

Physical Education

Being physically active is extremely important for children's development, assisting in their ability to concentrate, improve mental health, learning and leading a healthy, happy life. PE is a mandatory part of the national curriculum for primary and secondary schools. However, PE lessons can be an extremely overwhelming experience for some children. This could be due to the noisy gym environment, using certain equipment or getting changed into different clothes. The following ideas are designed to help address these challenges. When using them, consider your child's age, any potential risks and their sensory preferences. Reflect on how to adapt these strategies to best support your child in feeling calm and relaxed during PE.

Area of difficulty	Strategy	Tick when strategy has been tried and add comments
Child distracted during PE	Use visual aids or structured visual schedules to outline PE activities. This will help your child with which activities to expect.	
	Provide stimulating activities like swinging, spinning, or jumping prior to the lesson to help with alertness.	
	Include heavy work activities like pushing, carrying, or pulling, this could help your child regulate themselves and keep focused. For some examples see: heavy-muscle-work-activities.pdf	
	Adapt the environment: Reduce overwhelming sensory input such as loud noise or bright lights where possible. Consider breaking up the class into smaller groups.	
	Grade activities to match the child's ability and build confidence gradually.	
Child refuses to engage/withdraws in PE	Use equipment that aligns with the child's interests or introduce alternative equipment they feel comfortable using.	
	Allow your child to explore equipment in a non-pressured way before use.	
	Modify activities to fit your child's ability and confidence level.	
	As above, use visual aids and/or adapt the environment	
Child refuses to get changed	Provide alternative changing spaces if the noise, their peers or lighting in the main area is overwhelming.	
	Can the child come into school wearing appropriate P.E. clothing to avoid changing during the school day.	

	Explore sensory-friendly uniform options (e.g., softer materials or tag-free clothing). Easy On Easy Wear Collections George at ASDA	
Child becomes distressed	Use a visual timetable or social stories™ to prepare them for PE. For further information on social stories™ see: Social Stories - Carol Gray - Social Stories (carolgraysocialstories.com)	
	Create a clear method for your child to request to exit to avoid using inappropriate behaviours. Create a clear shared plan about what will happen when they leave.	
	Create a calm space or offer quiet time if needed, for example provide a stretching routine with calming music.	
	Support your child to transition to PE earlier to reduce anxiety from busy corridors/changing rooms.	
Child finds it difficult to copy movements (posture, coordination, motor planning)	Incorporate balance and coordination exercises to build skills, e.g. using obstacle courses with various textures and surfaces. See the balance activities referenced in Worksheet A- Balance, Coordination and Motor Planning (p.1-2) in 'Paediatric Occupational Therapy Motor Skills Resource Pack' on our website.	
	Build core stability to support your child's posture. Activities to improve core stability could include kneeling whilst engaging in activities against a wall, throwing at a target, planks, or push-ups. See Worksheet C- Sitting Posture (Core strengthening exercises, p.2-3) in 'Paediatric Occupational Therapy Motor Skills Resource Pack' on our website.	
	Allow time for the child to trial and practice movements without time pressure.	
	Grade activities to enable the child to achieve tasks within their 'just right' level.	
Child is unsafe/hyperactive to engage in PE	Ensure safe clothing is worn (e.g., proper footwear).	
	Allow purposeful activities to channel hyperactivity, such as running in a designated area, circuits or carrying equipment.	
	Avoid unstructured movements and movements involving spinning or sudden changes of direction as this may overstimulate their sensory systems.	

Useful resources:

A teachers guide [Including pupils with SEN and/or disabilities in primary PE](#)

Video's/Short guides [Movement Activities & Exercises](#)