



PE provision in secondary schools 2018

Survey Research Report

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Produced by the Youth Sport Trust

Research and Insight Team

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1. Introduction

Youth Sport Trust

The Youth Sport Trust is an independent UK children's charity dedicated to creating a brighter future for young people through the power of PE, sport and physical activity. We want to ensure that every child – regardless of age, gender, background or ability - can enjoy the benefits of an active lifestyle and has access to high quality PE and school sport. We passionately believe this is crucial to tackling some of the biggest challenges facing today's generation of children and young people.

The organisation places great value on building a strong evidence base to understand the extent to which our work is achieving our overall mission.

Context for this research

The Government Childhood Obesity Planⁱ has set out the ambition for all children to achieve one hour of physical activity every day, with schools being responsible for delivering 30 of these active minutes.

Schools are a unique and promising setting to help children meet Physical Activity (PA) guidelines. They have access to most children regardless of race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status for most waking hours on weekdays.

With access to children, facilities, equipment and staff, schools have the foundation already in place to facilitate a school-wide approach to PA promotionⁱⁱ. However, despite this there are many challenges facing schools which prevent them maximising these opportunities.

Research shows that **too many young people are inactive**, childhood **obesity** is getting worse and **mental health issues** are increasing:

- Only 22% of children aged 5 to 15 in England meet the Chief Medical Officer's recommended 60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous activity. 40% of children did fewer than 30 minutes per dayⁱⁱⁱ.
- Nearly a third of children aged 2 to 15 are overweight or obese, with younger generations becoming obese at earlier ages and staying obese for longer^{iv}.
- Around one in ten children have a diagnosable mental health disorder, and among teenagers, rates of depression and anxiety have increased by 70% in the past 25 years^v.

In addition, there is **increased pressure** on schools to **deliver academic results**. Research by the NUT^{vi} shows that teachers consider that children in England today are experiencing a narrower curriculum than in the past, with an increased focus on achieving accountability measures (i.e. Ofsted, SATS), and that this affects pupils with low attainment, disadvantaged pupils and those with special needs to an even greater degree.

It has been widely argued that the focus on test/exam results as the main outcome of schooling means that that other potential aims of education are not being achieved: for example, developing creativity, divergent thinking, collaboration, ability to learn and generally becoming well rounded citizens.



Traditionally, physical education and break times have been thought of as obvious school-based settings for providing children with opportunities to be physically active. Yet, increased pressure for performance on high stakes testing has caused many schools to reduce the amount of time allocated for physical education and break times^{vii}.

In response to this challenging landscape the YST conducted a short survey with PE teachers (Secondary schools) to gather insight into their concerns, worries and thoughts on their current PE Curriculum offer.

2. Survey Methodology

The online survey link was distributed through our networks^{viii} in October 2017

- 595 teachers responded from 487 different schools across the UK.
- The core questions in the survey were:
 1. On average, during 2017-18, how many minutes of core PE per week do students at your school receive?
 2. How, if at all, have the number of minutes of core PE changed
 - Since last academic year?
 - In the last 3 years?
 - In the last 5 years?
 3. If your core PE provision has decreased, what are the key reasons?
 4. Do you think PE should be valued more within the school curriculum for what it offers young people?
 5. What do you think needs to change to make PE a more valued part of the curriculum?



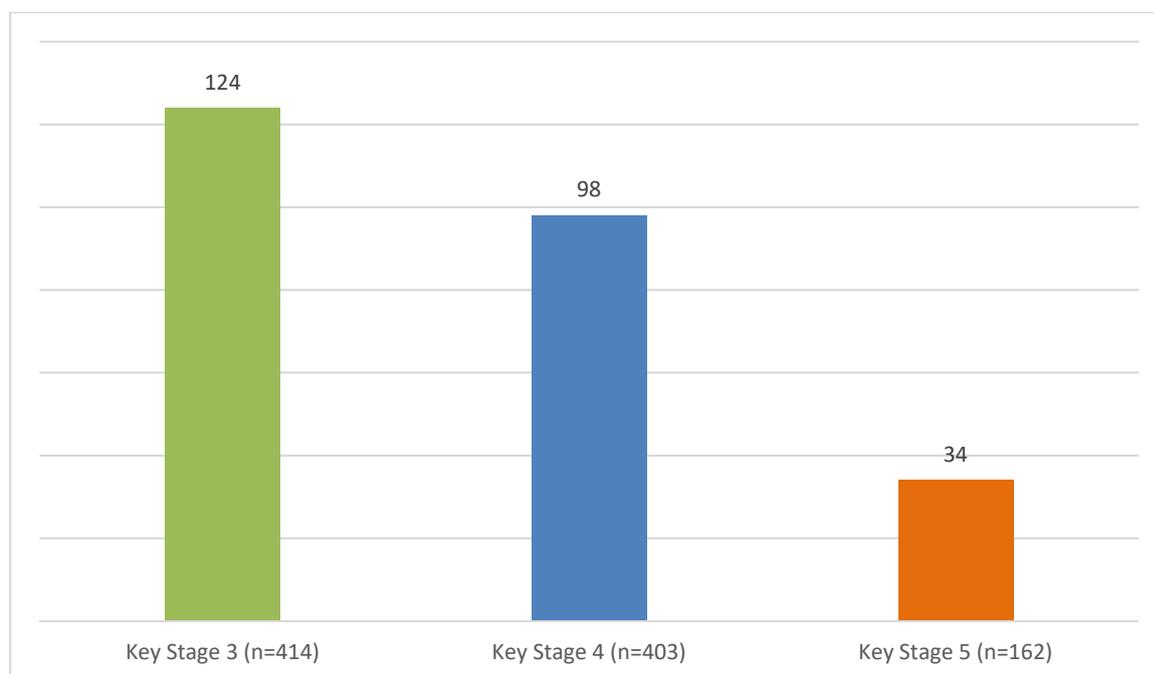
3. Results



The average number of curriculum PE minutes reduces as pupils get older

- Pupils in Key Stage 3 have the most curriculum PE.
- Unsurprisingly, pupils in Key Stage 5 have the least amount of curriculum PE.
- In Key Stage 3 pupils receive an average 124 minutes of curriculum PE each week, 26 minutes more than pupils in Key Stage 4, and a staggering 90 minutes more than Key Stage 5 pupils.
- On average pupils moving from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 experience a 21% drop in the amount of curriculum PE they receive.

Figure 1: The average number of curriculum PE minutes each week by Key Stage (school level data)



Therefore, at an age when young people are becoming increasingly sedentary, they are receiving fewer opportunities within their school timetable to be physically active, compounding the problem at this critical time.



The average number of Curriculum PE minutes has declined over time

- 10% of schools surveyed have seen a decline in the number of minutes of core PE for Key Stage 3 since last academic year.
- The trend is greater for Key Stage 4, where 24% of schools have seen a decline in the number of minutes of core PE since last academic year.

- However, the results are even more profound when looking at the trend across the last 5 years - Key Stage 3 minutes have declined by 20% and Key Stage 4 minutes by a staggering 38%.

Figure 2: Change in the number of core PE minutes for Key Stage 3 (school level data)

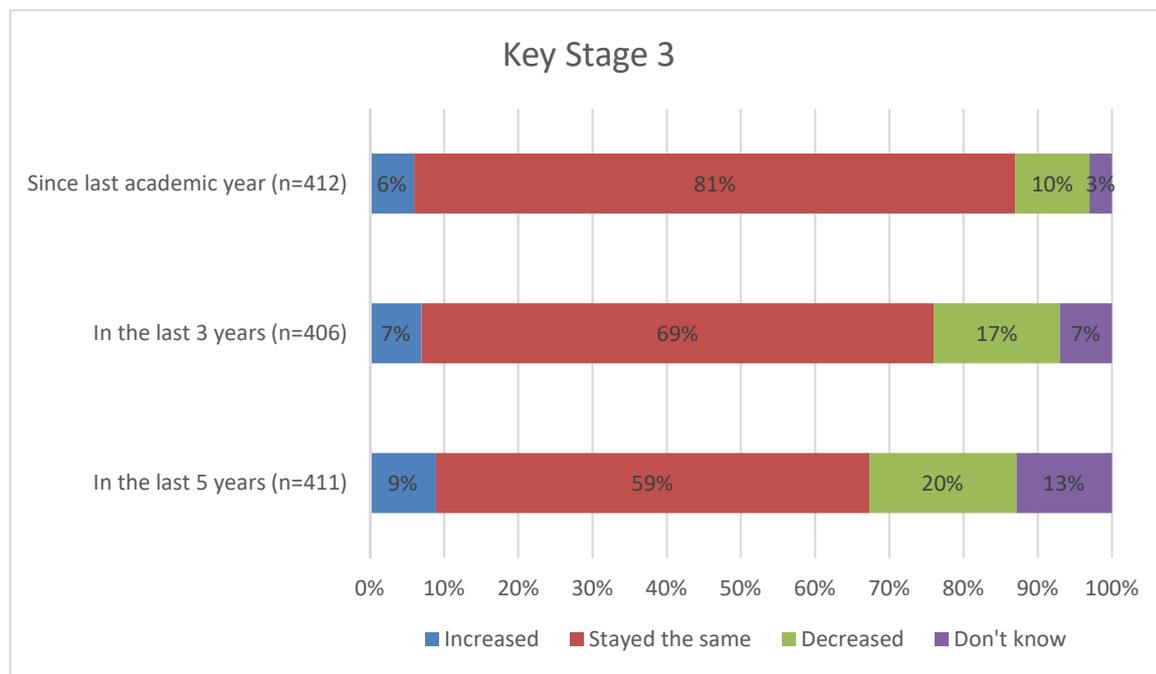
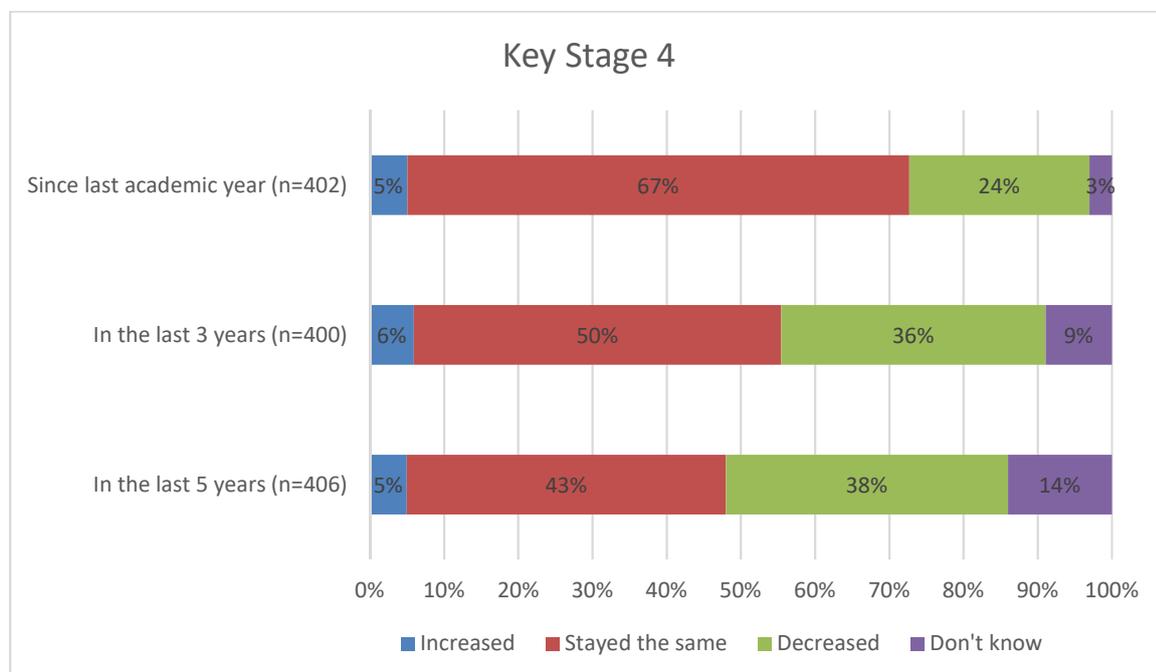


Figure 3: Change in the number of core PE minutes for Key Stage 4 (school level data)



This research suggests there is a spiralling downward trend in the number of core PE minutes offered to young people in secondary schools today, at a time when improving young people’s mental and physical wellbeing is becoming increasingly important.



PE provision has suffered as other subjects are given additional time

- 38% of teachers said their PE provision has declined because core subjects have been given additional time, and 1 in 3 cited exam pressures as a key reason for the decline:

Figure 4: Key reasons for a decrease in core PE

Core subjects have been given additional time	38%
Exam pressures of Progress 8 and eBacc	33%
My Core PE time has not decreased	17%
Cuts to number of PE staff	11%
Lack of interest in PE by Ofsted	8%
Lack of support from senior leaders	8%
Pressure to teach to the GCSE PE outcomes from year 7 which do not align to the needs for all students	5%
Lack of PE facilities	4%
Lack of clarity on success criteria from high quality PE to contribute towards school accountability measures	4%
Lack of student engagement / motivation	3%
Lack of inclusive PE opportunities	1%
Other: <i>“Actual core PE ks4 time hasn’t changed but students are taken out for intervention.”</i> <i>“More time need for other subjects at GCSE / leadership opportunities in Year 9.”</i> <i>“Changes to timings of school day and number/length of lessons.”</i>	2%

Therefore, pressure to achieve in other core subjects is having a detrimental effect on the provision of high quality PE opportunities for young people.



PE should be more valued within the school curriculum

97% of teachers agree PE should be valued more within the school curriculum for what it offers young people



The Government and school SLT should lead the promotion of PE as a more valued part of the curriculum

- 67% of teachers said they would like the Government to be more vocal on the value of PE.
- 61% said they wanted senior leaders and governors to have a better understanding of the value of PE.
- Over half of teachers surveyed would like to stop students being taken out of core PE for intervention in other subjects.

Figure 5: Changes needed to make PE a more valued part of the curriculum

Government to be more vocal on the value of PE	67%
Better understanding of the value of PE from senior leaders and governors in school	61%
Stop students being taken out of core PE for intervention from other subjects	54%
Including health and wellbeing measure as part of whole school accountability and league tables	48%
Ofsted inspection framework to show more interest in PE	47%
Better understanding of the value of PE from students	40%
Better PE facilities	40%
Change examination PE qualifications to better match needs of all students	39%
More time to plan high quality lessons	29%
Improved breadth of PE, with more variety of activities	18%
Improved competence of PE staff to deliver high quality lessons	10%
Nothing	1%
Other <i>“Increased funding to secondary schools PE. Money is in primary PE and there needs to be an opportunity for secondary to also access this funding. The hard work done in primary quickly undone in secondary due to lack of funding.”</i> <i>“Including health and wellbeing measure as part of whole school accountability and league tables”</i> <i>“Better understanding and support from parents”</i>	2%

It is paramount that senior leaders and the Government promote the value of PE in the curriculum to halt the decline in PE provision in secondary schools.

4. Conclusions

- This research has highlighted that at an age when young people are becoming more sedentary, they are receiving fewer opportunities within their school timetable to be physically active.
- There is a spiralling downward trend in the number of core PE minutes offered to young people in secondary schools today, at a time when improving young people's mental and physical wellbeing is becoming increasingly important.
- Pressure to achieve in other core subjects is having a detrimental effect on the provision of high quality PE opportunities for young people.
- This research highlights the need for PE to be more widely valued and promoted in the curriculum by both senior leaders and the government to ensure young people, teachers and parents are fully aware of the benefits of an active healthy lifestyle.

ⁱ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childhood-obesity-a-plan-for-action/childhood-obesity-a-plan-for-action>

ⁱⁱ Institute of Medicine. (2013) *Educating the student body: Taking physical activity and physical education to school*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

ⁱⁱⁱ NHS Digital (2016). *Health Survey for England 2015: Physical activity in children*. [online]. Retrieved 29th November October 2017 from: <https://digital.nhs.uk/catalogue/PUB22610>

^{iv} <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childhood-obesity-a-plan-for-action>

^v http://www.youngminds.org.uk/about/whats_the_problem

^{vi} Hutchings (2015) Exam Factories? The impact of accountability measures on children and young people

^{vii} Webster, C. A., Russ, L., Vazou, S., Goh, T. L. and Erwin, H. (2015) 'Integrating movement in academic classrooms: understanding, applying and advancing the knowledge base', *Obesity Reviews*, 16: pp. 691–701. doi: 10.1111/obr.12285

^{viii} The Youth Sport Trust network of PE Catalysts and Teach Meets