

How To Teach A Good PE Lesson

Children running around with smiley happy faces does not make a PE lesson good. I was told this while shadowing an observation of a primary colleague. This statement is something I've reflected on many times. Teaching a good PE lesson is as refined as any subject, but is not a mystery. This article will look at some of the areas that help us to teach PE well and the pupils to make the progress they need while having children with smiley faces!



PUPILS ARE ENGAGED IN ACTIVITY QUICKLY IN A GOOD PE LESSON

PE lessons are short and so are children's attention spans. Harness your pupils' natural enthusiasm by getting them on task quickly at the start of a lesson. If your main objectives require more lengthy explanation, then do this after a simple, fun but relevant starter activity. Pupils can get their breath back and will be more inclined to listen. Other benefits of quick engagement in activity include:

-  Setting the tone for learning
-  More time to achieve outcomes
-  Fewer incidents of disruptive behaviour
-  Increased time on activity thereby increasing pupils' fitness

LEARNING ACTIVITIES ARE DIFFERENTIATED

In a good PE lesson, all children are working towards the same outcome, how they achieve this is through effective differentiation. Pupils' ability to achieve in PE is related to not only their physical ability but mental capacity and emotional understanding; we call this head, hand, heart. Consider these factors when planning any activity. In general, I advocate pupils of similar ability working together. However, there are times when a mixed ability is more appropriate.

A good PE lesson can be differentiated by using the STEP method. If we change the Space, Task, Equipment or People involved in an activity, it can increase the chances of success for those taking part. An example of STEP in use would be swimming widths; the objective might be 'swim one width without feet touching the bottom'. The beginners would require armbands and both hands on a float to propel them successfully from one side to the other. More experienced swimmers may require only one hand on a float to support their crossing. The teacher would modify equipment by pupil need. To learn more about the STEP principle check out our related blog.



PUPILS ARE MAKING PROGRESS



Children are improving. Improvement does not just mean becoming physically more proficient but also meeting other areas of the national curriculum outcomes such as engaging in competition, working well with others and developing a deeper understanding of healthy active lifestyles. What does progress in PE look like? Pupils are performing against progress markers. It is important to consider what these progress markers look like over an activity, a lesson and longer term. Pupils must be aware of how they can make progress and describe and show this to others.

PUPILS CAN LINK LEARNING

A good PE lesson means that pupils can draw links to things they have previously learnt; which does not mean that they can reiterate what they discovered the last lesson, but can draw parallels in more sophisticated ways. Linking learning could mean making comparisons between activities such as discussing an aspect of defending in gameplay in both netball and football. Or another example, children can suggest that they could develop their work in dance by trying a concept that worked in gymnastics. Linking their learning is a crucial aspect for pupils to acquire the knowledge to lead a healthy active lifestyle now and into their adulthood.



TIME ON ACTIVITY



There is no substitute for it, time on activity is essential when learning new skills, developing mindset and honing interpersonal skills. Unfortunately, teacher-led input can be as high as 70% in some PE lessons, which takes away from this activity-based learning. To develop and master skills children must be able to try, fail, repeat and refine. Teacher intervention should be only when necessary and to the pupils who need it. Avoid at all costs stopping the class and sitting them down to labour a point. Before you stop children, think, is what you're about to say or show going to add to their learning or can they find out for themselves with a few prompts or through trial and error?

Aim for 20% teacher speak and 80% activity time. A few ways to help you achieve this are:

-  Only stopping small groups at a time and allowing others to continue play/participate in activity
-  'Stop, stand still' – make your point and allow the class/group/individual to continue, there is no need to stop everyone and sit them down
-  Peer review with small groups or pairs rather than the whole class watching and feeding back, its more effective

There are other useful hints and tips I will share in future posts about what makes a good PE lesson, but for now, give these a go. Wishing you the best for your next PE lesson. Share with us what happens you can find us on Twitter @thepehub or on our Facebook page.