

Liberty Academy Trust

PE and Sport Strategy

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1. Introduction

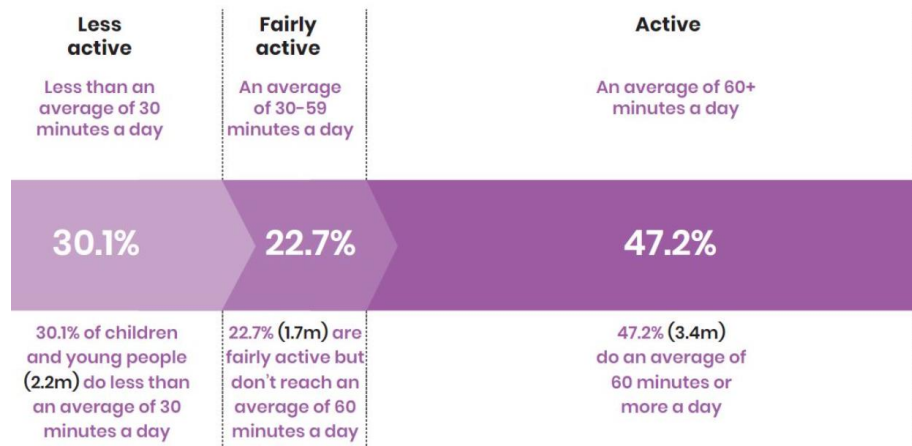
- 1.1. In July 2023 the Department for Education released its [School Sport and Activity Action Plan](#). It highlights the pupil health and wellbeing benefits of exercise but additionally it links academic achievement and personal development to sport and exercise.
- 1.2. We believe that high quality 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.
- 1.3. 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.
- 1.4. 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).

2. Aims of the LAT PE and Sport Strategy

- 2.1. 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.

3. Research

- 3.1. 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.



- 3.2. They also found that 50% of boys are now doing an average of 60 minutes a day compared to 45% of girls.
- 3.3. 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.
- 3.4. 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.
- 3.5. 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).

- 3.6. 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.

4. Specific considerations for specialist settings

- 4.1. 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.
- 4.2. 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.
- 4.3. 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.

- 4.4. Physical activity plays a vital role in supporting pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing. Liberty schools will ensure PE and sport are used as tools to promote positive mental health, reduce anxiety, and build resilience. Staff will be trained to recognise signs of mental health challenges and adapt physical activity accordingly. Where appropriate, PE sessions may include mindfulness, yoga, or other activities that support emotional regulation and wellbeing

5. Sports clothing

- 5.1. 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.
- 5.2. 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.
- 5.3. 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.

6. Approach to PE and Sport

Whole school

- 6.1. Timetabling allows for 2 hours PE and Sport per week.
- 6.2. Schools develop their own long-term plans for PE. These are informed by the range of materials available; particularly through the Association for Physical Education.
- 6.3. 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.

- 6.4. 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.
- 6.5. 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.
- 6.6. 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.
- 6.7. 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.
- 6.8. 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.
- 6.9. 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

- 6.10. 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

- 6.11. PE Leads, Keyworkers and form tutors / teachers provide helpful information to illustrate the variety of sport and activity available in school.

- 6.12. Pupils' profiles and plans detail any information that is relevant to sensory needs or physical activity that supports their health and wellbeing.
- 6.13. 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.

7. Swimming and Water safety

- 7.1. 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.
- 7.2. 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.
- 7.3. 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.
- 7.4. [Swim England](#) has a range of resources to support the teaching of swimming including downloadable certificates.
- 7.5. All visits to swimming pools are planned in line with the LAT Educational Visits Policy and [DFE \(2018\) Health and safety on educational visits](#)

- 7.6. 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.

8. Enrichment Strategy

- 8.1. Liberty schools plan enrichment activities for pupils in line with the Liberty Academy Trust (LAT) Enrichment Strategy 2025–2026. The strategy aims to provide pupils with enriching experiences that support their personal, social, emotional, and academic development, aligned with LAT's core values of courage, determination, and teamwork. Enrichment activities are designed to foster resilience, confidence, independence, and life skills, with a particular focus on supporting disadvantaged and autistic pupils. The LAT Enrichment Award Programme encourages participation in diverse activities across five categories—Ambitious, Creative, Active, Independent, and Socially Conscious—with pupils working toward Bronze, Silver, and Gold awards.

9. Extra-curricular activities

- 9.1. 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.
- 9.2. 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.
- 9.3. 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.

10. Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) award

10.1. 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.

10.2. 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.”

10.3. 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.

10.4. 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

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

11.1. Schools with primary-aged pupils have historically received Primary PE and Sport Premium funding from the Department for Education to improve the quality of PE, school sport and physical activity.

11.2. The Government has [announced](#) that the Primary PE and Sport Premium will be replaced by a new PE and School Sport Partnerships Network. Transitional funding arrangements will operate during 2026/27, after which support will be provided through the new national partnership model rather than direct grant funding to schools.

11.3. Primary schools within Liberty Academy Trust will continue to prioritise high-quality PE, physical activity and sport regardless of future funding arrangements, ensuring that provision is a budget priority and remains inclusive and responsive to the needs of autistic pupils and pupils with additional needs

12. Reporting

- 12.1. Schools will comply with all Department for Education reporting requirements relating to Primary PE and Sport funding and any successor arrangements introduced

13. Monitoring

- 13.1. Implementation of this strategy will be monitored by the Principal and PE Leads through SLT meetings and school improvement planning. Schools will track pupil participation, progress in physical activity levels, and feedback from pupils and families. Annual updates will be coordinated by the Director of Education based on stakeholder input and national guidance.

14. Staff training and development

- 14.1. All staff involved in delivering PE and sport will receive regular training on inclusive practice, safeguarding, and supporting pupils with additional needs. PE Leads will access professional development through the Association for Physical Education and other accredited providers. Training will include strategies for engaging autistic pupils, managing sensory sensitivities, and promoting positive behaviour through sport.

15. Inclusion

- 15.1. LAT schools are committed to ensuring that PE and sport are inclusive of all pupils, regardless of gender identity, background, or ability. Staff will ensure that pupils feel safe and respected in all sporting environments and will adapt activities to meet individual needs.

- 15.2. In line with safeguarding requirements, including the School's Safeguarding Policy and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), separate changing facilities are provided for pupils based on biological sex. Where a pupil has an identified need for additional privacy, including where an agreed support plan is in place to support their wellbeing, the school will consider and implement appropriate individual changing arrangements on a case-by-case basis. This may include access to a suitable private space, such as an accessible changing/toilet facility where appropriate and available. Such arrangements will be made in partnership with parents/carers and relevant staff, with the aim of safeguarding the dignity, privacy, safety and inclusion of all pupils.
- 15.3. We recognise that for some autistic pupils the primary goal may be regular participation in physical activity rather than competitive sport. Success should therefore be measured not only through sporting achievement, but also through improved wellbeing, confidence, resilience, physical health and engagement in active lifestyles.

16. How parents can help with sport and activity

- 16.1. 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.
- 16.2. 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.
- 16.3. 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.**



17. Social responsibility statement:

Liberty Academy Trust acts with integrity and accountability in all aspects of its operations. We strive to make a positive impact on our students, staff, communities, and the environment by promoting equity, sustainability, and ethical practices. Our commitment to social responsibility underpins every decision we make, ensuring that we contribute to the well-being of society while fostering an inclusive and respectful educational culture.

18. References

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