



Department *of* Education

Report on Physical Education in Secondary Schools

eti

*The Education and Training
Inspectorate*

Inspected: 1998-99





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A number of quantitative terms are used in the report to comment on aspects of provision in percentages, the terms correspond as follows:-

| | | |
|---------------|---|--------------------------|
| More than 90% | - | almost/nearly all |
| 75%-90% | - | most |
| 50%-74% | - | a majority |
| 30%-49% | - | a significant minority |
| 10%-29% | - | a minority |
| Less than 10% | - | very few/a small number. |

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In March 1996, the Health Promotion Agency published the Northern Ireland Physical Activity Strategy 1996-2002. In response to the strategy and following extensive consultation, the Northern Ireland Physical Activity Strategy Implementation Group agreed an action plan with approximately 70 organisations including the then Department for Education for Northern Ireland (DENI). As one of the key areas, the action plan states that a survey of physical education (PE) should be undertaken, with a view to: identifying and disseminating good practice; encouraging schools to use the additional flexibility in the school timetable to offer at least two hours of PE a week and promoting health-related physical education (HRPE) as part of the PE programme of study (PoS) of the Northern Ireland Curriculum (NIC).

1.2 This report summarises the findings from inspections of PE in 37 post-primary schools during the period September 1998 to June 1999. The schools visited are listed in Appendix 1. The visits focused on teaching and learning, and the standards of performance and understanding of the pupils; in particular, attention was given to the teaching approaches used to encourage and develop the planning, performing and evaluating skills of the pupils during PE. The report includes illustrations of good practice which were observed during visits to schools. These illustrations are highlighted throughout the report and are intended to be used by head teachers, teachers and lecturers, members of the curriculum and advisory support staff (CASS) of the education and library boards, and all those interested in, or responsible for, PE in post-primary schools.

2. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

2.1 In most of the schools included in the survey, the teachers and members of senior management value highly the contribution of PE to the curriculum. (3.1)

2.2 The relationships between the pupils and the teachers are good and often excellent; in most lessons the pupils are motivated and enthusiastic about participating. (3.2)

2.3 The pupils respond well when the work is enjoyable and challenging, and the teachers set and expect high standards of behaviour. (4.1)

2.4 In the majority of the schools, HRPE is well-integrated into the programme, the pupils are developing an awareness of health-related activities and recognise the benefits of exercise. (4.1.3)

2.5 In key stage 3 (KS3), the majority of the pupils perform at a satisfactory level in games and show good understanding of the rules; the more skilful pupils progress to good standards in a range of games. (4.1.4)

2.6 In gymnastics and dance, the pupils in KS3 perform to good standards in only a minority of lessons. (4.1.5, 4.1.6)



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2.7 The standards of the pupils' performances in KS4 are generally satisfactory. In games and athletics, the skills of the most proficient pupils are usually well developed, and their standards are good or excellent. (4.1.7)

2.8 Specialist and non-specialist teachers continue to devote substantial amounts of time before school, at lunchtimes, after school and at weekends to provide extra-curricular activities; the provision of extra-curricular activities, however, ranges from poor to good, but is generally satisfactory. Only a minority of schools offer a broad range of activities. (4.1.9, 4.1.10)

2.9 The quality of teaching was excellent in 20% of the lessons and good to satisfactory in about 50% of the lessons observed during the survey. The best practice was characterised by good organisation, clear learning outcomes, an appropriate range of learning experiences for the pupils, maintenance of good pace and effective use of the available teaching time. (4.2.1)

2.10 Nearly all PE teachers assess the pupils in PE. Only a minority are using the appropriate level descriptions, or using information gained from assessment to inform the learning outcomes in their schemes of work. (4.3.1)

2.11 The planning for PE is satisfactory or better in a majority of schools, but in the remainder, it is poor. (4.4.1)

2.12 In a significant number of schools the broadening of the programme in years 8-10 has resulted in too many activities being offered in short unrelated units of work with fewer opportunities for pupils to develop competences in specific activities; insufficient attention is given to gymnastics and dance. (4.4.3, 4.4.4)

2.13 A significant minority of PE teachers have begun to evaluate their teaching approaches and to involve pupils increasingly in their own learning. (5.1.1)

2.14 Heads of department are the most important influence on the quality of PE provision in a school; in addition, the quality of teaching and learning are affected significantly by the support given by principals to the subject. (5.2.1)

2.15 Only a minority of the schools visited allocate two hours a week to PE. For the majority of schools, the allocation is inadequate to cover fully the programme of study. (5.3.1)

2.16 Through the Youth Sport Initiative, about a third of the schools are developing links with their local primary schools, and a significant minority of schools report that young people increasingly are participating in sport where there are clubs in their local communities. (5.4.1)

2.17 Just under a third of the schools visited have poor indoor and outdoor facilities for PE, and in a fifth of the schools, the outdoor facilities are poor. (5.5.1)

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3. ETHOS

3.1 In most schools, the teachers and members of senior management value highly the place of PE in the curriculum; the teachers act as good role models, promote involvement in sport in and out of school, and work with outside agencies for the benefit of their pupils.

3.2 The relationships between the pupils and the teachers are good, and often excellent. In most lessons, the pupils are motivated and enthusiastic about participating. In a significant minority of the schools, PE departments have targets and work hard to find strategies and solutions to overcome problems, such as falling levels of participation, especially with senior pupils.

3.3 In the majority of schools the extra-curricular provision complements and sometimes extends the PE programme, and contributes to a positive ethos within the school. The pupils have opportunities to extend their learning, gain self esteem and develop a group and school identity, while meeting and competing with pupils from within their own or other schools.

4. TEACHING AND LEARNING

4.1 The Pupils' Responses

4.1.1 In almost all lessons, the pupils respond enthusiastically when the work is enjoyable and challenging, and the teachers set and expect high standards of behaviour. In these lessons, the pupils act responsibly when given opportunities to work with a partner, or in groups.

4.1.2 The majority of pupils at both key stages understand the importance of warming up before vigorous activity. They are able to identify muscle groups and explain suitable methods of stretching before an activity. Too often, however, the warm-up activities take up too much time in a short lesson, are taught in isolation, and are not an integral part of the lesson. In the best practice, the warm-up activities relate to the remainder of the lesson; the pupils are asked questions about muscle groups and the changes taking place in their bodies as they exercise. In lessons in a significant minority of schools, different pupils are selected each week to plan and lead the warm-up activities. Through these experiences they develop their understanding of health-related activities and their confidence in working with the other members of their class.

4.1.3 In a majority of the schools, HRPE is well integrated into the PE programme. As a result, the senior pupils are aware of the benefits of exercise and can develop their own fitness or training programmes. For example, in about half of the schools, the senior girls participate in and plan aerobic dance routines, and can use fitness equipment safely to increase their own levels of fitness. Senior boys in almost all of the schools also understand the relationship of exercise to a healthy lifestyle and can, on occasions, develop fitness programmes which help them in their own particular sports.



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4.1.4 In the vast majority of schools, games have the largest allocation of PE time; accordingly, the pupils have more opportunities to develop their games skills. The high expectations and expertise of most of the teachers encourage the pupils to practise and perform the skills accurately and consistently before they are applied in a large or small game. The majority of the pupils perform at a satisfactory level and show a good understanding of the rules. In contrast, in a significant minority of the lessons, the teachers do not give enough support and encouragement to the weaker pupils; thus the basic skills of these pupils do not improve, especially in large-sided games practices. In all schools, the more skilful pupils in KS3 progress to good standards in games such as badminton, basketball, Gaelic football, hockey, hurling, netball and rugby.

4.1.5 In gymnastics, the pupils in KS3 perform to good standards in only a minority of lessons. Insufficient attention and time are given to this aspect of PE. Too many gymnastics lessons are unimaginative and skills-based, and the pupils have too few opportunities to explore and practise basic body management on a range of apparatus. Few pupils are able to progress confidently to more challenging tasks, and the majority of pupils lose interest. As a result, few schools, especially boys' PE departments, offer gymnastics in year 10 or KS4.

4.1.6 In dance, the pupils progress satisfactorily when the teachers are well prepared and have a clear understanding of the standards required in national and creative dance. In the majority of lessons, however, the teachers' expectations are too low and they are unable to support the pupils with effective advice to improve their performances. As a result, in these lessons the standards of the pupils' performances are poor. In the best practice, which was evident in only a minority of lessons, the work is well planned and presented and the pupils are motivated by the tasks set. They have opportunities to develop their own movements from clearly structured tasks, to work in pairs and groups, and to demonstrate their developing movement vocabulary.

4.1.7 The standards of the pupils' performances in KS4 are generally satisfactory. In games and athletics, the skills of the most proficient pupils are usually well developed and the standards are good or excellent; many of these pupils achieve provincial and national honours. In contrast, the skills of the less proficient pupils are often under-developed because, with the intention of maintaining interest, the activities are changed too frequently and insufficient attention is given to helping these pupils make appropriate progress. It is a challenge for even the most experienced and skilful teachers to balance the need to provide variety in learning with the opportunity for pupils to develop competences in specific activities. In over half of the schools, the girls perform to good standards when given opportunities to participate in non-team activities such as aerobic dance, badminton and trampolining. Similarly, when the boys' programmes are developed to include more individual activities, there is an improvement in their interest, involvement and standards, particularly among boys who are less likely to play for school teams. Most pupils enjoy the range of activities offered at KS4 and have a good understanding of the recreational opportunities available in their local area; many train and play for local teams.

4.1.8 Sixteen of the 37 schools visited enter pupils for GCSE PE examinations. The examination results in these schools over the last three years range from 78.9% to 100% at grades A*-E, and 27.6% to 82.3% at grades A*-C. The results of most of the schools visited are above the Northern Ireland average for PE at grades A*-E and A*-C. The standard of the practical work is mostly good; the pupils are motivated to achieve high standards and they show a sound

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understanding of the principles of fitness training; they can observe accurately particular techniques associated with individual and group activities. The quality of the pupils' written work is generally satisfactory and sometimes good. Five of the schools visited offer GCE 'A' level programmes in Sports Studies. The pupils are provided with a good range of learning experiences in the practical and theoretical aspects of sports studies. These programmes prepare the pupils well for higher level courses.

4.1.9 Specialist and non-specialist teachers continue to devote substantial amounts of time before school, at lunchtimes, after school and at weekends to provide extra-curricular activities. The extra-curricular provision is varied and in the main, the range is limited. Only a minority of schools, usually grammar schools, offer a broad range of activities. A majority of schools generally offer a range of games and athletics usually directed towards competitions, either within the school, or with other schools. The range and breadth of extra-curricular programmes depend, generally, on the expertise and the time available to specialist teachers, the willingness of other teachers to help with the programme, and the value placed on extra-curricular involvement by the Board of Governors and principal of the school.

4.1.10 Extra-curricular programmes are often restricted in rural schools because of the inflexibility of transport arrangements at the end of the school day and, in girls' PE departments, because of lack of support from other teachers. A considerable number of non-specialist staff have gained coaching qualifications to enable them to provide high quality coaching which enables pupils to benefit from this important aspect of school life; a few schools, which identify extra-curricular involvement as a high priority, also pay for specialist coaches to come to the school to provide after-school coaching.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF GOOD RESPONSES BY PUPILS DURING LESSONS

A high level of success was attained in a rugby lesson when the teacher used known activities in the warm-up to help the pupils refine their skills further. They practised new skills and the teacher identified a small number of coaching points which were consolidated throughout the lesson. He encouraged the pupils to try to use these skills and gave extra points during the game when the pupils demonstrated understanding. The lesson was well paced, and the teacher left enough time to discuss why some pupils had been given extra points and the progress made by the whole class.

Pupils in a year 8 gymnastics lesson demonstrated appropriate stretching exercises for particular muscle groups during the warm-up. They showed understanding of the tasks set and planned what they had to do; they demonstrated their knowledge and understanding of technical terms such as speed and levels, and could add other elements to their gymnastic sequences when asked by their teacher. The majority of the pupils could decide which section of their sequence required improving; they were aware of safety and could bring out and put away the apparatus quickly and effectively.



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In a dance lesson with a large group of year 9 boys, the teacher provided a wide range of movement ideas gathered both from the pupils, and his own experience. Using these ideas, the class worked in two groups to develop short pieces of energetic dance which demonstrated their understanding of levels and space; each group was able to perform confidently in front of the other group. The teacher gave specific criteria for evaluation which helped to develop the pupils' observation skills. On completion of the tasks, the groups were given suggestions as to how they could improve their performances.

In a practical lesson, the levels of fitness of the GCSE pupils were assessed and the pupils were required to develop their own individual programmes to help them improve and to reduce any identified weaknesses. This work was complemented in the classroom where the pupils made spoken presentations on fitness, drawing from their lesson notes, and from researching textbooks. The standards of the individual presentations were good and the pupils responded confidently to questions asked by the other pupils. The marking of homeworks and short assignments was thorough and provided detailed feedback on how the pupils could improve further.

4.2 Teaching Approaches

4.2.1 During the survey the quality of teaching was excellent in 20% and good to satisfactory in about 50% of the lessons seen. In the remainder of lessons, weaknesses outweighed strengths and in about 4% the teaching was poor. The best practice was characterised by good organisation, clear learning outcomes, an appropriate range of learning experiences for the pupils, maintenance of good pace and effective use of the available teaching time.

4.2.2 In about half of the lessons seen, the teachers use an appropriate range of teaching styles. However, in games, much of the teaching is strongly teacher directed, whereas in gymnastics and dance greater scope is provided for the pupils to use their initiative. The use of open-ended questioning is varied; teachers often use questioning to assess the pupils' recall of facts, but rarely to assess the pupils' understanding, or their ability to apply what has been taught in a range of situations. In the best practice, the pupils are questioned about the options available to them and given time to practise and refine their skills; they are given the criteria by which to judge their partner's performance, or the performance of another group. In contrast, pupils often spend too much time and have a poor learning experience when, as a whole class, they watch individual performances but have not been told what to look for, and thus cannot make informed judgements.

4.2.3 The practical elements of the GCSE course are generally taught well; the pupils can demonstrate their practical competence in the chosen activities, and can analyse and improve aspects of their own and others' performance. In a minority of schools offering GCSE, the teaching of the theoretical aspects of the examination is poor. The expectations of the teachers are too low; the teachers provide insufficient opportunities for the pupils to develop independent learning skills and either the teacher prepares the learning material, or the pupils copy from the

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text book. In the best practice seen, the pupils can research, discuss and report issues, and take personal notes. In a few schools, good use of video material and structured questioning helps to develop the pupils' observation and evaluation skills.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF GOOD PRACTICE IN TEACHING

The specialist teacher had identified clear learning outcomes and used a good range of teaching approaches throughout the basketball lesson. Part of the warm-up involved a practical ball handling activity which was developed throughout the lesson. The pupils worked individually and then in small groups. The teacher asked open-ended questions and expected and received extended answers from the pupils about aspects of their play. During the small-sided games, the pupils were given specific skills to look for, and used a scoring system to evaluate their performances. The teacher paced the lesson well, gave feedback to the pupils, who, at the end, were able to demonstrate and talk about what they had learnt.

The tasks set in the gymnastics lesson ensured that all the pupils in year 9 could succeed and produce work in keeping with their ability. The lesson was well planned and organised, planning for safety was thorough, apparatus was varied and progression was obvious in teaching and learning. The teacher gave clear instructions, and within a firm lesson structure, the pupils had opportunities to be creative and to make choices about their own work. Technical advice and creative suggestions were provided throughout the lesson. The pupils were given time to practise, and good questioning helped them to evaluate their own and the other pupils' performances. At the end of the lesson the pupils were informed of their progress, praised and told what would follow in the next lesson.

In an athletics lesson on high jumping, the teacher was well prepared and the year 8 pupils participated in a fun warm-up which raised their heart rates. The pupils stopped beside number cards which were placed around the designated area, and when different numbers were called out they demonstrated a stretching exercise and were given feedback by the teacher. During the lesson the pupils were given opportunities to practise on their own, to observe others in their group, and to analyse and recognise good performances. These observation skills helped to develop the pupils' knowledge and understanding, and to evaluate their own performances. The teacher timed the lesson well so that he was able to give positive feedback to individual pupils, and to the class as a whole, and to motivate the pupils for the next lesson.

In a GCSE badminton lesson, the introductory activities included a warm-up, led by one of the pupils, and practical demonstrations by the teacher and pupils. This was followed by the pupils practising a range of shots and commenting on the variation of their partner's shots. The pupils had developed good observation skills and were confident in evaluating each other's performances. In the game, the pupils were able to use a good range of shots to outwit their opponents. The teacher used effectively a video tape for assessment and also, in class, to examine the personal performances of the pupils. The pupils were able to talk knowledgeably and apply their theoretical understanding in a practical situation.



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4.3 The Teachers' Assessment of the Pupils' Work

4.3.1 Nearly all physical education teachers have some form of assessment and recording which enables them to report to pupils and their parents. In most instances, the teachers know the abilities of their pupils in the various activities and record these on pupil profiles; a small number of teachers use computer-generated reports from banks of statements. Only a minority of schools, however, are using the appropriate level descriptions in the PoS of the NIC as criteria for assessment, pupil evaluation as part of summative assessment, or use information from assessment to influence the learning outcomes set out in their schemes of work. A majority of schools have internal certification for pupils who have achieved success at class or school level, and these are included in the pupil's Record of Achievement (ROA).

ILLUSTRATIONS OF GOOD PRACTICE IN ASSESSMENT

One school has identified specific criteria for each activity which are consistent with the level descriptions. At the end of a unit of work, the teachers observe classes other than their own and moderate their assessments for a particular year group. These assessments are used to inform the pupils of their progress, and for future planning and teaching.

At the end of a unit of work, the teachers set tasks for the pupils which take into account the attainment target of planning, performing and evaluating. The teachers "score" the pupils' work from 1-10. The criteria are written into the planning and the pupils are made aware of them. Sometimes self- and peer-assessment are part of the summative assessment score. This approach to assessment helps to inform future planning and teaching.

For assessment at the end of a unit of work in gymnastics, a group of year 10 boys planned, as homework, a sequence of floor activities. During the lesson, they chose and practised a vaulting activity, and then performed both the floorwork sequence and the vaulting activity. The teacher had chosen the tasks carefully and the pupils knew the assessment criteria. The teacher made good of the whiteboard in the gymnasium to give ideas to the pupils which, in turn, helped them to identify the constituents of good quality sequences in gymnastics.

4.4 Planning

4.4.1 The majority of schools have satisfactory or better planning in place for PE. In the best practice, the planning in the units of work and lesson plans indicates clear learning outcomes including, for example, the development of observation and evaluative skills, aspects of HRPE, specific content and teaching approaches. The planning of the programmes in the remainder of the schools is poor. Insufficient emphasis is given to defining opportunities for the assessment of the expected learning outcomes, and to developing a progressive programme for HRPE. More specifically, the planning for gymnastics for boys is poor in most schools.

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4.4.2 In two schools, the PE teachers have contributed successfully the whole-school commitment to language development. Wordbanks for each activity are displayed in the PE area and the teachers use the words during lessons; this approach has had a positive effect on the development of the pupils' language within lessons, especially those taking GCSE. Another school displays posters relating to the various activities on the programme, and to the words which are used for specific activities during lessons.

4.4.3 In a significant number of schools too many activities are offered in short, unrelated units of work. For example, fitness testing of each year group and separate units on HRPE reduce the time available for other aspects of the programme of study, a widening of the range of games programmed in year 10 further reduces the time available. In a significant minority of schools, HRPE is integrated effectively in all areas of the programme in KS3.

4.4.4 In a majority of schools, insufficient attention is given to gymnastics and dance; the units are too short to enable appropriate progression to take place and the planning is insufficiently detailed to provide challenging experiences for the pupils, or to raise their standards of performance.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF GOOD PRACTICE IN PLANNING

In the best practice, the teachers in the PE department have detailed and agreed lesson plans for boys and girls, which are evaluated and up-dated regularly. The assessment processes are linked to the learning outcomes for each of the units of work. This good practice also ensures that all of the pupils have a broadly similar range of learning experiences across all the activities on the programme.

5. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

5.1 Evaluation of Teaching and Learning

5.1.1 The majority of teachers do not use information gained from an assessment of the pupils' work when evaluating teaching and learning in PE. For the most part, evaluation consists of reviewing the activities provided, the use of facilities and the deployment of non-specialist teachers. However, a significant minority of PE teachers have begun to evaluate their teaching approaches, to consider how the pupils may become more involved in their own learning, and to encourage the development of language within lessons.

5.2 Staff Development and Deployment

5.2.1 In a significant minority of schools subject-related in-service training (INSET) has resulted in improvements in the planning, and teaching and learning of health-related PE. More support is required to bring about similar improvements in the teaching and learning in areas of the PoS such as dance and gymnastics. Participation in appropriate INSET has enabled heads of



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department to discuss subject specific issues and to examine their roles. In a few schools, a small number of non-specialist teachers who teach PE regularly, have obtained coaching awards, and this expertise has led to an improvement in the quality of the pupils' learning.

5.2.2 Almost all PE departments have well qualified teachers who are enthusiastic, knowledgeable and fully committed. Heads of department are the most important influence on the quality of PE provision. The highest standards of pupils' work are found in schools where the head of department has high expectations of pupils and teachers, and, by example, promotes good planning, teaching and learning, and carries through a rigorous and regular review of the programme. Poor standards of work are often associated with inappropriate deployment of non-specialist teachers, many of whom are allocated to the PE department on an irregular basis. For example, in most grammar schools, non-specialist teachers are deployed for up to 50% of the programme. Often these teachers work with the pupils who show little proficiency in PE. This arrangement results in a limited programme for these pupils and contributes to their low standards of achievement. The work of these teachers needs to be monitored closely by the head of department, and support provided for them, either within the school, or through external courses.

5.3 Organisation of the Curriculum

5.3.1 Less than one-third of the schools visited allocate two hours a week to PE. Almost half of these schools are grammar schools. One-third of the schools allocate 1.5 hours and the remainder a minimal time of approximately one hour. For the majority of schools, the allocation is inadequate to cover the areas of activity contained in the PoS for PE.

5.3.2 A few schools offer a rotational enrichment programme which is often a recreational activity taught by a non-specialist. These programmes are usually short blocks of activities which, although useful experiences, do not build on the pupils' previous experiences in PE or allow for progression; they are not a replacement for a planned PE programme.

5.3.3 Provision for pupils in sixth form varies. In the best practice, there is time-tabled provision which enables the pupils to participate in a variety of activities to develop their skills in a range of activities, or to take responsibility for their own levels of fitness and to become aware of enjoyable activity as part of a healthy lifestyle.

5.3.4 The range and quality of the pupils' learning experiences in PE are affected significantly by the support given to the subject by principals. Most principals acknowledge and value the contribution made to the school by PE and put structures in place to facilitate the curriculum and extra-curricular programmes. For example, a small number of schools avoid using the assembly hall and gymnasium for other school activities and thus ensure that the facilities are available for PE for most of the school year. A majority allocate funds for the use of local facilities to extend the PE programme, and a few also provide transport for pupils who stay after school for extra-curricular activities.



ILLUSTRATIONS OF GOOD PRACTICE IN SUPPORTING EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Because the school population comes from a wide rural catchment area, a range of after-school activities such as choir, homework club, netball and dance clubs are held on the same day. To facilitate participation, the school ensures that a bus is available to take the pupils home. As a result of these arrangements, the school reports that participation in after-school activities has increased significantly.

5.4 The Development of Links between the School and the Community

5.4.1 Through the Youth Sport Initiative, about a third of the schools are developing links with their local primary schools. The Youth Sport Co-ordinators in post-primary schools have facilitated coaching sessions for primary school children and, in almost all instances, some provision for extra-curricular activities has resulted for their own pupils. Activities such as badminton, basketball, dance, football, netball, gymnastics and trampolining have been offered for a number of sessions to extend the extra-curricular provision within the school. It is reported by a few post-primary schools, that the extra support given to the primary children has raised the skill levels of the pupils entering year 8. A small number of schools have also developed links with governing bodies of sport to provide support for the teachers during games lessons in rugby, basketball and Gaelic football. An increasing number of schools encourage their pupils to join local sports clubs to develop their skills further. A significant minority of schools report that more young people are participating in sport through clubs in their local communities.

5.5 Accommodation and Resources

5.5.1 Just under a third of the schools visited have poor indoor and outdoor facilities for PE. The implementation of the PoS is constrained greatly by the lack of adequate indoor facilities in six of the schools. In the other schools, there is a growing and regular use of the assembly hall and gymnasium for other school activities such as school productions, KS3 examinations and parents' meetings, with the result that the continuity of the programme is greatly impaired. In over 20% of schools, there are either insufficient outdoor facilities or the playing areas are in need of extensive maintenance. These deficiencies also restrict the range of activities which can be offered on site. Although costly, schools make very good use of local facilities to provide progressive and varied programmes especially for senior pupils.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 This report confirms the good relationships and generally enthusiastic responses of pupils in PE. It also identifies areas of good practice in teaching and learning, standards of performance and planning. The report shows also that good provision and standards are related to the knowledge, leadership and commitment of heads of department, who regularly monitor and review planning and teaching, and to the interest and support of principals and boards of governors.



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6.2 There are areas of concern: HRPE is not well developed in just under half of the schools and fewer than one-third of the schools offer at least two hours of PE a week. These deficiencies have a direct influence on the quality of the pupils' learning experiences, their standards of work and knowledge and understanding in PE.

6.3 Many teachers commit a great deal of time to provide extra-curricular opportunities for their pupils, and there is evidence that a majority of schools are working successfully with local sports clubs to extend the pupils' experiences and ensure participation after they leave school. Through the Youth Sport Initiative, about one-third of the schools offer coaching opportunities for primary school pupils and some extra-curricular provision for the pupils in their own school. This initiative has raised the profile and scope of sport in the primary schools involved, and the range and breadth of extra-curricular provision in a few post-primary schools.



PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

To improve the quality of provision and raise standards further the following action needs to be taken:

- sufficient time should be allocated to PE each week for all pupils;
- enough time should be allocated to all areas of the programme of study to ensure sufficient progression in each area;
- the information gained from assessment of the pupils' work should be used effectively in the evaluation of teaching and learning;
- a range of teaching approaches should be developed to support and encourage those pupils who show little proficiency in PE;
- more specific planning is needed to identify clear learning outcomes for each lesson, and to ensure consistency in all areas of the programme, and within individual PE departments;
- a planned and progressive programme for HRPE is needed for all pupils in order for them to understand the importance of regular physical activity in a healthy lifestyle;
- there is a need to provide more support for teachers of PE in order to strengthen the quality of teaching and learning in the areas of dance and gymnastics;
- a consistent approach is required in schools to provide support for the professional development of non-specialist teachers who assist with curricular and extra-curricular PE programmes in order to improve the quality of provision for the pupils they teach;
- where possible broader extra-curricular programmes should be developed through the Youth Sport initiative and other community-based agencies in order to increase participation of young people in sport;

The ideas and examples in this report are offered to inform practice, to support self-evaluation in schools and prompt professional debate and development in physical education in post-primary schools throughout Northern Ireland.



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Appendix 1

SCHOOLS VISITED 1 SEPTEMBER 1998 to 30 JUNE 1999

Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School, Belfast
Antrim Grammar School
Ashfield Girls' School, Belfast
Ashfield Boys' School, Belfast
Ballyclare Secondary School
Belfast Model School for Girls
Brownlow College, Craigavon
Cambridge House Grammar School for Girls, Ballymena
Christian Brothers' Grammar School, Omagh
Clondermot High School, Londonderry*
Coleraine Girls' Secondary School
Convent Grammar School, Mount Lourdes, Enniskillen
Convent Grammar School, Strabane
Donaghadee High School*
Down Academy
Down High School
Dunmurry High School*
Faughanvalley High School
Limavady Grammar School
Little Flower Girls' School, Belfast
Lisnagarvey High School*
Lumen Christi College, Londonderry
Portadown College
Priory College, Holywood
St Breacan's High School, Londonderry
St Cecilia's College, Londonderry
St Columb's College, Londonderry
St Colman's High School, Ballynahinch
St Malachy's High School, Castlewellan
St Mary's High School, Downpatrick
St Mary's Grammar School, Magherafelt*
St Paul's Junior High School, Lurgan*
St Patrick's Girls' Academy, Dungannon*
St Patrick's College, Belfast*
St Patrick's High School, Lisburn*
Shimna Integrated College, Newcastle*
The High School, Ballynahinch

* Schools which had an inspection between 1 September 1998 and 30 June 1999.



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