



# MASTERING PRIMARY PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Kristy Howells with Alison Carney,  
Neil Castle and Rich Little

B L O O M S B U R Y

# Mastering Primary Physical Education

## **Mastering Primary Teaching series**

Edited by Judith Roden and James Archer

The *Mastering Primary Teaching* series provides an insight into the core principles underpinning each of the subjects of the Primary National Curriculum, thereby helping student teachers to 'master' the subjects. This in turn will enable new teachers to share this mastery in their teaching. Each book follows the same sequence of chapters, which has been specifically designed to assist trainee teachers to capitalize on opportunities to develop pedagogical excellence. These comprehensive guides introduce the subject and help trainees know how to plan and teach effective and inspiring lessons that make learning irresistible. Examples of children's work and case studies are included to help exemplify what is considered to be best and most innovative practice in primary education. The series is written by leading professionals, who draw on their years of experience to provide authoritative guides to the primary curriculum subject areas.

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# Series Editors' Foreword

A long and varied experience of working with beginner and experienced teachers in primary schools has informed this series since its conception. Over the last thirty years there have been many changes in practice in terms of teaching and learning in primary and early years education. Significantly, since the implementation of the first National Curriculum in 1989 the aim has been to bring best practice in primary education to all state schools in England and Wales. As time has passed, numerous policy decisions have altered the detail and emphasis of the delivery of the primary curriculum. However, there has been little change in the belief that pupils in the primary and early years phases of education should receive a broad, balanced curriculum based on traditional subjects.

Recent Ofsted subject reports and notably the Cambridge Primary Review indicate that rather than the ideal being attained, in many schools, the emphasis on English and mathematics has not only depressed the other subjects of the primary curriculum, but also narrowed the range of strategies used for the delivery of the curriculum. The amount of time allocated to subject sessions in ITE courses has dramatically reduced which may also account for this narrow diet in pedagogy.

The vision for this series of books was borne out of our many years of experience with student teachers. As a result, we believe that the series is well designed to equip trainee and beginner teachers to master the art of teaching in the primary phase. This series of books aims to introduce current and contemporary practices associated with the whole range of subjects within the Primary National Curriculum and religious education. It also goes beyond this by providing beginner teachers with the knowledge and understanding required to achieve mastery of each subject. In doing so, each book in the series highlights contemporary issues such as assessment and inclusion which are the key areas that even the most seasoned practitioner is still grappling with in light of the introduction of the new Primary Curriculum. In agreement with the results attached with these books, we believe that students who work in schools and progress onto their Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) year will be able to make a significant contribution to the provision in their school, especially in foundation subjects.

Readers will find great support within each one of these books. Each book in the series will inform and provide the opportunity for basic mastery of each of the

subjects, namely English, mathematics, science, physical education, music, history, geography, design and technology computing and religious education. They will discover the essence of each subject in terms of its philosophy, knowledge and skills. Readers will also be inspired by the enthusiasm for each subject revealed by the subject authors who are experts in their field. They will discover many and varied strategies for making each subject 'come alive' for their pupils and they should become more confident about teaching across the whole range of subjects represented in the primary and early years curriculum.

Primary teaching in the state sector is characterized by a long history of pupils being taught the whole range of the primary curriculum by one teacher. Although some schools may employ specialists to deliver some subjects of the curriculum, notably physical education, music or science, for example, it is more usual for the whole curriculum to be delivered to a class by their class teacher. This places a potentially enormous burden on beginner teachers no matter which route they enter teaching. The burden is especially high on those entering through employment-based routes and for those who aim to become inspiring primary teachers. There is much to learn!

The term 'mastery' is generally considered to relate to knowledge and understanding of a subject which incorporates the 'how' of teaching as well as the 'what'. Although most entrants to primary teaching will have some experience of the primary curriculum as a pupil, very few will have experienced the breadth of the curriculum or may have any understanding of the curriculum which reflects recent trends in teaching and learning within the subject. The primary curriculum encompasses a very broad range of subjects each of which has its own knowledge base, skills and ways of working. Unsurprisingly, very few new entrants into the teaching profession hold mastery of all the interrelated subjects. Indeed for the beginner teacher it may well be many years before full mastery of all aspects of the primary curriculum is achieved. The content of the primary curriculum has changed significantly, notably in some foundation subjects, such as history and music. So although beginner teachers might hold fond memories of these subjects from their own experience of primary education, the content of the subject may well have changed significantly over time and may incorporate different emphases.

This series, *Mastering Primary Teaching*, aims to meet the needs of those who, reflecting the desire for mastery over each subject, want to know more. This is a tall order. Nevertheless, we believe that the pursuit of development should always be rewarded, which is why we are delighted to have so many experts sharing their well-developed knowledge and passion for the subjects featured in each book. The vision for this series is to provide support for those who are beginning their teaching career, who may not feel fully secure in their subject knowledge, understanding and skill. In addition, the series also aims to provide a reference point for beginner teachers to always be able to go back to support them in the important art of teaching.

Intending primary teachers, in our experience, have a thirst for knowledge about the subject that they will be teaching. They want to 'master' new material and ideas in a range of subjects. They aim to gain as much knowledge as they can of the

subjects they will be teaching, in some of which the beginner teachers may lack in confidence or may be scared of because of their perceived lack of familiarity with some subjects and particularly how they are delivered in primary schools. Teaching the primary curriculum can be one of the most rewarding experiences. We believe that this series will help the beginner teachers to unlock the primary curriculum in a way that ensures they establish themselves as confident primary practitioners.

Judith Roden

James Archer

June 2017

# How to Use This Book

This book is one of twelve books that together help form a truly innovative series that is aimed to support your development. Each book follows the same format and chapter sequence. There is an emphasis throughout the book on providing information about the teaching and learning of physical education. You will find a wealth of information within each chapter that will help you to understand the issues, problems and opportunities that teaching the subject can provide you as a developing practitioner in the subject. Crucially, each chapter provides opportunities for you to reflect upon important points linked to your development of the in order that you may master the teaching of physical education. As a result you get to develop confidence in the teaching of primary physical education. There really is something for everyone within each chapter.

Each chapter has been carefully designed to help you to develop your knowledge of the subject systematically. Chapter objectives clearly signpost the content of each chapter and these will help you to familiarize yourself with important aspects of the subject and will orientate you in preparation for reading the chapter. The regular 'Pause for Thought' points offer questions and activities for you to reflect on important aspects of the subject. Each 'Pause for Thought' point provides you with an opportunity to enhance your learning beyond merely reading the chapter. These will sometimes ask you to consider your own experience and what you already know about the teaching of the subject. Others will require you to critique aspects of good practice presented as case studies or research. To benefit fully from reading this book, you need to be an active participant. Sometimes you are asked to make notes on your response to questions and ideas and then to revisit these later on in your reading. While it would be possible for you to skim through the opportunities for reflection or to give only cursory attention to the questions and activities which aim to facilitate deeper reflection than might otherwise be the case, we strongly urge you to engage with the pause-for-thought activities. It is our belief that it is through these moments that most of your transformational learning will occur. At the end of each chapter, you will find a summary of the main points from the chapter, along with suggestions for further reading.

We passionately believe that learners of all ages learn best when they work with others, so we encourage you, if possible, to work with another person, sharing your ideas and perspectives. The book also would be ideal for group study within a university or school setting.

This book has been authored by Kristy Howells with Alison Carney, Neil Castle and Rich Little, all of whom are experienced and highly regarded professionals in their subject area. They are strong voices within the primary physical education community. By reading this book you will be able to benefit from their rich knowledge, understanding and experience. When using this, ensure that you are ready to learn from some of the greats in primary physical education.



# Acknowledgements

We would like to recognize and acknowledge the contribution that each author has made to this book. Kristy Howells led the writing and brought the whole book together; she wrote Chapter 1 – An Introduction to Primary Physical Education, Chapter 5 – Developing Curiosity and Physical Development, as well as writing Chapter 7 – Observing and Assessing Children in Physical Education. Alison Carney wrote Chapter 8 – Practical Issues in Physical Education. Neil Castle wrote both Chapters 2 and 3 – Current Developments in Physical Education, as well as Physical Education as an Irresistible Activity. Rich Little wrote Chapter 4 – Physical Education as a Practical Activity and Chapter 6 – Skills to Develop in Physical Education. We would like to acknowledge our students, especially our Schools Direct students, who fed back to us all, on our chapters as we devised and trialled, especially our pause for thought moments, in a wonderful spiral of research informing teaching and teaching informing research.

As a team we would also like to acknowledge all the children, parents and teachers who have given their permission to allow us to share their photographs and their examples of movements within Physical Education and Physical Development lessons. We would specifically like to acknowledge the children from River Primary School and the children from White Cliffs Primary School College for Arts, who also shared examples of lessons plans as well as appearing in our photographs. We would like to acknowledge and thank Jenny Hill for contributing her photographs. We would also like to thank our own children for participating within our photographs to illustrate movement, as well as our friends' children who also appear throughout the book, with whom our Physical Education illustrations become alive.

We dedicate this book to J. D.; Paul, Alistair, Lewis; Helen, Samuel, Benjamin; Jo, Evie, Harvey, and Sam in appreciation for their fabulous support that they have given us throughout our writing and editing of this book.

# Chapter 1

## An Introduction to Primary Physical Education

### Chapter objectives

- What is primary physical education?
- What is sustained activity and how can we ensure this occurs?
- Why physical education should be taught and what is the value of physical education?
- What does it mean to be physically educated?
- How can physical education contribute to a child's whole education?

### Introduction

This chapter will enable you to understand the importance of primary physical education and how you, as the teacher/practitioner within the educational setting, can inspire and motivate your children to physically develop, be physically active and become physically educated.

#### **Pause for thought – *Thinking about the value of physical education:***

What is the point of physical education?

What do children learn from physical education?

How would you explain to a child *why* we are doing physical education today?

## What is primary physical education?

Primary physical education has three parts that contribute to the overall activity that may occur within a school or an early years setting. These include physical education, physical development and physical activity, and these will each be examined individually.

### Physical education

Physical education has previously been defined by Howells (2012) as a place within the curriculum where attitudes and interests can be fostered and an understanding of the importance of physical activity, diet and healthy lifestyles can be shared with and developed within the children. It is a place where passion and where an enthusiasm and a love for movement can be imparted to the children and a place where lifelong physical activity can be developed. Howells (2011) proposed that physical education is beyond just being active and providing exercise opportunities. Authors such as Rink et al. (2010) proposed that 'Physical Education programs are now designed to prepare students to be physically active' (p. 49) so that children can be physically active both within physical education lessons and outside the class.

Sallis and Owen (1999) suggested that physical education lessons could be the place that provides the main opportunity for physical activity for many young people. Murphy and Ní Chroinin (2011) agreed and highlighted that physical education lessons were a vital part of the child's life in school, as physical education lessons may be one of the only places within the curriculum where a child can 'learn in and through movement' (p. 142). However, primary physical education is not just about being physically active, but about developing and educating the child physically, in a holistic manner (Doherty and Brennan, 2007), and about developing basic skills and movements (Jess and Dewar, 2004). Hellison and Templin (1991) suggested that social learning should be a particular focus within physical education lessons. Within the primary school, children are at a stage where habits, likes and dislikes are formed (Howells, 2012); therefore, physical education is more than just the act of being physically active. Yelling et al. (2000), prior to Howells (2012), suggested that physical activity was 'only one consideration of Physical Education lessons and the National Curriculum for Physical Education' (p. 62). The aims of the National Curriculum for physical education in England (DfEE/QCA, 1999) encompassed promotion of the children's spiritual, moral, social, cultural and academic development.

Since the introduction of the 'new' Primary National Curriculum (DfE, 2014) in England, there has been a shift in both the purpose of study for physical education and the aims. The purpose of study now expects you to provide a 'high-quality physical

education curriculum' that 'inspires all children to succeed and excel in competitive sport and other physically-demanding activities. It should provide opportunities for children to become confident in a way which supports their health and fitness. Opportunities to compete in sport and other activities build character and help to embed values such as fairness and respect' (DfE, 2013, p. 198). The aims revolve around a healthy lifestyle perspective, with all children developing competence to excel in a broad range of physical activities, sustaining physical activity and engaging in competitive sports and activities.

Physical education, historically within England, used to be a very traditional lesson in which discrete sports were played. These were mainly traditional games that varied across the country depending on where you lived to being more, for example, rugby focused versus football focused (Figure 1.1). These activities were very competitive, almost exclusive and elitist. There was a great deal of running, in particular cross-country running, and the focus was on those children who could.

**Figure 1.1** Football-focused traditional game



Now that the ‘old’ National Curriculum’s activity areas and breadth of study have been removed, there are no longer the requirements of dance activities, games activities, gymnastics activities, swimming activities and water safety, athletics activities and outdoor and adventurous activities (DfEE/QCA, 1999). There are suggested activities that could be used, but they are not compulsory, allowing for much more freedom within the lessons, which will help children to learn movement skills and concepts in more detail. The focus within physical education now is on developing fundamental movement skills (which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5). There has now been an increase in the number of key words beginning with the letter ‘c’ to 5cs for children aged up to 7; these include developing competence, confidence, coordination, cooperation and undertaking challenge. For children aged 7–11 there are an extra 3cs on top of those for the young children and these include communicating, collaborating (Figure 1.2) and competing (DfE, 2013). The progression with age allows for the basic movements to be developed from movements completed in isolation to a combination of movements (Figure 1.3). It allows for simple movement patterns to be developed into ranges of patterns and tactics of defending and attacking that would evolve into a variety of modified competitive games. This progression of transferable skills, and the phrase ‘enjoy communicating, collaborating and competing’ being used for the first time in the curriculum, will allow more children to be successful both individually and within a team setting, to be excited about physical education and to enjoy their lessons.

**Figure 1.2** Key Stage 2 – children communicating and collaborating within an outdoor and adventure activities lesson



**Figure 1.3** Children completing combination movements of a triple jump



*(The children have joined together a hop, a skip/leap and a jump which they had practiced in isolation to make the combined movement of a triple jump. The girls in Figure 1.3 are in different stages of the triple jump. The one on the left is starting in the hop and the one on the right is transitioning from the hop to the skip/leap.)*

## Physical development

### **Pause for thought – to write down your thoughts before going on:**

What do you think Physical Development is in the early years?

What would you want your children to achieve as goals of early movement?

Do any of them begin with the letter c?

Physical development is a term mainly found within the early years setting, but does and will also include reception classes (those aged 4–5 years) within primary school settings. Physical development itself is one of the seven areas of learning and development identified in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework in England (DfE, 2014). It is regarded as one of the prime areas, alongside communication and language and personal, social and emotional development. The prime areas are interwoven and interconnected within the specific areas of literacy, numeracy and understanding the world and expressive arts and design. The specific requirements of physical



development include ensuring that young children have opportunities to be ‘active and interactive’ (p. 8, DfE, 2014). The early learning goals for physical development can be summarized into the ‘3cs’, which include moving with control, coordination and confidence, the later with particular relationship to the children’s movement within space, both their own immediate space and the general space they share with others. Therefore, you need to plan for physical development within structured and unstructured learning that includes developing and supporting children’s learning of moving with control, coordination and confidence. This can be using small or large equipment, and using both indoor and outdoor environments. The links between the early learning goals and physical development will be extended in Chapter 5.

Physical development is the way in which children develop physically and master skills; this can be within both structured and unstructured activities. There is a large physical strand to the Early Years Foundation Stage which is viewed in a variety of ways such as how children develop large motor skills (gross motor skills) or small motor skills (fine motor skills). This is evident from the early learning goals that refer both to large body movements such as skipping, jumping and hopping (Figure 1.4) and to small body movements such as writing and using the correct grip. This highlights the impact of learning physically; it is not just a lesson, but a journey that the child goes on and that is supported through opportunities to explore, enquire and investigate. These opportunities are the focus you need to master to ensure children can physically develop.

*(In the picture on the right-hand side the child at the right back of the photograph is using her hands in a closed fist shape which is helping her with control and balance of her hopping. The child at the front of the photograph is using her hands in a crossed-over position, again to help her try and keep balance.)*

There are numerous physical development milestones; the ones that are focused on within reception classes in the primary school setting, for those aged 4–5, are linked to both fine and gross motor skills including (as described by Meggit 2006) jumping on one foot, walking backwards, cutting paper with safety scissors and printing. However, it is important to note that children develop at different rates and

**Figure 1.4** Children jumping and hopping within gymnastics

