Move Well, Move Often – 
Developing the Physically Literate Child through the Lens of Fundamental Movement Skills – PDST Seminar for Primary Schools

The Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) provides a range of continuing professional development supports in the area of health and wellbeing. A central component of this relates to the teaching and learning of the PE curriculum. The PDST are currently offering one full day’s training in physical literacy in light of the new resource developed by the PDST for primary schools – Move Well, Move Often – Developing the Physically Literate Pupil Through the Lens of Fundamental Movement Skills. This resource has been designed to complement the teaching of the physical education (PE) curriculum and aims to provide a range of tools to support the teacher in teaching fundamental movement skills (FMS) throughout the primary school. Two teachers from each school are invited to attend the seminars which have been taking place nationwide since the beginning of May. A copy of this new resource which brings FMS to life for teachers, will be provided to all schools who attend. The Department of Education and Skills will provide substitute cover where required.

The response so far has been overwhelmingly positive and indicates the interest that primary teachers have in prioritising this part of children’s development. If you are reading this and missed these seminars, the good news is that there will be additional seminars in the autumn to facilitate demand and the resource will be given to all in attendance!

What is physical literacy?

Research shows that being physically active later in life depends on feeling confident in an activity setting; and that confidence, as an adult, most often comes from having learned a range of specific movement skills as a child. Physical literacy gives pupils the tools they need to take part in physical activity and sport, both for healthy life-long enjoyment and for sporting success. The physically literate child can be described as having the motivation, confidence, movement competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take part in physical activity throughout their personal lifelong journey. Through focusing the lens on the development of FMS in the primary school, we can create an environment in which pupils can flourish physically and meet the milestones of physical literacy as they move through the school years, so that they are more likely to continue to be active outside of school and later in life. We aim to teach our pupils to move well, so that they will move often.

What are fundamental movement skills (FMS)?

FMS are the basic building blocks of movement and a core element of physical literacy, because enhanced movement competence enables pupils to participate in a wide range of physical activities and settings, for a variety of intensities or durations. It is only when these skills are mastered that a child can go on to develop specialised movement skills, which will allow them to reach their potential in sports-specific endeavours. FMS are divided into the three categories below:

- **Locomotor skills:** transporting the body in any direction from one point to another.
  - Walking
  - Running
  - Hopping
  - Skipping
  - Jumping for height

- **Stability skills:** balancing the body in stillness and in motion.
  - Balancing
  - Landing

- **Manipulative skills:** control of objects using various body parts.
  - Catching
  - Throwing
  - Kicking
  - Striking with the hand
  - Striking with an implement

As the concept of physical literacy is relatively new in Ireland, and because it will be developed through the lens of 15 different skills, the PDST will provide continuing professional development for this resource over the next three years. Year One will focus on locomotor skills, Year Two will explore stability skills and Year Three will look at manipulative skills.

How do I teach FMS in my PE programme?

This highly practical and interactive resource has been designed to complement the teaching of the PE curriculum. The resource features a teachers’ guide, three skills and activities books, and a suite of online resources including video clips, planning exemplars and sample lessons. More than 350 activities are presented in the resource to provide opportunities to develop FMS. Furthermore, take home activities are provided throughout the resource to enable pupils to reflect on, consolidate and share their learning outside of the PE lesson. These experiences should lead to a physically literate pupil, who has the movement competence, confidence, and understanding to continue participation in physical activity throughout their lives. It is not intended that the
development of FMS replaces the PE lesson. Rather, it is intended that this skill development is integrated into the PE lesson in line with the overall school plan. In this way, the teacher focuses a lens on skill development within a lesson that is based on one of the six strands of the PE curriculum.

**Why focus on FMS in primary school?**

The primary years are particularly significant in the child’s physical literacy journey. It is at this stage that physical competence is very readily enhanced and when attitudes to physical activity are established. Equally, it is a time when the learners begin to develop their self-awareness and self-concept and are hungry for knowledge.

Where progress on this journey is achieved for each pupil, there is the potential for a most valuable legacy of a positive attitude to physical activity that can last a lifetime and add significantly to quality of life (Whitehead, M. 2013). Moving well and moving often contributes to the pupil’s physical, social, emotional and intellectual wellbeing and development.

A copy of the resource will be presented to all teachers who attend the training seminar (you need to book through your local education centre). The resource is also accessible online at www.scoilnet.ie/pdst/physlit. For further support in all aspects of health and wellbeing in the primary school, including PE, visit www.pdst.ie.

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**References**