



PE to the Rescue

After many weeks of a pandemic lockdown, children are starting to return to their primary schools and bringing with them a whole host of challenges particularly surrounding their personal, emotional and mental health and well-being. Teachers need look no further than physical education for a rescue package to deliver much needed fun, freedom and the feel good factor. Primary school PE lessons can provide a positive, stress-free, active learning experience where children can achieve success, be creative, embed new routines, rebuild their self-confidence and develop resilience. In the current climate PE is surely the 'go to' subject. It ticks all the boxes.

Deprived of regular exercise, my guess is that children will be desperate to be more physically active, eager to be outdoors, hungry for personal challenges and excited to be taking part in structured PE lessons. High quality PE lessons can be organised safely and be compliant with new measures in an outdoor environment where working in your own space and maintaining social distancing is often the norm and a focus on individual skill practice without the need to share equipment is often desirable. Pairs and small group work can continue where children are already operating in exclusive bubbles. Existing playground markings or cones could be used to define play areas or chalk could be used to mark out lines or grids. Essential equipment such as hoops, cones, skipping ropes, balls, bats and quoits consisting predominantly of durable plastics make regular sanitisation possible.

The desire to master fundamental skills rarely goes out of fashion in the primary years. Being able to catch, throw, kick or control a ball more skilfully, or improve their skipping, running or jumping remain obsessions for many children. Now could be the perfect time to focus on children's individual skill development and give them increased opportunities to master the fundamentals, laying the foundations for their future success in PE and sport and promoting their physical literacy.

Primary school PE lessons in my experience equate to happy, motivated children enjoying physical activities in a safe learning environment. The health benefits alone should be enough to elevate the importance of being physically active given that improving health and fitness and reducing obesity levels appear to be key to fighting the coronavirus. If regular engagement in physical activity is the closest thing we have to an antidote in this pandemic, then PE has to be the most important subject on the school curriculum and teachers of PE deserve to be recognised as the new national heroes.

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