

Liberty Academy Trust
PE and Sport Strategy

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Introduction

In July 2023 the Department for Education released its [School Sport and Activity Action Plan](#). And in 2024 [Enhancing Physical Education Provision and Improving Access to Sport and Physical Activity in School non-statutory guidance](#). It highlights the pupil health and wellbeing benefits of exercise but additionally it links academic achievement and personal development to sport and exercise. The 2024 guidance emphasises the need to equalise opportunity in sport and inspire the next generation of athletes, as well as the importance of creating the foundations for an active healthy lifestyle.

We believe that high quality PE, School Sport and Physical Activity are essential in preparing children and young people to live healthy lives, improve their mental health and promote focus, ambition and achievement. Supporting pupils to make choices that lead to healthy lives is a fundamental part of LAT Quality of Life Framework.

The [Physical Education School Sport Physical Activity \(PESSPA\) toolkit](#) reports that pupil's experiences of sport and physical activity have a significant impact on their mindset and behaviours, both now and in the future, and that there is good evidence that where there are positive levels of childhood activity, these positive behaviours continue into adulthood.

Supporting our pupils to be more active in PE is an essential part of enabling our pupils to achieve well in and have a positive quality of life. (See also LAT Curriculum Policy and LAT Teaching and Learning Policy).

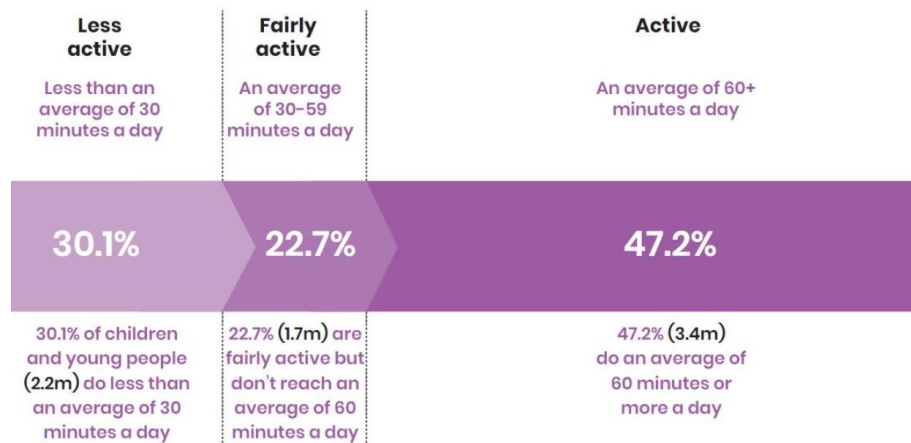
Aims of the LAT PE and Sport Strategy

This document is designed to support Liberty Academy trust schools to:

- Ensure equality of access to PE and Sport.
- Be ambitious in sports offer and aim to provide high quality PE and Sport for 2 hours a week.
- Develop extra-curricular and competitive sports.
- Support pupils to develop a lifelong love of sport and exercise.

Research

Sport England's 2022 research into [Children's activity levels](#) reports that children and young people's activity levels overall have recovered to pre pandemic levels with 47% of children meeting the Chief Medical Officer's Guidelines of taking part in an average of 60 minutes or more of sport and physical activity a day.



They also found that 50% of boys are now doing an average of 60 minutes a day compared to 45% of girls.

Sowa M & Meulenbroek R (2012) reviewed studies on the benefits of exercise for autistic people. They found that there were improvements in both motor performance and social skills following individual exercise interventions.

Lang, R et al (2010) found that autistic individuals are likely to benefit from their timetable / programmes including regular opportunities for exercise and that specific types of exercise (including running and cycling) could be particularly helpful in supporting on task behaviour and response to academic activities.

Mehmet et al (2010) acknowledged the role of exercise for autistic children but acknowledged that families, teachers and other specialist may experience difficulties in introducing and maintaining exercise routines. Challenges they reported included peer and social integration, access to sporting venues and clubs, and that although there are no criteria related to motor failure and movement disorder in the diagnosis, many studies showed that autistic children [may] have lower motor performance than their peers (Baranek, 2002; Dewey, 2007; Piek & Dyck, 2004; Todd & Reid, 2006).

A study from the Geneva Centre for Autism (1994) indicates that autistic people can experience distorted perception. This has been supported by several first-hand accounts by autistic people including Temple Grandin and Donna Williams. This can include difficulty with depth perception or only seeing small details not the whole and that this can be problematic when participating in a range of activities.

Specific considerations for specialist settings

Given the challenges reported in the research and by parents and educators in our schools this strategy acknowledges that some autistic pupils may experience a range of difficulties in participating in sport and PE. These may include:

- Motivation for trying new activities and environments may be reduced due to anxiety, unfamiliarity, sensory issues or lack of confidence.
- Anxiety over social elements required in some sports.

- Sensory differences can mean some environments or activities are aversive. Textures, smell, sound, temperature can all be different in sporting environments such as gyms or swimming pools.
- Perception issues – including depth perception. This can cause hesitation or reduced ability in different sports and PE activities. So, for example, gymnastics, running or hurdles could be extremely difficult for anyone experiencing depth perception issues. Or viewing the whole playing field in a team sport could be difficult for individuals whose perception leans towards focussing on detail not the whole picture.

However, this means that our role in supporting our pupils to develop regular exercise routines and a love of sport is even more important and prioritising this within the curriculum is paramount to prevent our pupils being further disadvantaged.

To support ease of access to physical activity, every Liberty school benefits from child-friendly outside gym equipment, so that pupils can benefit from both fresh air and exercise.

Sports clothing

Autistic pupils may experience sensory difficulties in relation to specific types and textures of clothing. It is important that each child has an appropriate PE kit and swimming clothes but that these are comfortable to them and do not present as a barrier to them changing for sport and activity.

Pupils at Liberty schools do not require branded sports kit and there is increasing availability in discount clothing stores for plain white t-shirts which do not have labels, thus alleviating some sensory sensitivities.

Changing for PE presents an important opportunity to practice an important life skill and for older pupils showering, using deodorant are important routines to learn to support good personal hygiene.

Approach to PE and Sport

Whole school

- Timetabling should be ambitious and aim to allow for 2 hours PE and Sport per week.
- There is Trust Curriculum documentation for PE that can be used directly or adapted according to school need. These are informed by the range of materials available; particularly through the [Association for Physical Education](#). Schools can further develop their own curriculum maps (long-term plans) for PE.
- All schools engage in some competitive sports. However, attention is paid to ensure pupils are supported to understand the rules and to develop the required social skills to engage in competitive sports.
- PE Leads routinely explore links with other schools and where possible facilitate opportunities for pupils to integrate with those in other settings when participating in sports. This may include cross school football matches, inter county athletics, SEND schools sports clusters.
- Liberty schools hold annual sports days in the summer term. Sports days include a range of activities and aim to ensure all children and young people are included.

- Schools support all pupils to try a range of new sports and encourage pupils to identify new talents and interests. This includes taster days or blocks of different sports such as Archery, Judo, Basketball, Golf.
- It should be noted that a pupil may have specific strengths in areas such as target / aiming sports that is not identified if only a narrow range of sports are experienced.
- Where necessary, Liberty schools will use external sports companies – these can be particularly helpful in motivating pupils to join in with sporting or health activities if they have been resistant in the past - or to encourage trying out a new sport.
- Liberty schools are proactive in talking about PE and Sport and look to invite speakers who can inspire pupils with their stories and how they have overcome challenges.

Individual

- PE Leads review pupils’ activity using the 3 categories developed by Sport England, who have a number of [resources](#) available including a pupil survey that can be used by schools. Pupils who are ‘Less active’ are identified and plans developed to support an increase over time.

Less active	Fairly Active	Active
Less than 30 minutes per day	An average of 30-59 minutes per day	An average of 60 minutes + per day

- PE Leads, Keyworkers and form tutors / teachers provide helpful information to illustrate the variety of sport and activity available in school.
- Pupils’ profiles and plans detail any information that is relevant to sensory needs or physical activity that supports their health and wellbeing.
- Some pupils’ Educational Health and Care Plans may indicate they require sensory circuits / sensory diets / regular movement breaks. These form part of tailored programmes to address the sensory needs of children and young people and are always guided by specialist professionals, such as Occupational Therapists.

Swimming and Water safety

Swimming and water safety is included in the Primary PE National Curriculum. All pupils are taught how to swim and how to be safe in and around water. All Liberty schools continue this development into secondary, especially where pupils may not have developed confidence in swimming.

Swimming is the only prescribed sport within the national curriculum physical education programme of study; all primary schools must provide swimming and water safety lessons in either Key Stage 1 or 2. Pupils in Liberty schools learn to swim before the end of Key Stage 2, but schools are best placed to determine when this is provided.

By the end of Key Stage 2, every pupil is required to be able to do the following:

- Perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations.
- Swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of **at least** 25 metres.
- Use a range of strokes effectively, for example, front crawl, backstroke and breaststroke.

[Swim England](#) has a range of resources to support the teaching of swimming including downloadable certificates.

All visits to swimming pools are planned in line with the LAT Educational Visits Policy and [DFE \(2018\) Health and safety on educational visits](#)

Some autistic pupils may find the environment of the swimming pool difficult, acoustically it can be challenging for pupils who experience hyper-sensitivity to sound. Some pupils may also find the feeling of being in the water difficult. In such cases the keyworker and teachers work with parents or carers and wherever possible an Occupational Therapist to plan how to best support the individual.

Extra-curricular activities

Most pupils at LAT schools are transported into school in taxis and minibuses provided by the local authority. This is prohibitive to running after school clubs as it is not always possible for parents or the transport company to adjust different collection times.

However, every Liberty school is proactive in liaising with parents and the transport teams to facilitate additional activities across the year or finding other creative ways to offer extra-curricular activities, so that all our children can access the same broad entitlement that their mainstream peers have.

Our schools currently run a range of lunch time clubs – these can be particularly helpful in providing structured support to leisure / activity time and enabling social skills to be developed simultaneously.

Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) award

Liberty schools are encouraged to wherever possible enable our pupils to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh award. Either by running the programme themselves or linking with other schools and colleges.

The DofE website states:

“Any young person can do their DofE – regardless of ability, gender, background or location. Achieving an Award isn’t a competition or about being first. It’s all about setting personal challenges and pushing personal boundaries.”

Participating in this programme can be a challenging but it is a life changing experience. It is an opportunity for our young people to make friends, discover new interests and talents, develop confidence and practice essential life skills. It is a recognised mark of achievement and is respected by employers and colleges.

DofE expeditions are only undertaken with leaders who have the appropriate training as detailed on the DofE expedition website. Expeditions are always planned in line with the LAT Educational Visits policy and [DFE \(2018\) Health and safety on educational visits](#)

Primary PE and Sports Premium (schools with Primary phase only)

All schools with Primary aged children are in receipt of Primary PE and Sport Premium. The expectation is that this funding will not be continued for 2025/2026.

Schools are allocated funding and report on the use of these funds in line with [guidance](#). Particular attention is given to ensuring this funding removes barriers to autistic pupils accessing PE and sports.

Reporting

The Primary PE and sport premium digital reporting tool for schools captures details on how a school has used its Primary PE and sport premium and the impact it has had on achieving the aims and objectives of the funding. Schools will report using this tool on the following:

The information gathered will include:

- Figures on the overall spend
- What the funding has been spent on
- Whether there is any unspent funding
- Swimming and water safety attainment

The reporting tool can be found: [Primary PE & Sport Premium - Youth Sport Trust](#).

How parents can help with sport and activity

Sport England's research has shown that families, parents and carers play a key role in shaping a child's attitudes to being active and their activity levels later in life. They can model active behaviours by taking part with children. Equally if families have a sedentary lifestyle, this will limit children's understanding of the role of sport and activity.

Adults often facilitate access to various opportunities for their children to be active and so it's important to support them in understanding the benefits of being active.

On the next page there is a list of ways for parents and carers to demonstrate the values of exercise, sport and activity:

How you can Help your Child to be Fit and Healthy



START EARLY!

- Young children usually love to play and be active. Encouraging lots of safe and unstructured movement and play can help build a strong foundation for an active lifestyle.
- Try different sports and activities to find out what is most enjoyable and motivating.
- Make exercise a positive experience and where needed use a 'first this, then that' approach to encourage some exercise.
- Set achievable goals that allow for success and build on this.
- Talk to local parent groups to find out about clubs and activities that are inclusive and may work well for your child, as well as helping them to make friends.



SET A POSITIVE EXAMPLE!

- Set a positive example by leading a positive lifestyle yourself.
- Make physical activity part of your family's daily routine - by taking family walks or playing active games together.
- Give your child equipment that encourages physical activity.
- Be positive about the physical activities your child takes part in and encourage them to be interested in new activities.
- Use a simple visual timetable or calendar to show how an evening or day is going to be structured, so that your child can see the different activities in a day, or to balance screen time.



TRY SOMETHING NEW!

- Consider your child's sensory needs - if they seek heights then climbing activities and hill walking can be enjoyable.
- If your child doesn't like noisy areas then a swimming pool or activity centre / soft play centre might be difficult, so outdoor quiet spaces may work better.
- Instead of watching television after dinner, why not go for a walk? Encourage your child to find fun activities to do on their own or with family and friends, such as playing chase or riding bikes.
- **Be Safe! Always provide helmets, wrist and knee pads for those activities where there is a risk of injury.**



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