

Cornwall Outdoors

PE and School Sport Project

Small Schools in Cornwall

Progress, achievement and attainment

Huffing and puffing in the playground

Pupils at a rural primary school have been finding purpose in lunchtime activities on two days a week when the games shop, supervised by year 5/6 pupils, is open for all pupils to have loan of sports equipment. Currently a classroom assistant supervises the Huff and Puff programme. The Headteacher has plans to provide further training for the classroom assistant in order to help pupils make a link between lunchtime activities and curriculum PE. She believes that this will be an important step to help pupils to practice and improve skills.

One outcome of the Huff and Puff has been the improved behaviour of the pupils. The Headteacher has noted that she has had no referrals for poor behaviour since the project began. The school is also linking this development to pupil diaries for physical activities, which is another strategy being used to increase participation rates.

A letter to the Headteacher from one of the pupils about Huff and Puff and a plea for 15 minutes more play time is very revealing. Year 6 pupil Sophie writes:

"I am writing on behalf of the children for 15 minutes more playtime at the time of half past 2 to quarter to 3. I have thought of some reasons for us to have what we should have.

- *Our 'huff and puff' facilities, we have a shed full of things like balls, easy catch, skipping, badminton, frog & hippos to chuck on the hopscotch and stilts but the only problem is that we only use it for 80 minutes a week.*
- *We would be more alert for the last lesson of the day. We would not talk so much and forget so much.*
- *You would have time to have a cuppa and mark books so you would not have to mark so much after school. You would be able to get things ready for the next lesson.*
- *Other schools have 3, even 4 play times a day so they must benefit and they are very fit.*

Summary

- Better SATS results
- Better behaved pupils
- Happier pupils

We are even prepared to stay 15 more minutes after school.

Please give us the 15 minutes we deserve."

Teaching and Coaching

Teachers feel better about gymnastics

The Headteacher of a small primary school, on entering the project, decided to look closely at the effectiveness of professional development of teachers for PE. The staff chose gymnastics as the focus as in this area they felt least able to provide high quality experience to help pupils to raise standards. With the training taking place in school with its limited facilities, each teacher's own class was the target for development. The LEA's TOP gymnastics tutor worked initially with staff, before teaching each class their first lesson of a new unit of work with the class teacher observing. The teacher taught lessons 2 and 3, with the tutor returning to team-teach lesson 4, leaving the teacher then to complete the unit of work. This approach provided clear targets for the teachers to meet rather than them being mere recipients of training. Time for individual mentoring by the tutor with each class teacher has been a crucial part of the process. The teachers report that they now feel more confident and competent to deliver gymnastics, with the whole school focus on planning for PE supporting this professional development. Comments from staff include: *"pupils have become more reflective of their own and others performance and pupils have a developing specialist vocabulary that is helping them describe and analyse performance"*. A similar programme for dance is now being undertaken.

Teaching and Coaching

Dance bridging communities

Two small rural schools are breaking down community boundaries through working together on a dance project led by the LEA's TOP dance tutor. The joint staff training and pooling of expertise, which has included the participation of a local artist, will shortly culminate in public performances. The foot and mouth outbreak in this rural farming community delayed these performances, but both headteachers believed that these events would be important for their communities, as well as helping to raise the profile of physical education and dance. They believe that such joint working is crucial to small schools in order to access expertise in practical subjects. In a desire to involve the whole school, KS1 pupils worked with a visual artist to portray the environments in which the dance performances would take place. The KS2 dance programme is an example of blocking a unit of work in one half term, where seven full afternoon sessions were devoted to this work. The tutor noted significant gains in the pupils' quality of movement, where they have now a heightened awareness of space; she commented: *"one example is that they don't bump into each other now during warm-up. You need to know that space is very acute"*. She was also very aware of gains in stamina. The dance performance of just under 4 minutes was performed 5 times over a short period for parents. After 4 repeats during the rehearsals she asked the pupils if they were tired. They responded that they were not, which was a marked contrast to the early lessons. Concentration levels had also increased measurably, with pupils moving without talking and carrying on and adapting when things went wrong. Gains have also been taken into the classroom, with one class teacher using IT to evaluate the work. Using video evidence to compare performances, pupils have been observing and analysing their work before writing down points to improve.

Time allocation and distribution

A school with no hall travels for gymnastics

A rural primary school with no hall has provided breadth and balance to its PE programme through changing its use of the local town leisure centre. The pupils have traditionally travelled the 30 minute journey once a week to the swimming pool during the Autumn and Spring terms. From September, whilst one of the school's two classes has been following a course of swimming, the other has undertaken a unit of gymnastics using a small gym adjoining the swimming pool. Although a teacher has been employed to cover the gymnastics in the short term, the new Head's relief, who has a specialist PE background, will be leading the activity in the future. There are clear indications that levels of attainment have increased since the introduction of the new programme. The teacher has commented on the improved quality of movement generally, but particularly in linking gymnastic skills effectively. One unpredicted outcome was the improved attainment in swimming across the whole school as a result of smaller teaching groups. Pupil's attitudes to PE have changed through their exposure to high quality teaching and a use of a facility that is fit for purpose. In a recent survey 82% of the parents who responded believed their children had increased their level of participation in physical activity since the project had begun.

Leadership

Specialist teacher and morning slot for PE

Having decided to get involved with the project, the Head of a small rural primary school looked at the best ways to promote the value of PE. The appointment of a newly qualified teacher with a PE specialism was a significant factor in showing that the school thought PE was important. The Head expressly told the pupils how lucky they were to have an expert in PE teaching them. Even more important was putting PE into the timetable during the morning, splitting literacy and numeracy with a 45 minute PE session twice a week. The decision to do this was taken because the NQT was part-time and taught mornings only. However, the pupils said that they felt they were being told how important PE was because it had been put with the important subjects that are taught in the mornings. These two actions brought about a significant change in attitudes towards PE. Pupils talked about it more and showed increased levels of commitment and enthusiasm. The introduction of activity diaries, where pupils record their curriculum, extra curriculum and outside school participation in physical activities has been a third key factor in changing attitudes to PE. In a recent survey, parents have remarked on how the activity diaries have encouraged their children to do more. They are also more conscious themselves of the amount of involvement of their children and physical activity.

