 2017, every primary school in England has access to a

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<sup>79</sup> [HCWS1311](#), 7 February 2019.

<sup>80</sup> Public Health England, [What Works in Schools and Colleges to Increase Physical Activity?](#), October 2015.

<sup>81</sup> DfE, DDCMS and DHSC, [School Sport and Activity Action Plan](#), July 2019, p12.

co-ordinated offer of high quality sport and physical activity programmes, both local and national.”

- A new healthy rating scheme for primary schools will be introduced from September 2017, which physical activity will be a key part of. Following delays, the [rating system](#) was launched in July 2019.<sup>82</sup>

## Plan of action: chapter 2

In June 2018 the Government published chapter two of its childhood obesity action plan. Among other things, the plan announced that the Government would “review how the least active children are being engaged in physical activity in and around the school day.” The review, it added, will also “consider how the Primary and PE and Sport Premium is being used.”

The action plan also set out a “national ambition” for every primary school to adopt an active mile initiative, such as the Daily Mile. Such initiatives can, the plan stated, be a simple means of contributing to the recommendation that schools should deliver at least 30 minutes of the total recommended 60 daily minutes of physical activity for children. The Government would, it said, review how the PE and Sport Premium could be used to support the ambition.<sup>83</sup>

## 5.3

## School Sport Action Plan

Following an earlier announcement in October 2018, the [School Sport and Activity Action Plan](#) was published in July 2019.<sup>84</sup> The Plan applies to England only.

### Ambitions

Noting the benefits of sport and physical activity in improving children’s physical and mental wellbeing, and helping them develop teamwork and leadership skills, the Plan set out a joint commitment from the DfE, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and the Department for Health and Social Care to collaborate at a national level to ensure that sport and physical activity are an integral part of both the school day and after-school activities, so that all children have the opportunity to take part in at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day.<sup>85</sup> It added that at least 30 minutes should take place in schools, and the remaining 30 minutes outside the school day, as set out in the Childhood Obesity Action Plan.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Department for Education, [Healthy schools rating scheme](#), 8 July 2019.

<sup>83</sup> HM Government, [Childhood obesity: a plan for action: Chapter 2](#), June 2018, pp27-8.

<sup>84</sup> [New education and skills measures announced](#), Department for Education, 2 October 2018; DfE, DDCMS and DHSC, [School Sport and Activity Action Plan](#), July 2019.

<sup>85</sup> DfE, DDCMS and DHSC, [School Sport and Activity Action Plan](#), July 2019, p3.

<sup>86</sup> As above, p8.

The Plan outlined two further overarching ambitions:

- That children and young people have the opportunity to realise developmental, character-building experiences through sport, competition and active pursuits.
- That all sport and physical activity provision for children and young people is designed around the principles of physical literacy, focuses on fun and enjoyment and aims to reach the least active.

The Plan emphasises the need for a collaborative approach and states that no single group or organisation can be expected to “to shoulder the responsibility for improving access to sport and activity on their own.” On the role of schools, it states:

Schools play an important role in young people’s lives, and it is important that they are supported to provide high quality, modern PE lessons that engage young people as well as opportunities for them to be active throughout the school day. We must ensure that teachers have the knowledge and skills they need to teach PE effectively, support primary schools to make use of PE specialists, help schools to protect PE time and build physical activity into the school day to help stem the drop-off in activity by older pupils.<sup>87</sup>

The Plan also states that Ofsted’s new inspection framework, which will come into effect from September 2019, will give greater recognition to schools’ work to support the personal development of pupils, such as the opportunities they have to be physically active.<sup>88</sup>

## A joined-up sport and physical activity offer

The Action Plan sets out a number of commitments and actions aimed at ensuring a “joined-up sport and physical activity offer for young people”, and argues that “a collaborative approach holds the key to maximising the impact of existing opportunities”.

### Trialling new approaches

As part of this, in September 2020 the Government will launch a series of regional pilots to “trial new and innovative approaches to driving up activity levels, and particularly focus on engaging the least active”. The pilots will aim to increase physical activity in school time and outside, with schools in pilot areas working with sport providers and local organisations “to put in place a coordinated offer of sport, competition and activity in and outside schools.” The scale and structure of the pilots will be determined by funding decisions taken as part of the Spending Review.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> As above, p6.

<sup>88</sup> As above, p6.

<sup>89</sup> DfE, DDCMS and DHSC, [School Sport and Activity Action Plan](#), July 2019, p10.

## Empowering young people

The Plan emphasises the importance of incorporating the views of young people into the sport and activity offer in order to increase their engagement and participation. It notes that this can be particularly important for girls, many of whom report negative experiences of sport at a young age. The Government will, it says, encourage schools to include young people in the design of their sport offer, to ensure that they offer a range of activities that appeal to young people from different backgrounds.

The Plan additionally sets out that:

- As part of the ‘This Girl Can’ campaign, Sport England will provide £1 million of National Lottery funding to develop a new digital resource for use in schools, to be launched in 2020, with the aim of empowering girls and building their confidence.<sup>90</sup>
- The DfE will invest up to £400,000 in 2019-20 to provide more opportunities for children to take part in sport volunteering programmes.<sup>91</sup>

## Raising awareness

The Plan cites evidence that the majority of UK adults are unaware of the amount of physical activity that children and young people should be doing every day and highlights this as “a fundamental issue that needs to be addressed”. The Government will, it states, “raise awareness of the importance of physical activity for children and young people, and make messages such as “at least 60 minutes a day” as recognisable as “5 a day”.<sup>92</sup>

## Actions within schools

The Plan sets out a number of actions to be taken within schools, some of which, such as regarding the PE and Sport Premium, are outlined in more detail above in the relevant section of the briefing. The actions in schools include:

- The DfE will provide £1.5 million to Sport England to boost the capacity of [Active Partnerships](#) to help schools further open up their facilities after the school day and during the school holidays.
- The DfE will provide £500,000 to “test new approaches to improve the strategic direction and delivery of PE and school sport through the use of teaching schools.”
- Encouraging schools to explore options outside of just PE lessons, such as lunchtime sports clubs and building in activity into classroom lessons, to provide physical activity for pupils.

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<sup>90</sup> As above, p11.

<sup>91</sup> As above, pp11-12.

<sup>92</sup> As above, pp12-13.

- The DfE’s review of the content of Initial Teacher Training will include looking at how to ensure it equips PE teachers to deliver high quality lessons. The DfE will also work with schools and others to explore further how to support PE teachers and schools to deliver high quality lessons and share best practice. A [new framework of core content for ITT](#) was published in November 2019.
- The DfE will look at how to provide schools with a toolkit to support effective use of the PE and Sport Premium.
- The support provided to schools to provide high quality health and relationships education will include looking at how to link these subjects to the provision of physical activity and PE across the day.
- The Government will work with schools and the sport sector to “identify areas where schools face additional barriers to provide high quality swimming and water safety lessons and provide further support to ensure all pupils learn how to swim and be safe in and around the water.”<sup>93</sup>

The Plan additionally states that schools and providers will be encouraged to work together to increase the provision of after-school sport opportunities. As part of this, Sport England will invest £2 million to create 400 new ‘satellite clubs’ targeting at 14-19 year olds with the aim of bridging the gap between school, college and community sport.<sup>94</sup>

## Measurement and next steps

The Plan states that the actions it sets out have been shaped by data from the Active Lives Children and Young People Survey (see section 6.2 below), and that the survey “will also be an important” element of how the impact of the Plan is measured. The Government will, it says, monitor delivery and impact of the Plan (and the updated Plan to be published after the Spending Review) “to strengthen [its] understanding of what works and build the case for future interventions and policy.” It will also work to set targets for an increase in physical activity levels, with particular regard to girls’ participation levels.

The Government will also, the Plan states, build the evidence case for how embedding sport and physical activity into the school day can help with broader school outcomes, such as improved behaviour and attendance. More detail will be set out in the updated version of the Plan.<sup>95</sup>

The Government has stated that an updated plan, including £30 million a year to improve the teaching of physical education at primary school and open school sport facilities outside of the school day, will be [published later in 2022](#).<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> DfE, DDCMS and DHSC, [School Sport and Activity Action Plan](#), July 2019, pp13-17.

<sup>94</sup> As above, p18.

<sup>95</sup> As above, p21.

<sup>96</sup> [PQ 113149 \[Primary Education: Sports\]. 27 January 2022](#)

## 5.4

## Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic

In January 2022, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the DfE, Will Quince, set out in response to a Parliamentary Question the Government's assessment of the impact of the pandemic on PE:

**Will Quince:** The department recognises that the extended school closures have had a substantial impact on children and young people's education.

While we do not collect detailed data on PE outcomes, we have been monitoring the effect of the COVID-19 outbreak on education. The department's school snapshot panel survey in December 2020 provided insights into the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on PE provision, showing a mixed picture. 73% of schools had changed their delivery of PE in some way, for 90% the change was around delivering different or modified activities. 19% of all schools reported increased PE time, for example due to pupils attending school in PE kit reducing changing time, and 15% of all schools reported reduced time for PE often due to the lack of appropriate inside space. The [school recovery report](#) of January 2022 shows that whilst some schools report increased hours for PE, 56% of primary schools have reported reducing hours for some subjects, such as PE.

The department's COVID-19 guidance has supported schools to continue to provide PE, sport and physical activity through COVID-19 restrictions, and online PE lessons have been available through Oak National Academy.

PE will play an important role in supporting recovery. We are continuing to support schools to provide high quality PE. Primary schools continue to receive the £320 million PE and sport premium, which is supporting improvements to the quality of the PE, sport and physical activity which they offer. In October 2021 the government also announced nearly £30 million a year will go towards improving the teaching of PE at primary school, as well as to improving and opening up school sport facilities in England.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> [PQ 104379 \[Physical education\], 19 January 2022](#)

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## 6 Surveys and reports

This section provides brief information on recent surveys and reports on physical activity in schools.

### 6.1 Association of Physical Education report (2021)

In June 2021, a taskforce established by the Association of Physical Education (afPE) published a report on [The Future of Physical Education](#), which aimed to put PE at the ‘heart of school life’. The taskforce was chaired by Edward Timpson, the former Children’s Minister.

The review recommended that the Government should carry out an “urgent review... of the status of PE as a foundation subject.” It further recommended that PE should be classified as a core subject.<sup>98</sup> The report argued that these changes would “unlock” its other recommendations to strengthen PE teaching in schools.

The existing ‘core’ subjects within the [National Curriculum](#) are English, Mathematics, and Science. Physical education is a ‘foundation’ subject within the curriculum – alongside subjects such as art, languages, and history.<sup>99</sup>

### 6.2 Active Lives Children and Young People Survey

As set out above, the Government’s 2015 Sport Strategy announced that Sport England’s Active People Survey would be replaced with an Active Lives Survey, which would also be extended to cover 5-16 year olds.

The report on the [fourth annual Active Lives and Children and Young People Survey](#) was published in December 2021. The report summarised the activity levels of 5-16 year olds in England during the 2020/21 academic year – so, during the coronavirus pandemic. It is based on a survey of pupils at both state-funded and independent schools.

The report estimated that around 45% of children and young people achieved the new Chief Medical Officer guidelines of taking part in sport and physical

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<sup>98</sup> Association of Physical Education, [Taskforce on the future of Physical Education \(PE\): The Heart of School Life](#), June 2021, p22

<sup>99</sup> Department for Education, [The National Curriculum in England: Framework document](#), December 2014, p7

activity for an average of 60 minutes or more a day. This was very close to the previous year's figure. Around 32% were estimated to do less than 30 minutes a day, on average.

Activity levels, and trends in these, were found to vary by some pupil characteristics. For example:

- Whilst an estimated 52% of pupils in school years 1 and 2 (so, aged between 5 and 7 approximately) were active, the figure for those in years 9 to 11 (aged between 13 and 16) was only 41%.
- Whilst the proportion of boys (across all age groups) who were active, appears to have decreased since 2018/19, the proportion of girls in this category has increased slightly, so that around the same proportion of boys and girls (45%) report being active.<sup>100</sup>

## 6.3 Taking Part Survey 2019-20

Taking Part is a household survey in England which has been running since 2005 and looks at participation in the cultural and sporting sectors. Statistical releases from Taking Part are available at: [Taking Part: statistical releases](#).

In September 2020, the annual data on child participation was published for the period covering April 2019 to March 2020. The key findings concerning participation in competitive school sport included:

- 65% of 5-15 year olds had participated in competitive sport in school in the last 12 months.
- The proportion of 5-10 year olds who had played sport in their school in organised competitions (eg, school sports day) was around 58%.<sup>101</sup>

## 6.4 Ofsted report on physical activity in schools, July 2018

In July 2018, Ofsted published a [report](#) on obesity, healthy eating and physical activity in primary schools. The report highlighted the things that schools can do to help tackle childhood obesity, including “providing ample opportunity for children to take physical exercise during the school day – with lots of opportunities to ‘get out of breath.’” The report cautioned, however, that,

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<sup>100</sup> Sport England, [Children's activity levels down but many embrace new opportunities](#), December 2021, ps 9 and 11

<sup>101</sup> Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, [Taking Part 2019-20: annual child release](#), 16 September 2020

while the contribution of schools is important, they cannot alone have a direct and measurable impact on children's weight.<sup>102</sup>

Regarding physical activity in schools, the report's findings included:

- 69% of the 60 schools visited as part of the research had two or more hours of PE in the timetable each week.
- Many schools also organised additional activities at the whole-school level; 13 schools, for example, organised a 'daily mile'.
- Parents surveyed as part of the research wanted to see more time for PE in the curriculum.
- Extra-curricular activities can be a good way to broaden the opportunities for children to exercise but a quarter of parents said that their child could not access all the activities they wanted.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Ofsted, [Obesity, healthy eating and physical activity in primary schools](#), July 2018, p3.

<sup>103</sup> [Schools not 'silver bullet' to tackling childhood obesity](#), Ofsted. 18 July 2018.

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