



PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical Education reveals the potential of the physical body God has created; our stewardship of it for Him; and ways in which we can co-operate together in unity to achieve common aims.

God calls us to honour Him with our bodies. Working with others we are to do this to give Him glory and build up the rest of the church.

'For physical training has some value, but Godliness has value in all things.' **1 Timothy 4:8**

'Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. Therefore, honour God with your body.' **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**

'This is what the Lord says; 'Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord.' **Jeremiah 9:23-24**

'Now you are the body of Christ and each one is a part of it. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.' **1 Corinthians 12:26-27**

Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit and we are called to honour God with them. We are to care for our bodies but not to boast about ourselves and our abilities but rather to boast about God.

Truth to Teach

Physical Education is to do with preparation for, and enjoyment of, life.

Way to Work

- a. To take part in a moderately wide range of sports at different levels and, if appropriate, to represent the school in competition.
- b. To perform appropriate routines involving physical activities and creative thinking (through Dance, Gymnastics, and Music and Movement) leading, if appropriate, to public displays.
- c. To give pupils opportunities to take part in Outdoor Pursuits through the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

Learning for Life

- d. To have learned valuable lessons from sports which leave pupils better able to play the real game of life successfully and by the rules.
- e. To have experienced the joy and physical demands of using one's body creatively and expressively.
- f. To have experienced the benefits of keeping one's body fit through the maintenance of a healthy lifestyle.
- g. To have learned to play corporately with others – experiencing what can be achieved as a team and how to serve the larger purpose.

Commentary on Physical Education

1. Truth/Concept

Physical Education is to do with the preparation for, and enjoyment of, life!

2. Preparation for Life

It is a feature of Paul's writing how often he uses a race as a metaphor for life. Chronologically, his references are as follows:

Acts 20:24 '....if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me'

1 Corinthians 9:24 'Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize. Run in such a way as to get the prize.'

Galatians 2:2 Paul checked his gospel with the leaders at Jerusalem. '.... for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain.'

Galatians 5:7 Paul says to the Galatians, '...you were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?'

2 Timothy 4:7 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.'

The writer to the Hebrews also uses the same metaphor:

Hebrews 12:1 '.... let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles us and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.'

For Paul, his one desire was to run the race of life properly and to finish it. To do so, he fully understood the following:

- a) Only one gets the prize in a race. (**1 Corinthians 9:24**)
- b) Strict training is essential. (**1 Corinthians 9:25**)
- c) Aimless running is pointless; only a disciplined approach wins the prize (**1 Corinthians 9:24**)
- d) The winner gains a crown that does not last. (1 Corinthians 9:25)

He uses the image of a race as a means of inspiring his readers to keep going in their Christian life, in order to gain the crown 'that will last for ever' (**1 Corinthians 9:25**). The athletic competition he alludes to is not the most important thing. The inference is that his readers, and possibly himself, had experienced athletic competition, and so he uses this as a metaphor of the Christian life because so much of the life of a Christian is similar to the preparation for and actual participation in a race.

Similarly, as Christian teachers, we can teach children so much about living as disciples of Jesus by giving them the experience of athletic competition. By teaching the temporal (with its fading crown) they can learn vital lessons about the outworking of their calling (with the eternal crown). Physical education is about preparation for life as opposed to seeing it as an end in itself. We are equipping them with a metaphor for life. A grueling session in preparation for a 1500 metre race is uncomfortable at the time, but hopefully will contribute towards a good performance in the race itself. That is a helpful memory for a young person later on in times of challenge (studying for professional exams, for example). As one writer has wisely expressed it, 'Various activities and contests may be looked at as role-play of the Christian life.' (Dr Ruth C Hayrock. EBTTTS, p 405)

3. Enjoyment

Physical Education should contain moments of enjoyment and fun, as well as the more strenuous aspects of training. Telling a class, 'The next lesson is P.E.' usually tends to arouse more enthusiasm than telling them the next lesson is History or English or whatever! Young children generally enjoy running about and using their bodies; they rarely walk soberly in a playground! Playing in a team should be a pleasant experience, as should devising a dance or a gymnastic sequence, learning a new skill or improving a familiar one. Later on, many may take part in physical activities as a means of relaxation or recreation, whether that be a walk in the country, a round of golf, or a game of tennis. Some will miss out on these pleasures if looking back to PE at school only evokes memories of hard work and endless training sessions. We need to aim for a balance and give at least some scope for the expression of 'the joy of the Lord.'

Way to Work

1. Competitive Sports

Referring once again to Paul's metaphor of the race, 'all the runners run but only one gets the prize'. The very nature of a race is that it is competitive. Therefore, says Paul, 'run in such a way as to get the prize' (**1 Corinthians 9:24**). To give children this life metaphor, they all have to have access to athletic competition of one sort or another. Involving children in competitive sport carries great potential benefits but also significant dangers; there is an element of risk involved.

Benefits of Competition

i. It promotes teamwork.

The very essence of the body of Christ is the interdependence of the various members (**Romans 12:4-5**). The more opportunities children have to work co-operatively towards a common goal the better. Team games clearly provide such opportunities.

ii. It provides moments of challenge and controlled pressure.

Most children need regular and appropriate challenges to overcome, in safe conditions and overseen by adults. The regulated pressures in team games can equip youngsters to handle some of the stresses of adult life (particularly the need for staying cool in a crisis, for taking rapid decisions, for inter-relating with others in order to relieve pressure on them, for 'weathering the storm' etc.)

iii. It gives early experience of character development through difficulty.

Romans 5:3 points to the progression from suffering to perseverance, to character and to hope. Regular training towards the goal of being part of a successful team involves this 'journey'. Getting fit involves a small amount of suffering! Sticking with a training programme, or with a run of losing matches, develops perseverance. The fruit is a more developed character, which ultimately affects a person's outlook on life (hope).

iv. It develops goal-setting.

Good coaches have a plan for the season, which they communicate to their players. Team games involve short-term goals (half or a full game) medium-term goals and long-term goals (part or whole season). Team games help promote goal-orientation, both for an individual and for the group. Remember Paul in **Acts 20:24** '.... if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me', and more poignantly, his overwhelming desire to 'gain Christ and be found in Him.'
(Philippians 3:7-14)

v. It promotes submission to a coach, and to the rules of the game.

Ultimately authority lies with the coach and, as a season progresses, children find out the value of submission in a variety of circumstances (from fun training sessions to being substituted or even left out of a team). (**1 Peter 5:5**) They will also have to learn to accept criticism.

Although very few soccer players end up as hooligans, a good proportion of youngsters involved in team games learn early the necessity and value of playing by the rules. Hopefully this will carry over into other areas of life.

vi. It gives opportunities both to lose and to win graciously.

Winning without becoming proud (**1 Corinthians 10:20**) and losing without resentment (**2 Corinthians 6:10**) are learned responses, usually through frequently getting it wrong. Like many of the character issues of team sports, the fruit is delightful but the process can be messy! It seems likely that if the mess is made and cleared up at school, a lot of heartache can be saved later on. Kipling's words, as quoted over the player's entrance to the centre court at Wimbledon, are not inappropriate. 'If you can meet with triumph and disaster and treat those two impostors just the same....'

vii. It should encourage the combination of training with natural 'flair'

Team games give innumerable opportunities for children to demonstrate both obedience and faith. Obedience is replicating set patterns of play, practiced on the training ground, and faith is shown in experimenting, taking risks and exhibiting natural flair.

Dangers of Competition

Despite all the benefits described above, competitive games are not without their drawbacks. They are the arena for the display both of the best and of the worst character attributes. They can also lead to unpleasant side-effects, which need to be guarded against. 'The foxes do not have to be very large before they can spoil the vine.' **(Song of Solomon 2:15).**

1. The development of an overly competitive spirit in children

The main virtue of competitive sport is what is achieved through participation (outlined above). The development of a 'competitive spirit' is not the object, but unfortunately often results. Good sportsmen are in danger of becoming competitive inappropriately: in class, in their friendships, in seeking a position, in always wanting to be first.

A few suggestions as to how to combat these dangers might be useful: -

- a) Emphasize the value of goal-setting in life above the concept of defeating others.
- b) Keep emphasizing the virtues of competitive sport. A useful little motto is:
 - Without fuss,
 - Within the rules,
 - With each other,

This covers issues such as no over-reacting to success, to failure, or to the referee; playing according to the rules and to the coach's instructions and playing as a team.

- c) Keep emphasizing the enjoyable aspects of sport. Winning merely adds to the enjoyment, it is not the sole reason for enjoying a game.

2. The elevation of sport above other aspects of school life.

This is a very real long-term danger which for many years was an unfortunate feature in many grammar and public schools. To combat this, constantly place athletic ability as a God-given gift of equal value to intellectual, musical and artistic abilities. Perhaps regular displays of artwork, musical items in assemblies, public recognition of good and improved grades alongside publication of sports results would even things out.

3. The elevation of sport in a child's life above his/her relationship with God.

This is a very reasonable fear for Christian parents, particularly in this age of saturation television coverage of sport. A few comments might help.

- a) The same fear applies to many other aspects of life: music, friendships, any consuming interest or hobby. Promotion of the wisdom given in **Matthew 6:33** would seem to be relevant 'Seek first his kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.'
- b) The denial of opportunity to play competitive sport will only breed frustration or resentment amongst the athletically inclined. Some outlet needs to be found. **Colossians 3:21** is perhaps relevant to parents.
- c) Moderation in all things. A constant reminder needs to be given that although God may call some to be professional sportsmen or women, it will not be many. And anyway, there is more to life than football.

4. The detrimental effect on the less physically able.

A very real issue, so how do we help them?

- a) For those whose co-ordination and physical abilities are of a particularly low level, another activity (possibly swimming) could be suggested, although the parents would probably have to take responsibility for this.
 - For the willing, but poorly coordinated
 - Regularly emphasize their other strengths, occasionally publicly
 - In training, pair them up with others of a similar standard
 - In practice games, avoid putting all the weaker players on the same side. Consistently emphasize their part in team sports
 - Occasionally give them administrative tasks, i.e. time-keeping
- b) The Key is regular communication which:
 - Shows recognition that their real strengths lie elsewhere
 - Commends their moments of success (without being patronizing)

5. Those who are less able in competitive sports might well shine in Dance or Gymnastics. (see Display)

School Matches

As a school, we will be looking to develop our fixtures list to provide even competition with other local schools, within the constraints imposed by the timetable, transport and finances. For boys this will be in football, rugby and, possibly, basketball. For girls this will be in hockey, netball and, possibly, rounders and tennis. There may also be scope for the development of teams competing in leagues at weekends. For both boys and girls, the Christian Schools Athletics Meeting at Southampton in July each year provides an excellent focal point for the summer term.

2. Display

As something of a balance to competitive sports, it would seem that there is a place for combining physical activity with a more creative element. For girls this would be through Dance, and for boys through Gymnastics. In both areas there is scope for improvisation and the construction of their own sequences, while there is also a need for specific instruction in certain steps and movements. There are a number of benefits in promoting both activities, with only two obvious dangers.

1. Benefits of display

It makes room for creativity

In dance there is plenty of scope for the interpretation of music and mood through movement, as well as room for simple mime work. There may also be links with school plays that are being performed. In Gymnastics, children enjoy developing their own sequence of movements individually, in pairs and in groups.

It highlights the virtue of practice

Good displays need a lot of practice and improve as a result. Perfection is not the final goal but putting on a reasonable show should be.

It should promote teamwork

Dance and Gymnastics give room for both individual and group expression in different ways to team sports. In some ways the reliance on team members is greater, particularly if lifting is involved.

It provides a challenge

The goal of public performance gives focus, as well as being a spur towards achieving as high a standard as is reasonable. It also provides children with a golden opportunity to overcome self-consciousness.

It combines sensitivity with strength

Both activities require a certain level of physical fitness and strength, but also call for sensitivity and delicate balance; qualities not always evident on the games field!

It provides opportunities for the non-games player

For both girls and boys, an individual who appears clumsy in ball games can be surprisingly graceful or well-balanced in Dance or Gymnastics. Equally, the star games player can suddenly feel like a fish out of water in the gym. Not that this needs to be pointed out, but it does help him or her to understand the non-games player's struggles during games lessons.

Dangers of display

Safety

In Gymnastics the danger of an accident is probably nearer than in any other sport, because awkward landings seem fairly common. Sensible pairings and good discipline are the best safety measures, as well as early spotting of outrageous and potentially dangerous improvisations.

The display can exalt its participants

Any display, by its very nature, attracts attention and is therefore open to a 'look at me' mentality (**Romans 12:3**). Dance can more easily be 'to the Lord' than Gymnastics and, as such, is an obvious means of worship (**Exodus 15:20-21**). As far as Gymnastics is concerned, the more the focus is on what the group can accomplish together the better, rather than on what the individual can do. The exception to this is the non-games player who suddenly comes into his/her own when demonstrating a complicated movement, and who would probably benefit from a good dose of public affirmation.

Learning for Life

Having outlined in some detail what we seek to achieve in Physical Education, we now need to consider how we intend to deliver this within the constraints of the school timetable.

1. Timetable

All pupils in Y7 – Y11 have two sessions per week allocated to Physical Education. These sessions are of 1.25 hours and 1.5 hours respectively (including time for changing and any transportation necessary).

2. Competitive Sports

To achieve our goals of raising the standard of selected sports in the school, and thereby reaping the benefits of competitive sports, as described above, realistically we need to give both sessions to competitive sports as opposed to allocating one of the two sessions to general P.E. If we only give one session we will not see a significant improvement in standards, and neither will we be able to compete on equal terms with local schools. To this end, all boys will do rugby in the Autumn Term and football in the Spring Term, thus corresponding with what other schools in the area are doing. In the same way, the girls will do hockey in the Autumn Term and netball in the Spring Term. As far as the Summer Term is concerned, a little more flexibility is possible. The focus for all pupils will be athletics. During their other session I would suggest Basketball for all boys, with scope for extra athletics practice if needed for training towards the Southampton meeting, or for individuals close to being able to achieve the next award in the Five Star Award Scheme. The Y7 – Y8 girls could play Rounders, and the Y9 – Y11 girls could play Tennis, assuming we have sufficient teaching staff. The girls also could do some extra athletics as outlined for the boys, above.

Our Physical Education Programme in the Senior School will therefore look like this:

	Boys (Y7 – Y11)	Girls (Y7 – Y8)	Girls (Y9 – Y11)
Autumn Term	Rugby	Hockey	Hockey
Spring Term	Football	Netball	Netball
Summer Term	Basketball & Athletics	Rounders & Athletics	Tennis & Athletics

3. Display

If we are to make progress with competitive sports there is, unfortunately, no room on the timetable for regular Dance and Gymnastics. We need, therefore, to set up as soon as possible a Dance and Gymnastics club for those interested, meeting during a lunch hour. In addition, when the weather is wet, I suggest that we seek to put on introductory sessions in Dance and/or Gymnastics.

4. Outdoor Pursuits

For Y7 and Y8 we need to seek opportunities to provide taster sessions in activities such as Abseiling, Rock-climbing, Canoeing, Sailing, etc. For Y9 – Y11 we need to seek to work towards setting up the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme.

5. GCSE P.E.

In years 10 and 11 we offer a GCSE in P.E. through the Midland Examining Group. This enables those with a particular interest in sport to study the theoretical side of P.E. (40% of final mark) and to improve their standards in four particular activities (60% of the final mark). At present the sports being studied are Football (boys) or Hockey (girls) plus Badminton, Orienteering, and Track and Field Athletics. All students work on these four sports. At some time in the future it might be possible to extend the range of activities so that there is a greater element of choice.

RESOURCES

Refer to 'Towards a Christian Curriculum' by Barbara Lord