

**IMPROVING  
PHYSICAL  
EDUCATION**  
IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

REPORT OF THE  
DISSEMINATION  
CONFERENCE

26 SEPTEMBER 2002

Scottish Centre for Physical  
Education, Sport & Leisure Studies  
University of Edinburgh

Mike Jess,  
Conference Co-ordinator  
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# INTRODUCTION

A national conference was held in Edinburgh in September 2002 to disseminate and discuss the findings of the HMIE Report, *Improving Physical Education in Primary Schools*. This conference report is a compilation of the outcomes of the conference. The report focuses on issues raised and describes courses of action suggested by speakers and workshop groups. A number of key questions are included at the end of each section. We hope that headteachers will find these prompts useful and serve to stimulate thinking on the future development of physical education in primary schools.

# KEYNOTE SPEECHES

## Keynote Speech (1)

### Fiona MacDonald HMIE

Dr MacDonald led a presentation on the findings of the HMIE report and developed ideas and questions around key themes.

#### 1. Improving attainment and achievement

The Report found that whilst pupils generally achieved good or very good standards in what their teachers asked them to do in their physical education lessons, there was a clear need to raise expectations of what pupils could achieve.

- How can schools capitalise upon the principles, approaches and developments that underpin improvements in other curriculum areas (e.g. English and mathematics) and apply them to physical education?
- How can schools capture children's interests, enthusiasms and talents in physical education to improve academic performance?
- Are schools adapting the activities on offer within their programmes so that they are attractive to boys and girls as they mature and develop?

#### 2. Improving programmes and initiatives

The Report finds that about only one third of schools visited had very good programmes. Pupils should experience a broadly-based programme which provides new experiences, develops movement patterns and ensures that their talents and interests are catered for. Physical education begins in play and continues through the disciplines of physical education to the highest levels of performance where the capacity to express oneself is essential to success and mastery.

- In what ways is the curriculum enhanced by planned inserts in sport, dance or outdoor pursuits including extra-curricular contributions from visiting teachers or other specialists?
- How are children being educated for competition? Are staff clear that physical education and sport are not the same thing?
- How can schools use curriculum flexibility to innovate and adapt their programmes to best meet the needs of pupils in their school?

### 3. Improving learning and teaching

The Report highlights that the quality of teaching in physical education is generally good. Pupils are often well motivated towards the subject. Sometimes the pace of lessons is too slow and pupils are not active enough during lessons. Key areas for improvement lie in the quality of teachers' planning and in assessment.

- How are schools using quality performers to provide the models, and often the interest, to help their pupils learn and improve?
- Have staff discussed good practice in learning and teaching within the subject?
- What opportunities have staff had to share ideas on the good use of assessment, feedback and personal achievement targets for pupils?

### 4. Accommodation, resources and staffing

The quality of accommodation for physical education varied. Often, the school hall doubled as the dining hall with all that that implies. Many schools did not provide changing or showering facilities for pupils. In almost all schools where visiting teachers were deployed, they made an effective contribution to the physical education curriculum. Arrangements for staff development had important weaknesses in around half of the schools visited.

- Could schools make better use of facilities in the local community?

- Who co-ordinates the inputs from specialists, dance and sports development officers, active primary school co-ordinators, etc?
- When was the last time that physical education featured in CPD programmes or on the school development plan?

### 5. Improving management and quality assurance

The key to promoting physical education in schools is to build in children a love of activity which starts in the early years and stays with them into adulthood. The most effective headteachers harness the energies of staff, pupils and parents and continually improve and adapt what is offered. High quality staff development is a key factor in the successful management of physical education. In the majority of schools, there were either no procedures in place for monitoring and evaluating physical education or they were insufficient.

- In what ways do senior management promote and value physical education?
- How often do senior staff and class teachers initiate focused discussions with pupils on the quality of their physical education programme?
- How do senior staff know about the quality of the programme being delivered in their school?
- How can staff be assisted to undertake innovative projects on learning and teaching within physical education?

# KEYNOTE SPEECHES

## Keynote Speech (2)

### Mike Jess, University of Edinburgh

*The HMIE Report: Implications for the future of Primary Physical Education in Scotland*

Building on the curricular and management focus of the morning, this presentation reflected on some of the national, community and pupil-specific initiatives presently influencing the future direction of the subject in Scottish primary schools. These include the PATF, the Review Group, the Active Primary Schools programme, TOPS, National Dance Agencies, the New Opportunities Fund and the McCrone agreement. It is certainly an exciting time for primary physical education and the world of physical activity in general.

Although the profile of primary physical education is rising, it is important that the findings of the HMIE report are acknowledged and lead to closer links with the agencies involved in the development of these initiatives. Physical education programmes within the school day are insufficient, by themselves, to address concerns about pupils' health and activity levels. The challenge will be to develop programmes that not only maximise children's opportunities within school physical education but also promote sport, dance and outdoor education opportunities beyond the school day.

One key will be to help all children develop their 'movement literacy'. This refers to the basic movement competence that may be considered as the building blocks for the more complex activities of late childhood and beyond. In this regard, does your school:

- Support those less able pupils whose basic movement competence is a cause for concern, for example through a motor skills programme?
- Extend those able pupils who demonstrate mastery of their basic movements?
- Offer additional opportunities for all pupils to practise and develop their basic movements?

Three inter-related projects are presently being developed to address these issues.

- The Basic Moves Programme which aims to develop children's basic movement competence during the pre-school and primary years.
- A Developmental Movement Programme at St John's Primary School, Portobello.
- Developing the Potential of Young People in Sport (DYPYS) which is currently being piloted in primary schools in Stirling and North Ayrshire Councils, in association with **sportscotland**.

The breakout sessions focus on a number of the initiatives noted above and highlight the potential influence that primary physical education can have on future developments. It is essential to remember that school physical education is the only place where all primary age children have the opportunity to be physically educated. If primary physical education is to be the catalyst for future development, the profession needs to be clear on the potential for links with sport, dance and the other physical activity professions as well as with communities and local agencies.

#### *Key Questions*

These initiatives have important implications for primary physical education in terms of:

- Time – how much time is allocated to the subject within your school?
- Support – can you access appropriate specialist support to help take the subject forward?
- Curriculum – are staff clear on your physical education programme and how it is to be delivered?
- Extra-curricular – what opportunities do you provide for your pupils to allow them to develop their interests and talents?
- Community – how do you link with your local community and the clubs/ opportunities that are available for pupils?

# MORNING WORKSHOP SESSIONS

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## CURRICULAR ISSUES

*Key Points from the Morning Breakout Sessions*

### **Raising Expectations & Attainment in Primary Physical Education**

*Liz Gordon, HT Gylemuir Primary School, Edinburgh*

This session, presented by the senior management team, used video footage to illustrate the wide range of exciting activities offered at the school. The team outlined a range of strategies used by the school to heighten the profile of physical education and raise expectations and achievement for all pupils in physical education settings. Some of those are outlined below.

### **Developing a shared understanding of the subject**

- Articulate and share expectations of the physical education programme at whole school, stage and teacher level
- Appoint a member of staff to co-ordinate the subject and the extra curriculum
- Learn from good practice developed in other curricular areas
- Ensure a broad and balanced programme
- Develop a clear framework for each stage

### **Delivering the Physical Education Curriculum**

- Acknowledge prior learning and the needs of children with SEN
- Provide a wide range of opportunities to practice and perform both within curricular and extra curricular activities
- Offer appropriate competition and performance opportunities
- Plan and offer a broad extra curricular programme from a range of sport, dance and outdoor education

*Has your school...*

1. Shared its expectations for achievement and attainment in physical education?
2. Learned from good practice in other curricular areas?
3. Developed a clear framework for each stage which links with and extends the curriculum?
4. Created a lively and inviting cultural atmosphere in which pupils' talents are fully developed?

# CURRICULAR ISSUES

## Improving Learning & Teaching in Primary Physical Education

*Theresa Campbell, University of Glasgow*

This session focused on key elements of learning and teaching.

### Some thoughts on planning

- The need for a yearly overview with mid- and short-term objectives
- Individual lesson planning which
  - Builds on previous learning and identifies individual needs
  - Identifies clear learning objectives linked to 5-14 attainment targets
  - Links assessment to learning
  - Is evaluated by class teachers and used to inform next lessons

### Teaching issues

- Share the purpose of lessons with pupils
- Set up tasks quickly and stand back to observe what is happening
- Set up contexts for learning (e.g. small sided games, dances, activities) which provide the opportunities for pupils to develop their skills and apply them in appropriate and challenging contexts: establish what this might mean for different activities and different ability groups

- Make effective use of observation and demonstration (discuss best practice in the use of demonstration)
- Ensure bouts of sustained physical activity
- Review class organisation, particularly for differentiation (do you have a good range of adapted equipment to hand for pupils of different abilities?)
- Observe pupils' responses and provide feedback: encourage pupils to watch and learn from each other
- Establish manageable systems for recording pupils' progress
- Consider the effectiveness of planning, teaching and assessment

*Has your school...*

1. Developed a yearly plan to ensure a broad and balanced physical education curriculum?
2. Discussed differentiation in the context of physical education and shared ideas and practices?
3. Monitored the delivery of the programme?
4. Assessed and reported children's learning in the subject?

# CURRICULAR ISSUES

## The Early Years: Developing the Foundation

*Kay Dewar, University of Edinburgh & Wilma Irvine, Edinburgh City Council*

Drawing on examples from the Basic Moves Programme, this session considered the development of basic movement competence.

### Background

- The programme focuses on the development of mature and adaptable patterns of basic travelling, object control and balance movements in the early years
- A key is to develop the 'building blocks' to help pass pupils through the 'proficiency barrier' to more complex activities in the upper primary and secondary physical education programmes
- Consider possible barriers to the development of pupils' movement skills, e.g.
  - Levels of curricular time
  - Teacher expertise
  - Extra-curricular opportunities

### Basic Moves

- This programme is being developed by the University of Edinburgh & **sportscotland**

- A pilot phase in an Edinburgh primary school has involved
  - Senior staff and whole school staff training
  - Restructuring the movement content and delivery of the early years programme
  - Linking the programme to the traditional activities of the primary physical education curriculum
- A longitudinal programme is being developed with Primary 1 classes in an East Lothian cluster

#### *Has your school...*

1. Reviewed its early years physical education programme and linked it to Early Intervention initiatives?
2. Planned and implemented a programme to develop children's basic movement competence?
3. Offered break time, lunchtime or extra-curricular opportunities for children to practise their basic movements?
4. Assessed children's progress in their learning of basic movements?

# MANAGING PRIMARY PHYSICAL EDUCATION

## Managing Physical Education in the Primary School

*Elsie Tysen, Bankhead Primary School, Glasgow  
& Irene Baker, Glasgow City Council*

Using examples from a Glasgow primary school, this presentation addressed management issues related to physical education.

- **Effective leadership**
  - The importance of personal interest by the headteacher and senior staff to give the subject a high profile
  - Designated remits to senior and specialist staff
  - The allocation of consultation and CPD, using the specialist as a facilitator
  - Consideration given to resource development and curricular time issues
- **Guidance on programmes and teaching**
  - The importance of guidance and support from the local authority
  - A clear indication of what children should learn
  - The value of co-operation between specialist and class teachers
- **Effective monitoring and evaluation**
  - The need for collaboration between headteacher, specialist and senior staff
  - Awareness by senior staff of the quality of delivery of the programme
- Clear expectations by teachers of what is expected of them
- Monitoring of class teachers' evaluations in their forward plans
- **Outward looking development of programmes**
  - Look to develop a sustainable programme including
    - After school clubs, community opportunities, active school environment and appropriate residential experiences
  - Access to physical activity information
  - Develop primary/secondary links

*Has your school...*

1. Ensured that the headteacher or a senior member of staff has a personal involvement in raising the profile of the subject?
2. Designated a member of staff to manage the subject throughout the school?
3. Collaborated to monitor developments in physical education?
4. Established systems to get feedback from pupils on their programme, and to celebrate the achievements of pupils both within and outwith the school?

# MANAGING PRIMARY PHYSICAL EDUCATION

## Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and Primary Physical Education

*Ian Scott, Education Officer, Dumfries & Galloway*

This presentation focused on the importance of CPD provision in primary physical education. It considered how primary schools could be supported to develop and manage their programmes and to take forward assessment of the subject.

### School perspective

- The need for collaboration time for the headteacher, class teachers and specialist to meet
- Considering physical education as part of school's CPD strategy
- Ensuring that the headteacher or physical education co-ordinator makes staff aware of CPD opportunities
- Using specialist teachers to raise staff confidence, assist with the implementation of national and local authority guidelines, provide advice on resources and contribute to team planning and team teaching

### Local authority perspective

- Supporting schools to develop effective programmes and manage the subject
- Monitoring and improving class teacher uptake at staff development courses, linked to physical education
- Capitalising on opportunities for CPD presented by national and authority initiatives such as the Active Primary School programme, School Sports Co-ordinators, New Opportunities Fund or increased input by outside agencies

*Has your school...*

1. Included physical education as part of its CPD strategy?
2. Created time for collaboration to plan and develop the programme?
3. Made all staff aware of possible CPD opportunities?
4. Sought support from the local authority or outside agencies to develop the subject?

# MANAGING PRIMARY PHYSICAL EDUCATION

## Specialist support in Primary Physical Education

*Belinda Asmar, St John's Primary School,  
Fife & Kay Haggerty, Fife Regional Council*

This session illustrated how one primary school in Fife has developed the role of its specialist teacher to assist with the development of the subject throughout the school.

### The influence of the visiting specialist at whole school level

- Is viewed as an important member of the school team
- Disseminates local authority policy and contributes to policy development
- Promotes ongoing staff development in class and at planned activity time and in-service days
- Assists with the organisation of whole school activities, e.g. school sports, dances, festivals, competitions
- Updates schools on physical activity opportunities outside the school
- Contributes to extra-curricular activities

## Class Level

- Multi-faceted role including
  - A model of good practice
  - A motivator for children
  - Designated consultation times for planning and other developments
  - Supporting delivery in many ways including team teaching and class teacher observation
  - Providing advice on supporting pupils with SEN

*Has your school made use of specialist input to help ...*

1. Develop the school policy for physical education?
2. Support continuing staff development in class time and during planned activity and in-service time?
3. Develop and implement an extra-curricular programme?
4. Build partnerships with appropriate external agencies?

# AFTERNOON WORKSHOP SESSIONS

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## NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

*Key Points from the Afternoon Breakout Sessions*

### National developments

#### **The Physical Activity Task Force: Implications for Primary Physical Education**

*Mary Allison & Stephanie-Anne Harris,  
National Physical Activity Task Force*

The Physical Activity Task Force was set up in 2001 to make recommendations on a strategy for increasing physical activity in Scotland. This presentation considered both the background and the case for a physical activity strategy, and highlighted the recommendations being made, with particular reference to primary age children.

#### **Key points**

- Physical inactivity levels in Scotland are problematic
- Physical inactivity is linked to a number of health problems
- The Task Force recommendations are aimed at both national and local authority level

- For primary age children these recommendations include
  - Access to a range of physical activities
  - Opportunities to be active for one hour per day
  - Two hours of quality physical education each week
  - Developing the essential movement and behavioural skills necessary for an active life
  - Reviewing the status and content of the physical education curriculum
  - Linking to the National Priorities for Education
- At present, many initiatives are underway but often are not effectively co-ordinated

The Physical Activity Strategy (PATF) was presented to Ministers in December 2002 and launched in February 2003. Physical Activity Task Force website:  
<http://www.show.scot.nhs.uk/sehd/PATF/Index.htm>

## NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

### The Physical Education Review: Issues for Primary Physical Education

*Joyce Ferguson, HT Abercromby Primary School, Clackmannanshire*

The Physical Education Review stemmed from the Physical Activity Task Force's (PATF) recommendation for a 'review of the status and content of the physical education curriculum and the resources for its delivery'. The Review Group is to report late in 2003. The presentation covered the background to the setting up of the Review Group and offered delegates the opportunity to discuss issues pertinent to primary physical education.

*The Group's remit is:*

to consider how schools can be supported, within the National Priorities framework for planning, delivering and monitoring improvements, to provide a quality physical education which meets the needs and talents of all its pupils, drawing on the following publications:

- 5-14 Guidelines on Expressive Arts
- The HMIE report, *Improving Physical Education in Primary Schools*
- The Karen Gillon report on Sport in Schools
- The report of the Physical Activity Task Force

- HMIE report, *Effective Learning and Teaching: Physical Education*
- The Sport 21 review

While considering these particular publications, the review should also consider a number of related issues, e.g. pre-school provision; transition between primary and secondary; 'core' physical education; teacher training and development needs; attainment and assessment; school-community links; youth organisations/community clubs provision; international approaches to physical education and physical activity; and the needs of pupils with disability or other special needs.

#### *Key issues emerging from discussion*

- Should physical education stay within the Expressive Arts, be considered as a separate subject or be more closely aligned to health?
- How much time should be given to the subject – should there be a stipulated minimum amount?
- What is the role of specialists in primary schools?
- The need for quality initial training and CPD
- Considering an extension of the school day to include opportunities for a wide range of physical activity experiences in sport, dance and outdoor education

## NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

### The Active Primary School Programme

*Kirstin Collin, sportscotland*

The Active Primary School Programme has been introduced in local authorities with the aim of maximising physical activity opportunities for all primary age children. This presentation explained the background to this programme and mapped the progress that has been made since its inception in 2000.

#### Key points

- The programme builds on recent developments in physical education, sport and health
- It aims to provide quality physical activity opportunities in and around the school environment. These include play, physical education lessons, active travel/living and sport

- 39 full-time Active Primary Co-ordinators are currently in post
  - One per primary school cluster
  - They adopt a whole school approach, developing pathways and partnerships
  - They have implications for training and management
  - Resources are being used from TOPS, HEBS, BHF (British Heart Foundation) and Sustrans (Safer Routes to Schools)
- Monitoring and evaluation highlight the commitment and willingness of headteachers and senior staff as a key factor

Since the Conference the Active Primary programme has received a substantial financial boost from the Comprehensive Spending Review and will expand considerably over the next few years.

# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENTS

## Primary Physical Education and Youth Sport

*June Murray, East Lothian*

With the increase in sporting opportunities available to primary age children, this presentation considered how one local authority has developed a strategy to integrate the development of primary physical education with sport. The session discussed the strengths of this strategic approach and also examined some of the important challenges.

- East Lothian has an Education and Community Services Department which seeks to integrate education, health and community development
- They set up a Sport and Education Advisory Group
  - This is chaired by the Director of Education and includes senior representative from primary education, secondary education, sports development, community education and a senior member of staff from **sportscotland**
- The focus is on school sport, club development, coach and teacher education and district and elite development
- Primary age developments are integrated with the physical education curriculum
  - These include: after-school clubs, motor improvement programmes, the active primary programme, the TOPS programme, sports development programme, primary schools sports association, holiday programme and satellite/junior centres
- Developments are viewed as a long-term process which the authority aims to maintain and strengthen the development base for physical education and youth sport

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENTS

### Primary Physical Education and Youth Dance

*Katy MacKeown, Scottish Youth Dance*

A feature of recent developments in primary physical education has been the growing number of partnerships with professionals from related agencies and specialisms. This session reported on one such partnership between Scottish Youth Dance (SYD), **sportscotland** and two local authorities. This has led to a physical activity focused dance programme being introduced to the P1-P3 curriculum. The background to the project was considered as was the development and delivery issues that subsequently emerged. The CD-ROM (**AnyBodyCanDance**) created by Scottish Youth Dance was the main resource for this programme. SYD work in schools and offer taster workshops or performance projects.

#### Key points

- Dance is an important activity in its own right and has important links with sport, exercise and play
- As a discipline, it has the potential to address many of the activity issues highlighted in the HMIE report

- The programme above approached physical activity and fitness from a creative perspective
- It focused on P1-P3 because this age group often receives the least provision, particularly extra-curricular
- The programme was delivered in 4 schools over an 8-week period
- Each session lasted 30 minutes and followed clear, repeated workshop themes
- The positive response from pupils and staff highlighted important issues for long-term continuity of the programme. These include the need for
  - Appropriate resource
  - Appropriate teacher training
  - Full participation by the class teacher
  - Specialist and class teacher time to discuss the programme and pupil progress
- Another CD-ROM will be developed as an outcome of the project at P1-P3

Since the Conference the programme has received more funding for the next three years.

[www.ydance.org](http://www.ydance.org)

# PUPIL DEVELOPMENTS

## Primary Physical Education and the Less Able Pupil

*Jan McIntyre, Specialist PE Teacher, Edinburgh*

In recent years, Early Intervention programmes have become a common feature of primary school education. This presentation considered some of the management and delivery issues emerging from the implementation of the Developmental Movement Programme in St John's Primary School, Portobello.

### Key points

- The potential benefits of appropriate movement programmes for children identified with movement problems
- To develop movement programmes the support of senior staff is essential and positive interaction with related professionals

### At St John's

- Children are often identified in the early years, but sometimes later
- The programme consists of 10-minute daily sessions over a minimum of one year, but often 2-3 years

- It is not a quick fix, so many are still involved during the upper primary years
- Ideally, the programme takes place at home with parents, but it was found that many children were unable to sustain this regularly. Therefore, the programme is now part of the school day, with parental support at the weekends
- Children work in small groups with input from teaching and support staff
- Three case studies were presented to highlight the positive impact of the programme
- Benefits include improvements in movement performance, concentration, self-esteem, behaviour, reading, spelling and written work

# PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENTS

## Primary Physical Education and the Physically Able Pupil

*Angela Abbott, University of Edinburgh*

Staff in primary schools need to be more directly involved in the process of identifying and developing able or talented children in physical education and sport. A programme titled, Developing the Potential of Young People in Sport (DPYPS) has been set up with **sportscotland**. It is being piloted in two councils in Scotland (Stirling and North Ayrshire) and is targeted at the P6-S2 age group

### Key points

- At present, talent identification and development usually depends on luck, often through children's chance involvement in a specific sport.
- Identification, often leading to early specialisation, is usually based on children's performance or body size from an early age, both of which have been shown to have low long-term predictive validity.

- The DPYPS programme, targeted at the P6-S2 age group, is based on the rationale that all children should have the opportunity to develop a sound foundation for later involvement in lifelong physical activity and sport.
- The focus in the primary years is on development of all children's basic movement competence and mastery behaviours prior to the identification and development process.
- As the children get older and the activities become more complex and more specialised, able children are identified and future development will take place within the club context.
- DPYPS is being set up within an inclusive structure that ensures children who are not selected, or drop out of the programme, can integrate back into an activity club context.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

*Fiona MacDonald HMIE*

I am struck by the positive energy in the workshops. I am also going to take note of a new piece of information I learned today. Namely, a new formula for determining our concentration span – our chronological age plus 5 minutes! We have probably all gone well beyond that by now so I do not intend to keep you any longer than necessary. I know that we have been forced to make some very difficult choices today, given the wide and interesting range of workshops on offer. I sense that there has been a desire for more discussion. I have enjoyed learning about some of the programmes that are happening in our schools. For example, Accelerated Learning and full VAK presentations, programmes for those who achieve more highly and a range of intervention programmes for those with movement difficulties.

The timing of the conference has been beneficial given the various initiatives we have heard about. There have been recurring themes, for example, accommodation issues, curriculum time, CPD, teacher training, and the need for clear funding streams. These bring their own challenges, particularly the need for a strategic overview. I do not underestimate the challenges facing the subject. In particular, we need to be very clear on the nature of physical education and set a clear path for the future.

It will be important not to get caught down side tracks and so fail to see the big picture and to distinguish the primary aims of the subject from those which are secondary. It is worth reminding ourselves that physical education is essentially a practical subject that develops practical-experiential knowledge. It begins with play in early childhood and leads to a wealth of culturally relevant bodily activities and disciplines which have traditionally held an important place in Scottish physical education. School physical education begins the process of initiating children into those physical activities which are deemed worthwhile in our society. By its very nature, it makes strong connections to and is supportive of other aspects of the school curriculum, such as health education and many aspects of personal and social development. These contribute to the secondary aims of the subject.

I am reminded of something that Naomi Mitcheson once said about conferences. She likened participants to beachcombers who walk the beaches looking for treasures. I hope that you have found your own piece of treasure today and that you go away from the Conference refreshed, inspired and positive about the future.

*Copies of the HMIE Report, Improving Physical Education in the Primary School can be accessed on the HMIE website*

[www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk)