

COVID-19: Return to educational establishments

Physical Education Guidelines

Version 7.0

Published 2 November 2020

| Version | Date | Summary of changes |
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| V 1.0 | 05/08/20 | First version of the document. |
| V 2.0 | 07/09/20 | Various updates for clarification. |
| V 3.0 | 14/09/20 | Revised date for the re-introduction of indoor physical education. |
| V 4.0 | 21/09/20 | One update for clarification. The revised text is highlighted in yellow. |
| V 5.0 | 05/10/20 | One update for clarification. The revised text is highlighted in yellow. |
| V 6.0 | 30/10/20 | The revised text is highlighted in yellow. |
| V 7.0 | 02/11/20 | Various updates in line with Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance on reducing the risks from COVID-19 in schools document (30 October 2020). The revised text is highlighted in yellow. |

Contents

| | |
|---|----------|
| 1. Overview and purpose | 2 |
| 2. How to use these guidelines..... | 2 |
| 3. Key Messages from the COVID-19 Sub-advisory Group | 2 |
| 4. Practical Considerations..... | 3 |
| 5. Risk assessment..... | 7 |
| 6. Physical Activity and Sport..... | 7 |
| 7. Conclusion | 8 |
| 8. Appendix | 8 |

1. Overview and purpose

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020](#), Para 136 states: 'Practical, "hands-on" learning and activities, experiments and investigations are an important part of the curriculum across all subject areas'. This document focusses on the practical, experiential nature of learning in, through and about physical education.

Physical Education provides a critical learning opportunity for children and young people as they re-connect and adapt to the new learning environments in schools.

The practical and interactive nature of the subject will lend itself well to supporting nurturing conversations with learners following the period of school closure. This document will assist teachers and school leaders with risk assessment and decision making, leading to the provision of learning through Physical Education in a safe and carefully considered way.

2. How to use these guidelines

This document reflects the latest scientific evidence and advice and the significant progress that Scotland has made in suppressing the virus. A risk-benefit approach to decision making can be helpful while understanding that no risk can be reduced to zero.

This document is designed to promote a consistent and equitable approach against the context of the current pandemic. Local authorities and schools will understand best how these guidelines can be applied in their settings. They should do so in a way that prioritises the health, safety and wellbeing of all children, young people and staff, and ensure that the risk mitigation measures set out in this document are implemented effectively. It has been written to stimulate conversations on how Physical Education can be safely and effectively delivered. It recognises the pedagogical expertise and leadership of primary teachers, teachers in special schools and secondary physical education teachers.

3. Key Messages from the COVID-19 Sub-advisory Group¹

Considering the changed position on infection and transmission rates, the evidence and experience of school re-opening between August and October 2020, and recent scientific evidence, the sub-group has concluded that its advice on indoor physical education should remain broadly in line with advice in the community going forwards, in order to ensure consistency and better support compliance.

From 2 November 2020, if staff complete risk assessments that reflect the most current advice (all risk assessments should be proportionate to the

¹ This advice is current on this date. The advice is reviewed periodically and may change as evidence is published and more about the virus is understood.

relevant protection level of the local area), and mitigations are in place, physical education can take place both indoors and outdoors as follows:

Levels 0-3

| | Indoors | Outdoors |
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| Primary | Children can participate in contact and non-contact activities. | Children can participate in contact and non-contact activities. |

| | Indoors | Outdoors |
|------------------|---|---|
| Secondary | Young people can participate in contact and non-contact activities. | Young people can participate in contact and non-contact activities. |

Level 4 – Children and young people within school settings can only participate in activities that are non-contact and outdoors.

4. Practical Considerations

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| 1 | <p>Minimising contact between individuals and groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a precautionary approach schools should encourage physical distancing where possible between adults, and between children and young people, particularly in the senior phase. • There should be an enhanced focus on activities that do not involve close physical contact. This will contribute to further lowering of any risk involved. • During contact activities, physical distancing does not need to be maintained during play, but should be applied at all other times. • Schools should ensure young people wear face coverings, if indoors, before and after activity, or when in non-playing areas of the physical education department, for example, changing-rooms. There is a legislative exemption |
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| | <p>for exercise in respect to wearing a face covering. This is consistent with the advice from WHO.²</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wherever possible, efforts should be made to keep children and young people within the same groups. |
| 2 | <p>Ventilation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration should be given to ventilation in all indoor spaces. Staff should liaise with senior leaders and follow local/school guidelines. <p>Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance on reducing the risks from COVID-19 in schools Para 50 – 54.</p> |
| 3 | <p>Use of indoor space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners should enter the area individually and make their way to a designated space. As a precautionary approach, physical distancing should be encouraged where possible, between adults, and between young people, particularly in the senior phase. • The teacher should have an assigned area to ensure 2 m spacing. This should be clearly marked. Staff should wear a face covering out with this designated area when interacting with young people or supporting practical tasks. Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance on reducing the risks from COVID-19 in schools Para 92: where adults cannot keep 2 m distance and are interacting face-to-face with other adults and/or children and young people, face coverings should be worn at all times. This applies to all staff including support staff and classroom assistants. • Teacher demonstrations/explanations could be done from an assigned area to ensure they stay an appropriate distance from learners. • Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance on reducing the risks from COVID-19 in schools Para 183: Every child and young person will have different levels of required support. It will be important as part of the risk assessments carried out to consider the individual needs of a child or young person. Where there is a need to work in close proximity with adults and children and young people the safety measures to protect adults and children and young people alike should be followed. Staff should wear a face covering or PPE (where appropriate), and regularly wash their hands before and after contact. Guidance on supporting children and young people with additional support needs is published by the Scottish Government. |

² <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters#exercising>

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| <p>4</p> | <p>Changing Rooms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing rooms are an area of increased risk of transmission and should be avoided where possible. • Consideration should be given to the needs of children and young people who require additional support. • When considering the use of changing rooms, schools should ensure that they implement pragmatic and proportionate control measures which reduce risk to the lowest reasonably practical level. They should have active arrangements in place to monitor that the controls are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ effective; ○ working as planned; ○ updated appropriately considering any issues identified and changes in public health advice. • Following a risk assessment, if the use of changing rooms is considered necessary, schools should ensure mitigating actions are in place. This includes ensuring that changing rooms are as well ventilated as possible, used only by small numbers at any point in time to maximise physical distancing, and that close attention is paid to cleaning surfaces after use. • If changing rooms are not used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ consideration should be given to alternative places for storing learners' belongings, for example, assigning each learner their own space; ○ young people should be encouraged to arrive at school in their PE kit on days when physical education lessons will take place and, where possible, wait until they get home to change. |
| <p>5</p> | <p>Equipment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities where there is no sharing of equipment are safer than those that do, therefore teachers should plan activities that minimise the use of equipment. • If any equipment has been shared, this should be carefully cleaned before next use/between each lesson. • Consider keeping extra equipment on hand so that teaching time is not lost to re-clean equipment. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where possible, remove equipment from indoor spaces that are not essential for participation purposes, for example, benches, tables. Where this is not possible appropriate cleaning measures should be put in place. • Fixed equipment should be checked by the teacher prior to use to avoid children and young people having to adjust or touch it. |
| 6 | <p>Hygiene measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior leaders should ensure the physical education department is linked to the enhanced cleaning programme across the school. • Commonly touched objects: Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance on reducing the risks from COVID-19 in schools Para 33 states: 'Local authorities and schools should ensure that an enhanced environmental cleaning regime is in place. The regime put in place should be in line with Health Protection Scotland Guidance for Non-Healthcare Settings'. This specifies in particular: 'Ensuring regular (at least twice daily) cleaning of commonly touched objects and surfaces (for example, desks, handles, dining tables, shared technology surfaces etc)'. • Use of areas/facilities by shared groups: Para 34 states; 'There should also be more frequent cleaning of rooms/areas that must be used by different groups...(for example, classrooms, toilet blocks, changing rooms and staff areas)'. • Para 35 states; 'Movement of children, young people and staff between classrooms should be minimised wherever possible. Where this cannot be avoided, the provision of appropriate cleaning supplies to enable them to wipe down their own desk/chair/surfaces before leaving and, especially, on entering the room should be considered as part of overall hygiene strategies for secondary schools'. • Equipment: Para 36 states: 'Careful consideration should be given to the cleaning regime for specialist equipment (for example, in practical subjects or for children with additional support needs), sensory rooms, practical subjects with specialist equipment... etc. to ensure safe use'. <p>Equipment that is difficult to clean should be taken out of use.</p> <p>Personal Hygiene:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand-washing facilities or hand sanitiser stations should be available and easily accessible at entry/exit points, when children and young people move between groups and when entering or leaving a facility. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hands should be washed and dried thoroughly or sanitised before and after the activity. • There should be no handshakes at the beginning or end of any activity. • There should be no sharing of water bottles. |
| 7 | <p>Other considerations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly communicate the route and rules with learners ahead of every location, movement and transition. • Use learner voice to reflect on how well protocols are being followed and how practice can be improved. • If possible, create a virtual/visual tour of structures and routines and share with learners, staff, parents/carers. • Consider using physical and visual aids to define space and modify layouts, for example, tape, rope or chalk on required surfaces/walls. • Careful consideration should be given to the selection of appropriate activities for indoors and outdoors taking into account local circumstances. |

5. Risk assessment

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Guidance on reducing the risks from COVID-19 in schools](#) includes information on risk assessment.

It is a legal requirement that local authorities and head teachers ensure that risk assessments are conducted or updated to reflect the revised planning assumption of a full return to school. All risk assessments should be reviewed regularly as circumstances change to ensure that the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and adults is not compromised.

6. Physical Activity and Sport

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020](#), Para 137 states: 'Opportunities to participate in physical activity and sport have the potential to enhance children and young people's mental and physical wellbeing and will support children and young people to lead healthy, active lifestyles now and in the future'.

Attention should be paid to maximising opportunities for pupils to build activity into their daily routines. The COVID-19 Sub-advisory Group emphasises the importance

of supporting active travel wherever possible, as the safest means of transport to school in light of COVID-19. *The Daily Mile* is another activity, that would be recommended at the current time.

The provision of activities or clubs outside the usual school timetable

Please note for Level 4, the following mitigation:

Suspension of activities or clubs outside the usual school timetable.

7. Conclusion

Changes in incidence of COVID-19, and the potential impact on the practical, experiential learning in physical education will be kept under review and updated when necessary. Local authorities and schools will also need to be able to adapt to local issues, for example, outbreaks or local increases in cases of COVID-19, and follow any locally-determined advice and guidance.

Physical education is now permitted both indoors and outdoors, with appropriate mitigating actions outlined in this document to ensure the safety of all children, young people and staff.

8. Appendix

These policy documents currently provide a frame of reference for Scottish education

More detail, particularly about wider school issues can be found in the official Scottish Government advice which can be found here:

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Guidance on reducing the risks from COVID-19 in schools](#)
30 October 2020

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020](#) 25 August 2020