

St Finians

NS



Physical Education Plan

Whole School Plan PE – St Finian’s National School

Introductory Statement

This PE plan for St Finians N.S. was formulated in consultation with the teachers and members of the Board of Management, taking into consideration best practice advice from the PDST.

Rationale

Physical Education provides children with learning opportunities through the medium of movement and contributes to their overall development by helping them to lead full, active and healthy lives. We aim to provide optimum learning opportunities for the children in our school by maximising active learning experiences and approaches which benefit each individual child. *We aim to emphasise the importance of leading a healthy, active lifestyle to promote positive mental health amongst the children.*

Vision

Physical Education is distinguished from other curricular areas by its primary focus on the body and on physical experience and is an integral part of the educational process, without which the education of the child is incomplete. In St Finians NS, by implementing a diverse range of experiences that provide regular, challenging physical activity, the balanced and harmonious development and general well-being of every child can be fostered.

Through our physical education programme, our children can experience the joy of physical exertion and the satisfaction of achievement while developing skills and positive attitudes that enhance self-esteem. Physical education provides opportunities to develop desirable personal and social attributes: the concept of fair play, the acceptance of success and failure, and the ability to co-operate in group situations. These opportunities contribute to the understanding and promotion of a healthy life-style. Physical education, as an integral part of the total curriculum, provides vital opportunities for the physical, social, emotional and intellectual development of the children in our school.

We aim to provide Physical Education opportunities which meet the physical needs of each child and their need for movement experiences, challenges and play. We aim to develop a desire for daily physical activity in all of the children through encouraging constructive and active use of free time, so that children will be motivated towards participation in physical activities in adult life. To fulfil these needs, our Physical Education programme is built on the principles of variety and diversity. We aim to provide a wide variety of movement activities appropriate to the level of development of each individual child.

Aims

We endorse the aims of the [Primary School Curriculum for Physical Education](#)¹

- To promote the physical, social, emotional and intellectual development of the child
- To develop positive personal qualities
- To help in the acquisition of an appropriate range of movement skills in a variety of contexts
- To promote understanding and knowledge of the various aspects of movement

¹ Page 10, PE Curriculum, 1999

- To develop an appreciation of movement and the use of the body as an instrument of expression and creativity
- To promote enjoyment of, and positive attitudes towards, physical activity and its contribution to lifelong health-related fitness, thus preparing the child for the active and purposeful use of leisure time.

Objectives of Physical Education

The broad objectives of the PE curriculum have been considered in the design of this plan:

Social and personal development

- experience enjoyment and achievement through movement
- interact and co-operate sensitively with others, regardless of cultural or social background or special needs
- develop qualities of self-esteem, self-awareness, confidence, initiative and leadership through movement
- develop an understanding of fair play and team spirit through participation and competition
- develop positive attitudes towards participation in movement activities
- experience adventure and challenge

Physical and motor development

- develop strength, speed, endurance and flexibility through engaging in a wide variety of activities
- develop agility, alertness, control, balance and co-ordination through movement
- develop personal competence in the athletic skills of running, jumping and throwing
- perform dances with confidence and competence, including simple folk and Irish dances
- develop personal competence in a range of gymnastic movements
- develop personal competence in the games skills of sending, receiving and travelling using a variety of equipment, and to apply these skills in games situations
- apply the skills needed to live and move with confidence in the environment
- build water confidence near, in, on and under water
- develop personal competence in a variety of strokes and water agility

Knowledge and understanding

- develop an understanding and general knowledge of movement activities and derive benefit as a participant and as a spectator
- develop an understanding of travel and weight-bearing as the basis of efficient body management and control, both on the floor and using apparatus
- experience and develop an understanding of the use of space, speed, effort, direction and level in the performance of actions
- develop an understanding of the appropriate basic rules, tactics and strategies of movement activities
- observe, discuss, analyse, interpret and enjoy the performance of movement
- gather, record and interpret information on achievement in movement activities
- be inventive, make decisions, solve problems and develop autonomy through movement activities
- participate in and develop a knowledge, understanding and appreciation of cultural activities through movement
- develop an appreciation of and respect for the environment through participation in activities outdoors

Creative and aesthetic development

- use the body as a means of expression and communication, using a range and variety of stimuli
- create and perform simple dances
- create and play simple games
- develop artistic and aesthetic understanding within and through movement

Development of health-related fitness

- maintain and enhance health-related fitness through vigorous physical activity that helps to promote a healthy life-style
- understand and practise good hygiene and posture
- appreciate the benefits of relaxation and cope with challenges

Development of safety

- adopt safe practices in all physical activities

Curriculum Planning for Physical Education

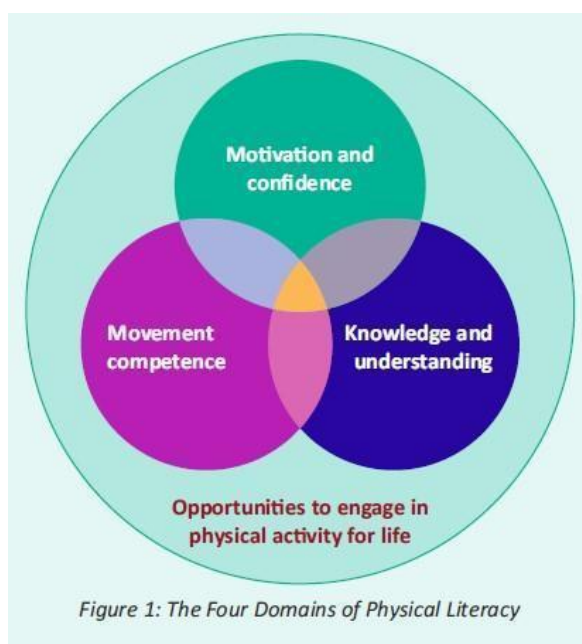


The PE curriculum is organised into the six strands shown above. These strands and strand units can be found on the following pages of the [Physical Education Curriculum](#) ★ Infant classes pp. 16-23 ★ First and Second classes pp. 24-34 ★ Third and Fourth classes pp. 38-46 ★ Fifth and Sixth classes pp. 48-59 ★ Aquatics: Junior Infants-Sixth pp.62-64

In planning for teaching PE, teachers will be guided by the [PE Curriculum Teacher Guidelines](#) and will also use the PE lesson plans prepared by the Primary School Sports Initiative - [PSSI Lesson Plans](#) and the PDST Move [Well, Move Often Physical Literacy Resource](#).

Developing the Physically Literate pupil in Physical Education

We aim to use the **Move Well, Move Often** resource to support the teaching of Physical Literacy in St Finians NS. Physical literacy is the underlying goal of all physical activity. Physical literacy addresses the whole child and respects each pupil as an individual. The physically literate child can be described as having the motivation, confidence, movement competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take part in physical activity throughout their personal lifelong journey. Physical literacy includes four essential and interconnected elements whose relative importance may change throughout life: Movement Competence, Motivation and Confidence, Knowledge and Understanding, and Opportunities to engage in physical activity for life.



Physical Literacy gives pupils the tools they need to take part in physical activity and sport, both for healthy lifelong enjoyment and for sporting success. To become physically literate, pupils need to master fundamental movement skills (FMS) through a series of developmental stages. FMS are the basic building blocks of movement and are an essential part of everyday life and recreational activity. It is only when these skills are mastered that a child can go on to develop specialised movement skills, which will allow them to reach their potential in sports-specific endeavours.

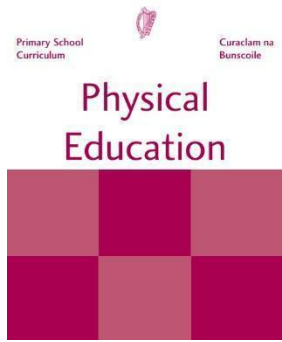
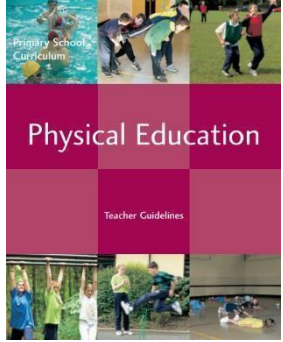


Fundamental Movement Skills

Locomotor Skills Transporting the body in any direction from one point to another	Stability Skills Balancing the body in stillness and in motion	Manipulative Skills Control of objects using various body parts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking Running Hopping Skipping Jumping for height Jumping for distance Dodging Side stepping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balancing Landing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catching Throwing Kicking Striking with the hand Striking with an implement

In St Finians N.S., we recognise that it is important to teach a balanced range of locomotor, stability and manipulative skills across the strands during the year. Our whole school plan for PE reflects this approach.

Resources for Teaching Physical Education

Teachers in St Finians N.S. will utilise the following core resources to support planning for and teaching a broad and balanced programme of Physical Education:

			
Physical Education Curriculum	Physical Education Curriculum Teacher Guidelines	PSSI Lesson Plans	Move Well, Move Often Physical Literacy Resource

The role of the teacher is to

- Help each child to develop a positive self-image and sense of fair play and cooperate with others,
- Ensure that the child experiences a variety of vigorous and challenging activities,
- Foster a stimulating and secure environment in which the child can be creative and imaginative,
- Link physical education activities with other curricular areas when appropriate,
- Evaluate the programme and assess the progress of each child,
- Provide information to parents, in line with school policy, about the class programme for physical education,
- Have due regard for safety by ensuring that each child adopts safe practices.
- Teachers will devise a balanced programme in line with this plan which meets the needs of each child in their class. Where possible, children will have experience the following five strands each year – Athletics, Dance, Gymnastics, Games, Outdoor and Adventure Activities.
- Continuity and Progression

Teachers will ensure there is continuity and progression from class to class by:

- Utilising appropriate warm-up activities relative to each class level.
- Following the structure of the PSSI lesson plans.

- Recording the content covered at each level in each strand (Cúntas Míósúil)

Approaches and Methodologies

Teachers will use a combination of the following teaching approaches:

- Direct teaching approach
- Guided discovery approach
- Integration

Teachers will use methodologies that encourage maximum participation by the child such as individual, pair, group and team work, station teaching or using a play area divided into grids.

Structure of a PE lesson

- **Warm Up**
- Main Activity – running, jumping, throwing, rolling, striking an object, kicking, playing small sided games, orienteering, dancing etc.

This main activity will take place at individual, pair and small group levels.

Station teaching will be used to teach a specific skill and to enable the children experience a variety of activities in the PE lesson. We will divide play area into grids to allow for small group activity and all children will be involved.

- **Cool Down**

Children with Different Needs

In St Finians N.S., we recognise that physical education is important in the curriculum for students with Special Educational Needs and disabilities. Pupils with special educational needs or disabilities depend on teachers to manage their learning and to provide support. In St Finians NS, inclusive PE ensures that all pupils experience a sense of belonging during the lesson. This includes feeling respected, valued for who you are, and feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others. It is important to create and encourage a positive environment and to provide pupils with opportunities to enjoy physical activity with others, so that they will, in the future, approach activity as a means of socialisation and integration in the community.

Many children with SEN experience difficulty with basic coordination, balance, left and right orientation, rhythm, and spatial and body awareness. These skills can be addressed and improved through physical education. As it is a practical subject, it is particularly suited to the learning styles of many students with general learning disabilities. Students who experience difficulties and frustration in academic areas of their school life can enjoy and acquire personal achievement and satisfaction in the physical education curriculum. Physical education is a student-centered curriculum that challenges each student at his/her personal level. It is also a very sociable subject involving a high level of appreciation and acceptance of others.

Physical education can enable students with general learning disabilities to acquire and enjoy many physical skills during their school life, and so widen the possibilities for recreation and socialization in their adult lives. It provides the student with an avenue to enjoy life and social interaction. All children will be encouraged to participate in all PE activities through the use of co-operative fun activities. We will provide encouragement and acknowledge good effort wherever possible. Our main aim is to set activities close to each child's ability level but at the same time challenging them to improve their performance. Reasonable targets will be set for all children at individual, pair and small group levels. Teachers will endeavour to support and ensure the participation of children with Special Educational Needs and disabilities through an inclusive approach to planning for PE.

In order to make our PE curriculum inclusive and accessible, the following ideas may be considered when planning for inclusion of students with disabilities and Special Educational Needs:

- Skills, concepts and activities will need to be redefined and broken down into progressive stages to meet the varying abilities of these students.
- Learning expectations should be reasonable in meeting the balance between familiar and unfamiliar skills and activities.
- Realistic targets should be set, appropriate activities and equipment should be chosen, and sufficient time should be given to bridge the gap between applying familiar skills and learning and applying new skills and concepts.
- Positive reinforcement should be given frequently, the ability of the students should be emphasised, and appropriate activities should be provided in order to improve the self-esteem and confidence of these students.

The following support materials will assist teachers in planning for children with SEN and disabilities:



All pupils exhibit a wide range of abilities in the area of PE. Some may be talented, some may be gifted, while others show significant needs and require guidance through a progressive and systematic approach to their participation and learning. In planning for teaching this subject area, it is important to keep in mind the following key issues and learning difficulties that pupils may have.

POTENTIAL AREAS OF DIFFICULTY FOR STUDENTS WITH MILD GENERAL LEARNING DISABILITIES

Potential area of difficulty	Implications for learning	Possible Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fitness levels 	It may be necessary to set targets to improve fitness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • include active warm ups and drills for skills practice • vary activities in the lesson to include the use of gross motor skills; regular short periods of exercise daily; cooling down exercises and consultation with parents/guardians
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listening and responding 	The student may have difficulty with short-term memory and concentration span.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keep instruction simple and clear. Students repeat instruction. • demonstration(s) of task; verbal analysis of task; student performs task; teacher affirms task • move to new instruction regularly

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • co-ordination and balance 	<p>The student may have difficulties in fine and gross motor skills in all strand areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teach suitable gait for skill, for example, throwing and catching a ball, jumping and landing, balancing. • give good visual demonstrations • reaffirm good examples and practices • use additional equipment to suit the needs of the student, for example softer balls, larger target • provide physical support to student in performing skill, for example, jumping
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spatial and body awareness 	<p>There may be safety issues for students engaging in movement exercises.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide suitable group arrangements; restrict area of movement; plan for the student to engage in follow the leader, and copying and contrasting exercises • use specific body parts in exercises e.g make a shape with the upper part of the body
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • left–right orientation 	<p>It may be necessary to include regular exercises with these movements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • include warm-up exercises/stretchers. Students mirror actions of peers or teacher: O’Grady says; Follow the leader • include exercises with equipment using both sides of the body
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • behavior 	<p>This will necessitate the smooth progression of lesson structure with clear</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish routine format for class and the expectations of desired behaviours • ensure that the student is suitably placed in the class for optimum learning
	<p>instructions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • check that the student is attending by reinforcing and questioning • involve the student where possible in demonstration • encourage the student and assign tasks opportunities for success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social integration. 	<p>Keep appropriate balance between cooperative and competitive activities. Foster enjoyment of activities with others. Encourage individual student’s interest in particular aspects of the strands.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • group student(s) appropriately • use co-operative fun activities regularly • give encouragement and acknowledge good effort • set appropriate skill development level commensurate with students’ ability level • set reasonable targets for co-operative activities (individual and group).

Exceptionally Able Children

Children with exceptional ability or talent for PE will be encouraged and supported by acknowledging their talents and creating additional challenges for these children in the strands of the PE curriculum they excel in. These challenges will be based on the activity being pursued by the rest of the class. In addition, the children will be encouraged to maximise their talent by forging links with local clubs (if links have not been established already) so the child(ren) can progress their talent to a higher level. The children with exceptional ability will, on occasion, be encouraged to assist their classmates in achieving proficiency in the activities they are undertaking.

We will refer to the PE checklist in the NCCA Draft Guidelines for Exceptionally Able Students to identify children who have a special ability or talent for PE:

Physical Education

Specific sports and physical activities require differentiated and detailed checklists. Exceptionally able students:

use the body with confidence in differentiated, expressive and imaginative ways	are able to adapt, anticipate and make decisions
have a good sense of shape, space, direction and timing	have a good control of gross and fine body movements and can handle objects skilfully
produce a seamless fluency of movement with an intuitive feel for elegant movement	show high level of understanding of principles of health-related exercise and their application in a variety of activities
are able to use technical terms effectively, accurately and fluently	are able to perform advanced skills and techniques and transfer skills between activities
are able to analyse and evaluate their own and others' work using results to effect improvement	take the initiative, demonstrating leadership and independence of thought

Assessment and Record Keeping

The teachers in the school constantly assess in the PE lessons delivered as we identify progress and difficulties.

We will assess

- Willingness to participate in activities
- Readiness to engage with a certain activity
- The level of competence of a child in carrying out an activity
- Interest in and attitude to activity
- Willingness to cooperate in individual, pair and group activities

Our assessment tools are:

- Teacher observation
- Teacher-designed tasks
- Children's feedback surveys October 2023
- Teacher reflections on cuntas miosúil

Assessment is used to provide information on individual children, assist the teacher in planning a programme and facilitates communication with other teachers, parents and other professionals.

- **Assessment for learning** to provide feedback to children, improve learning and inform practice
- **Assessment of learning** which helps to identify the milestones children reach and the progress they make to report to parents, other teachers and the children themselves.

- **Assessment as learning** involves teaching the children how to self assess and peer assess.

The assessment criteria used for each activity forms part of class and school planning. The school will use a PE Journal to guide Self Assessment. Teachers will refer to the PDST teacher checklists, peer observation checklist and Individual Assessment Profiles from the Move Well Move Often website and resource pack, see link for details <https://www.scoilnet.ie/pdst/physlit/assessment/>

Assessment information is shared with parents at Parent Teacher meetings and in end-of-year school reports. The school will communicate home school link emails as well as active homework. If concerns are noted during the year parents may be contacted. Information is shared between teachers during the year as need arises and in particular in the case of formulating Individual Education Plans for children with special needs.

Equality of Participation and Access

- We will endeavour to ensure that all children from infants to sixth class will partake in all six strands of the curriculum during their primary education where possible.
- We will provide equal access for all children to physical education equipment and facilities and the use of the playground during breaks will be incorporated as an integral part of the school's programme.
 - When grouping children for physical education the school will endeavour not to group children solely on the basis of gender whenever possible.
 - As a staff we will help children to build positive attitudes towards all activities.
 - We will take into account the needs of the children when promoting the health related fitness of children.
 - We will enter both boys and girls teams in inter-school competitions and where necessary (if we have insufficient numbers) we will take the opportunity to enter mixed teams.
 - We will endeavour to celebrate multiculturalism through PE whenever possible, e.g. through including a variety of different types of Folk Dance or Games from other countries, from time to time.
 - All children are encouraged to participate in school team sports. While it is hoped that all children would get to participate, the management team will consider the following when selecting the team. This includes participation and interest shown at training sessions, level of ability and previous performances.
 - The Dance strand of the curriculum will be used to introduce dances from other cultures in the area of folk dance.
 - Large sporting events such as the Olympics, World Cup, Special Olympics etc will be used to look at the customs and sporting culture of some of the participating countries.
 - Introduction of games from different countries, yet at the same time the school will acknowledge the special place that Gaelic Games holds in our culture.

Linkage and Integration

Many of the broad objectives of PE, such as the development of self-esteem, confidence, cooperation and spatial awareness, are shared with other curricular subjects. Within PE, it is through learning opportunities provided in the various aspects of movement that these objectives can be achieved. The transfer and reinforcement of learning from other areas of the curriculum can be achieved when PE is integrated with other subjects. This approach can be particularly effective in meeting the needs of pupils with individual and varied learning styles, and enables pupils to appreciate how physical literacy is an integral part of all our lives.

- Linkage can take place within the physical education curriculum, because many activities transcend strands and are of benefit to the child irrespective of the strands or subjects being covered. Within the content of the curriculum, footnotes below the strand units suggest where linkage and integration might take place in the PE class.
- Theme based activities will be used to support integration especially in the gymnastics strand where the language of movement can be developed in tandem with the practical activities under the theme of travelling. Further language development can take place under the theme of balance. Mathematical concepts in fifth and sixth class can be developed with the theme of symmetry and asymmetry in the PE class.
- Linkage between SPHE and PE takes place during PE lessons through the promotion and emphasis placed on physical activity in order to maintain a healthy mind and body. By December 2022 all staff members in St Finians NS had completed the Brain Calm course, which provides information on how to correctly use exercise and activity to regulate children. This involves using activity to calm children and to energise children depending on their regulation needs.
- Movement breaks are encouraged and integrated into everyday teaching to provide the children with a break from class based work to refocus their mind and bodies. Movement breaks are completed using the sensory corridors in the school, Go Noodle, the Irish Heart Foundation website, Move Well Move Often resources, Just Dance Kids and Active Jar Sticks.

Language

The effective use of questioning from the teacher will develop the vocabulary associated with physical education. Allowing the children to analyse and describe their own performance will allow them to understand and appreciate their learning in physical education.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) is an approach to language learning where the target language is used as the medium to teach both content and language. This process enables the attainment of both content objectives and language objectives in the same lesson. CLIL is internationally recognised as a successful approach to language teaching and learning and offers a particularly favourable approach for the teaching of Irish in primary schools. It provides opportunities for integrating Irish across the curriculum in an active and meaningful way. PE is an appropriate subject for CLIL because it offers opportunities for discussion and active engagement by pupils in groups. This may involve pupils naturally conversing with each other, solving a problem together, conveying meaning or making a point to a peer. While the pupils will learn specific PE terminology in Irish, they will also learn to communicate and operate through Irish in that subject. The teacher uses language in the PE lesson to question, to direct, to explain, to suggest, to prompt and to stimulate the pupil to think. In turn, the pupil is encouraged to respond by describing, discussing, speculating, explaining and expressing ideas and reactions. A whole-school approach to CLIL will enable pupils to develop a rich and varied understanding of the language of Physical Education and movement experiences across all class levels in a developmentally appropriate manner. The CLIL approach is recommended in the Primary Language Curriculum and further support material on using CLIL is available in the Primary Language Toolkit, at www.curriculumonline.ie.

Organisational Planning

In this school all classes will timetable two 30 minute physical education lessons per week.

Discretionary curriculum time 'affords the teacher and the school the flexibility to accommodate different school needs and circumstances and to provide for the differing aptitudes and abilities of the children it serves. It can be allocated, at the teacher's and at the school's discretion, to any of the six curriculum areas²⁷ – PE being one of the curricular areas.

Active School

In October 2023, St Finians NS will begin the Active Flag initiative throughout the school. The Active School Flag (ASF) is a Department of Education and Skills initiative supported by Healthy Ireland. The ASF is awarded to schools that strive to achieve a physically educated and physically active school community. The process aims to get more schools, more active, more often.

As part of this initiative the whole school will complete various challenges/activities surrounding Physical activity. In term 1 each class will take part in the 'Active Break Challenge' where every class will complete an active break in class for a 4 week block starting on the 14th of November 2023. In term 2 the whole school will complete the 'Run Around Ireland' challenge daily for 4 weeks to improve running fitness levels. Finally as part of the ASF initiative, in term 3 the whole school will take part in an Active Schools Week.

As a school we have agreed to continue to focus on the Strand of Games for the 2023/2024 academic year. Teachers will complete professional development in this strand area. We also aim to provide as much external coaching for the children in the area of games where possible and available to the school. As of September 20th 2023, a dance coach will provide 30 minute dance lessons weekly for all classes Junior Infants - 6th for a period of 12 weeks. Junior classes will also benefit from GAA sessions with coaches from our local GAA club, Erin's Isle in October 2023.

Organisational Tips for PE

- Establish clear rules, routines and expectations for PE class.
- Establish a clear signal for drawing the pupils into a group for the purpose of direct instruction, and use this signal consistently.
- Structure lessons that foster success. Select inclusive activities that meet the needs of all pupils.
- Provide consistent encouragement, effective feedback and reinforcement.
- Take care to ensure maximum time for participation in physical activity within the lesson.
- Maximise participation by avoiding exclusion and knockout games.
- Avoid activities with long wait times. Consider setting up two of the same activity if space allows.
- Lessons should allow progression from initial work undertaken individually to work with a partner and work as a member of a small group.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to work in groups to enhance cooperation in preparation for the development of team play in games situations.
- Strike a balance between competitive and cooperative activities. The focus should be on participation.
- Small sided games and mini versions of games with modified rules are suitable for PE lessons.
- Encourage pupils to create their own games and modified activities.
- Consider availability of space, resources and support personnel when planning for grouping of pupils.
- Discuss opportunities to practise what is learned in PE beyond the classroom.
- Invite pupils that can exhibit good technique to showcase the skill for the rest of the class.
- Provide opportunities for the pupils to begin practising immediately after viewing a demonstration.
- When addressing the class, line pupils up along a wall or in a tight huddle. If the PE lesson is taking place outdoors, speak to the pupils with your back to the wind.
- Use a variety of teaching methods and approaches.
- Mix boys and girls.
- Vary the way groups are arranged and teams are picked (see suggestions below).

Code of Ethics

(Refer to school's Child Protection Policy based on the Department of Education and Science guidelines accompanying the 'Children First' guidelines).

- If coaches from a local or a national sporting organisation are invited into the school to work with the children as part of their PE class, they will be used to support the class teacher in the implementation of some of the PE curriculum strands in the school. They will not replace the class teacher and ultimate responsibility for the class lies with the class teacher. The class teacher will in turn support the coach on certain occasions when this will lead to maximum benefit for the children in the class.
- Any coaches working in the school context should undergo Garda Vetting and will be expected to adhere to the Code of Ethics of Irish Sport, produced by the Irish Sports Council. 'Adults interacting with children in sport (referred to as Sports Leaders in this Code) are in a position of trust and influence. They should always ensure that they treat children with integrity and respect and that the self-esteem of children is enhanced. All adult actions in sport should be guided by what is best for the child and

carried out in the context of respectful and open relationships. Verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse of any kind or threat of such abuse is totally unacceptable within sport, as in society in general.

- If there is a suspected case of child abuse in the class (even if it becomes apparent in the context of a PE class), all teachers will adhere to the Department of Education and Science Child Protection Guidelines to be used with the 'Children First Guidelines' (2011) produced for all personnel working with children.



After School Activities

After school football is organised in the school. Senior boys and girls can participate. All children of relevant age to the activities being offered will be invited to attend. These activities will adhere to the general principles of the P.E. curriculum of the school as follows:

- The importance of enjoyment and play
- Maximum participation by all children
- The development of skills and understanding
- A balance between competitive and non-competitive activities
- A balance between contact and non-contact activities
- Providing opportunities for achievement for each child
- Providing activities equally suitable for boys and girls.

PE Equipment and ICT (Refer to pp. 104-105 Teacher Guidelines)

- Our school has a detailed inventory of equipment and resources available for PE. This list is compiled by the post holder for PE and is checked and updated at the beginning and end of each school year.
- The equipment is stored in our PE store room in the school. Each teacher has the responsibility to ensure that all equipment is returned to the room after each lesson. Any breakages have to be reported to the post holder as soon as possible. The post holder will inspect the room once a month.
- The post holder in consultation with the Principal and the staff will have the responsibility to purchase the PE equipment for the school and to apply for equipment from different organisations who give free equipment to schools.
- The BOM, on the recommendation of the Principal (informed by the PE post-holder) will sanction a budget for updating PE equipment annually - subject to funds being available.

ICT (Refer to p. 101 Teacher Guidelines)

- The use of a camera/IPAD as a diagnostic tool for teacher is extremely valuable as children can view their own performances while still involved in a PE lesson. They can make immediate changes to the quality of their movements which in turn will enable them assess themselves in a more meaningful way. *For example, this is particularly true when investigating the theme of balance in the gymnastics strand.* Use will also be made of a digital video from time to time to enable children view their performance of certain activities in the PE classroom. The teachers will initiate discussion of same with the pupils and field any questions the child may have as to how the quality of their performance could be enhanced.
- All internet usage follows the strict guidelines laid down by the school in our Acceptable Usage Policy. This covers the use of appropriate software and the access to safe websites. Teachers will visit websites prior to children being referred to them and much of the websites will be visited by the teacher and shown to the children through a data projector.

Trauma-Aware Physical Activities and Games

While we move towards becoming more trauma-aware as a school, games and activities suited to children who may have experienced trauma, will be explored and researched by staff. These games will benefit all children in the classroom. Examples of these can be found at the end of this document from the book 'Trauma Through A Child's Eyes (Peter A Levine & Maggie Kline).

Health and Safety (*Refer to schools Health and Safety Policy*)

Issues identified as being health and safety issues in a PE context include warm-up at the start of all physical activity, practising in confined spaces, use of equipment, accidents, supervision, activities involving the whole school yard, procedures for dealing with accidents ...etc

It is important to acknowledge from the beginning that while the following procedures will eliminate unnecessary hazards they cannot remove all risks due to the physical nature of the subject. When engaging children in PE all members of staff will ensure that the following safety aspects will be taken into consideration

- All children have to wear suitable footwear and clothing during a PE lesson.
- The equipment used will be suitable in size, weight and design to the age, strength and ability of the child and be of good quality and in good repair.
- Children will be taught how to lift and carry all PE equipment safely.
- In all PE lessons, children will warm up and cool down. This develops good practice and the children will return to class relaxed after activity.
- Should an accident occur in the PE lesson we will follow the procedures outlined for other accidents in our Health and Safety policy.
- Best practice is safe practice and the teacher should ensure that the children understand that the rules and procedures are there for their safety.
- We will endeavour to have an appropriate surface for the activities in the PE lesson
- Children will not be forced to do activities they are not physically or psychologically ready for.

- The First Aid Kit is kept in a press in the staff room and is restocked regularly with items only recommended by First Aid personnel. Each teacher has a portable kit, available when children are participating in PE outside the school grounds. The medical conditions of all children are detailed by their parents/guardians on the school enrolment form. These are then transferred to a central file on our software system and teachers are made aware of any cases they need to be vigilant of. Their parents/guardians will be contacted in emergency situations and if necessary, their family doctor as outlined on the aforementioned enrolment form.

Covid 19 Considerations

All public health advice for Covid 19 will be taken into consideration, when planning PE activities and lessons, ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of all children. PE lessons will take place outdoors where possible. More non-contact activities will be researched and trialled where appropriate.

Individual Teachers' Planning and Reporting

The whole school plan and the curriculum documents for PE will lay out the structure and format that teachers will follow in addition to the aims and objectives of the primary school curriculum. While these documents are vital for planning, it is important that teachers do not rely on them exclusively as it is necessary to adapt the PE plan to your own class level and experience. It is vital that all teachers plan individually while at the same time ensuring that their class plans co-ordinate and feed into the overall school plan.

Teachers will plan based on the strands and the specific Fundamental Movement Skill as outlined in this plan.

The Cuntas Miosúil will be very relevant in reviewing and developing the school plan for the following years. Once the individual cuntas miosúil have been evaluated it should be obvious to the staff which elements of the curriculum were being implemented.

Staff Development

www.pcsp.ie, www.irishprimarype.com, www.activeschoolflag.ie and www.pdst.ie have definite links to the curriculum and PE in Ireland. An inventory of organisations can be found on the Active School website.

Parental Involvement

(Refer to Primary School Curriculum, Your child's learning, Guidelines for Parents)

We will ask all parents to support their children to participate in all strands of the PE curriculum. We will ask parents with recognised areas of expertise in the area of PE and/or sport to support us in our efforts if their talents will be of benefit.

Support for PE homework is also encouraged. 'Active Monday' homework was introduced in 2022 throughout the school.

Community Links

We are very much aware of the school's role in the community and we are also conscious of the fact that the expertise of people in the community is an invaluable resource to any school. We link with the community whenever possible. We will also make reference to famous sports people from our community and invite suitable people into the school to talk to the children as long as the content is in keeping with the sentiments of

the curriculum. If a local team or individual has had a notable victory, they will be invited in to the school to share the victory with the local children. Also when Dublin are playing in the football and/or hurling

Championship, we will hold a Dubs day in celebration where children will be encouraged to dress up in their county colours.

Ratification and Communication

The PE plan has been ratified by the Board of Management and parents can inspect the plan by request. This PE Policy was written in September 2023. It will be reviewed annually.

FOR THE LITTLE ONES: THE SLEEPING CROCODILES

This first game was taught to us by our colleague Eldbjörg Wedaa, who is the director of the Pinocchio Preschool in Bergen, Norway, a theatrical and musical school designed especially to help traumatized children have fun while learning to self-regulate. This game can be used with three- to seven-year-olds.

1. Divide the class into two groups: the crocodiles and the crocodile hunters. The crocodiles lie face down on a carpet pretending they are swimming or sunning themselves peacefully until they hear the hunters enter the "swamp" area.
2. The hunters are instructed to sneak up on the crocodiles, carefully stepping over them and scurrying about while the teacher plays music. The crocodiles now pretend they are sleeping. They are told to settle down, close their eyes, and get very quiet with calm breathing so they don't get "caught." When the music stops, the hunters tag any crocodile that moves even the slightest bit or opens its eyes.
3. The hunters change places with the sleeping crocodiles and play another round. Children who got "tagged" because they stirred, opened their eyes, or made noise do not trade places. They practice being "sleeping crocodiles" again. Those who have trouble settling can be coached to calm down by an adult or older student helper. (Gently place a warm hand on the student's back and breathe slowly and deeply, transmitting your calm presence to the child. Remind the child that it's time to settle down.)

SOMATIC EXPERIENCING® ACTIVITIES

The next set of activities was specifically designed for schoolchildren, using the principles of Somatic Experiencing®, by our Brazilian colleague Alexandre Duarte, who has an extensive background in physical education and various movement therapies. They are especially suitable for elementary schoolchildren; teachers are encouraged to adapt the games up or down in age suitability by increasing or decreasing their complexity. "The Parachute" activities below were used by Alé and our TOP (Trauma Outreach Program) team in Thailand after the 2004 tsunami. More classroom activities specifically used after that natural disaster (such as "Coyote/Tiger Chases Rabbit") can be found in Chapter Twelve, which focuses on disaster relief work in the schools. There are a variety of games that are suitable for either indoors or outdoors. Some are more suitable for outdoors due to space requirements for running, although any large indoor area with open space will work, such as a gymnasium, community room, etc.

THE PARACHUTE

Because the shape and size of a parachute brings children close together in a circle, it is a natural community builder. All that's required is a parachute and two or three lightweight balls that are two different colors. These activities can be used with five- to twelve-year-olds.

1. Lay parachute flat on the floor to delineate the space, and have children encircle the outer perimeter in a seated position. **Next**, have them make eye contact with each of their classmates and the adults who are strategically placed near the students who might need the most containment or support.

2. **Each** child grabs the edge of the parachute and pushes and pulls, with emphasis on feeling the tension of the parachute and the strength of their individual muscles and collective effort. Because they are still sitting, they can be instructed to notice the weight in their hips and buttocks as well as the strength in their upper arms as they pull. Make sure they are having fun!

3. Next, have them stand up and feel their feet and lower legs as they bend their knees to get a sense of their grounding and connection to the earth. With young children, you can have them stamp their feet and march in one direction as they hold on. With older children, have them bend their legs, lift the parachute, and make an elliptical movement with their arms like "stirring the pot."

4. Ask the children to notice the body sensations that they feel. Then, do a group check-in by asking, for example, "Who feels strong in their arms? Who feels strong in their legs? Who feels weak? Who feels tired?" and so forth.

5. Next, have the group (already standing up) make waves with the parachute. Instruct them to pay attention to feeling their strength. If some feel tired or weak, instruct them to feel the strength of the whole **group** together. As they flap the parachute, it activates their energy and level of excitement.

Note: At this point, not all children will be able to tolerate the pleasurable activation. If this is the case, the adults will need to help them recover their energy by resting and grounding, with attention put on their feet and lower limbs. For the children who feel weak, look spacey, or complain of fatigue, headache, or stomachache, adults or more able children will need to help them. This extra support can be given by making eye contact, showing empathy, and then gently but firmly pressing their feet against the floor using your hands. If the child has a tummy ache, have them place their own hand over the place that hurts. Place your hand on top of theirs, pressing lightly to give support and warmth to the internal organs as you wait for them to relax and soften.

6. Next, have **the** students make waves again, but this time **toss** one of the balls on top of the parachute. The children work together to keep the ball bouncing up and down without falling off. To make this activity more challenging, add a couple more balls, one at a time. It's kind of like the group is juggling together. Remember to have the students sit in a circle, recuperate, debrief by sharing sensations, and settle down.

PAST-PRESENT-FUTURE HOPSCOTCH

When children have been traumatized, there is little or no experience of the present or sense of the future. Images, thoughts, and sensations tend to be frozen in time from the past event. The child's world therefore can become preoccupied with worry and pain from the traumatic events, especially when they are under stress. This game is designed to help children overcome being stuck in the past and to begin to explore the concept of time in a way that restores movement. In this way they can be encouraged to sequence from the past into the present moment with a new idea of a possible future. Several hopscotch grids can easily be painted or drawn with chalk. Or, even easier, the children can just pretend that the grids are there.

The teacher has the children form several lines to make the waiting time shorter. The first student in each queue moves in "hopscotch" fashion (**alternating** between hopping on one and two feet). The game starts by having the children name an event as they hop. If the event is in present time, they hop and land on both feet. If the event they name reflects the past, they hop backwards on one foot. If the event is in the future, they hop forward on one foot. The idea is to keep thoughts and feelings moving, rather than be stuck in the past. Each student

has a turn to do the same.

Examples

Hopping in place on both feet: "I'm playing hopscotch now." Hopping backwards on one foot: "Last week my hamster died." Hopping in place on both feet: "I'm having fun now." Hopping forward on one foot: "We're having a party on Friday."

If a student states only unpleasant experiences on every turn, especially for the future, suggest that she alternate between pleasant and unpleasant future images. For example, a child whose parents are going through a divorce might say: "Today my parents are fighting-yesterday they were fighting-tomorrow they will still be fighting." Perhaps the next round, if she **is** still preoccupied with the divorce, the teacher might suggest something the child might like to do for fun. Only give this guidance when students are "stuck" in the past or see a grim future. Encourage them to imagine some things that might make them feel better if this does not happen spontaneously.

Balancing Activities That Restore

Protective Reflexes, Confidence, and Resilience In order for optimal learning to take place, it is essential that all children have the opportunity to freely explore their own body in space. When students have experienced trauma that involves encounters with gravitational forces and velocity, such as falls, vehicular accidents, and sporting injuries, they may have impaired access to their natural protective reflexes and balance. They are then more likely to sustain repeated injuries or be "accident-prone." Of course, children who have experienced early trauma and neglect may have poorly developed reflexes as well. Whether from developmental or shock trauma, students lacking agility or proficiency in self-defense may develop adaptive strategies that are fatiguing, rob self-confidence, and create a poor body image.

Although the primary need for healthy reflexes is self-protection, they are also necessary for brain integration. Students with undeveloped or "frozen" reflexes are more susceptible to learning problems, especially with reading and writing.

Activities that improve balance and motion have a significant effect on visual processing and academics.

BEAN BAG BALANCING

Using a balancing device, such as the Belgau balance board sold by Bala-metrics,³⁶ stand on the board adjusting your balance until you feel steady. The Belgau's level of difficulty can be changed by adjusting the angles of the rockers under the board. With other balance equipment, or with the Belgau, a child can adjust the difficulty also by experimenting with the width of their stance.

Once the child feels confident that she can keep moving slightly to keep the board balanced, increase the challenge and add the skill set of visual tracking by introducing the bean bag toss. Instruct the student to throw the bean bag up in the air with both hands, trying to make both sides of the body move symmetrically while balancing on the board. This activity is designed to develop

dynamic balance and to integrate both sides of the brain. Both the right and left hand and arm need to perform the same motions.

Next, instruct the student to throw and catch the bean bag with the left hand for several minutes; then reverse the activity, throwing and catching the bean bag with the right hand for several minutes. Finally, the student should throw and catch the bean bag with both hands again. As children throw and catch the bean bag, they should try to point **the** tip of their nose at the bean bag as it moves through space.. Instruct them to let their head rock back and forth as they throw, follow, and catch the bean bag. The neck muscles, the visual system, and the vestibular system will get practice in working in synchrony.

BALL BUDDIES

This is a simple activity to improve both coordination and social skills for very young children or **for** developmentally challenged students of any age, such as those with pervasive developmental delays (autism, for example). All that's needed is a ball to roll and a pair of students seated on the floor facing each other about three feet apart (or closer if this is too difficult). The children are instructed to spread their legs open to catch the ball as it is rolled toward them. Each child takes a turn to roll and catch, continuing the game back and forth. As their coordination improves, adjust the challenge level by having the children move further apart. Encourage them to look at their partner to make sure that they are ready to catch the ball. This game usually results in lots of glee and laughter as it aids children in learning non-verbal communication skills, as well as shared joy.

Variation

Have older children pair with younger children to learn pacing and patience. Have regular education students pair with special education students.

SIMPLE EXERCISES TO IMPROVE BALANCE REFLEXES

ROLL-AROUND

Using a fitness (gym) ball appropriate to the size of the student, have **the** child kneel down in front of the ball and lean his or her entire torso over the ball with tummy facing down and arms hanging over the ball. Other students form a circle around the child and act as spotters to help him or her regain balance, if necessary. The teacher places a firm hand on the child's back and gently pushes the child forward on the ball, meanwhile observing how the child protects himself from falling or rolling off the ball. Look for how the child makes use of shoulders, arms, hands, torso, hips, legs, and feet to assist. Continue with several turns until the child begins to involve more of her body in a relaxed but alert manner. Watch for places in the body that are stiff or frozen. After a few turns if the child is still unaware of certain parts of the body (for example, she doesn't involve her shoulders), the teacher can suggest exploring what it feels like to engage the shoulders. Usually, this step is not necessary unless the reflexes are exceptionally frozen. As students become more relaxed, they spontaneously use their body more efficiently.

PUSH ME AROUND

Again using a fitness ball, have the child sit upright on the ball with feet spread shoulder-width apart for good stability. Have **one** student on each side of the child and **lots** of pillows **or** soft rubber mats on the floor. One student *very gently* pushes (more like a tap) the child toward the

student guarding the other side. The other student "catches" the child if he isn't able to balance himself. This goes back and forth until the student is balancing easily. If the child gets dizzy or uncomfortable in any way, stop and track sensations until the child feels settled.

ROLLER BALL

A simple game that can be played by three or more kids (four to ten years of age) has each participant roll a ball toward one of the other children. (It can be asked that the "roller" call out the name of the child that he is rolling the ball to. This is an excellent way to combine motor and cognitive functions.) As the kids do this for a while, a second ball is introduced, requiring more coordination and flexible orientation. It also builds up the level of excitement. This can be done with three or more balls, but it is necessary to ensure that the kids are not being overstimulated.