

Physical Education (PE) Survey Visits

Generic grade descriptors and supplementary subject-specific guidance for inspectors on making judgements during visits to schools

Subject feedback letters, following survey visits, normally contain separate judgements on:

- the achievement of pupils in the subject
- the quality of teaching in the subject
- the quality of the curriculum in the subject
- the quality of leadership and management of the subject
- the overall effectiveness of the subject.

In coming to these judgements, inspectors will use the relevant criteria and grade descriptors from the 2012 Section 5 evaluation schedule as they can be applied to individual subjects. Key elements of these descriptors are set out in the left-hand columns in the following pages though inspectors may refer to the whole section 5 evaluation schedule where appropriate. Alongside them (for achievement, teaching, the curriculum and leadership and management) are supplementary, subject-specific descriptors which provide additional guidance for PE. These descriptors should be applied in a way which is appropriate to the age of pupils involved. Except where otherwise indicated, descriptors are intended to be used on a 'best fit' basis.

It is important to note that this guidance is intended only to inform the judgements made by specialist inspectors carrying out subject survey visits. It is not for use on Section 5 whole-school inspections.

Grade descriptors:¹ achievement of pupils in PE

	Generic	Supplementary subject-specific
1	<p>Outstanding</p> <p>Almost all pupils, including, where applicable, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, are making rapid and sustained progress in the subject over time given their starting points. They learn exceptionally well and as a result acquire knowledge quickly and in depth, including in the sixth form and areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They develop and apply a wide range of skills to great effect, including reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills that will ensure they are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment. The standards of attainment of almost all groups of pupils are likely to be at least in line with national averages for all pupils with many above average. In exceptional circumstances, where standards of attainment of any group of pupils are below those of all pupils nationally, the gap is closing dramatically over a period of time.</p>	<p>Pupils show exceptional independence; they are able to think for themselves and take the initiative by, for example, asking pertinent questions, actively ensuring their own and others' safety and in working constructively with others. Pupils acquire new subject knowledge and skills and gain an in-depth understanding of a range of different activities exceptionally well. They learn, practise and apply skills in a range of different contexts so that progress is at least good in each key stage. Pupils independently explore and experiment with techniques, tactics and compositional ideas in different types of physical activity to produce outstanding outcomes. They show significant levels of originality, imagination or creativity in their understanding and skills within the subject. Pupils demonstrate highly effective leadership skills and are highly competent in a broad range of roles. They have exceptionally well developed understanding of making healthy lifestyle choices. They demonstrate high levels of physical fitness and work hard for sustained periods of time. They develop their mental determination and physical strength, stamina, speed and flexibility to cope with the demands of different activities. Almost all pupils can swim at least 25 metres and perform basic water skills (KS2 and above). Pupils are confident and highly competent at evaluating, adjusting and adapting performances in different contexts. They develop a sense of passion and commitment to the subject. They eagerly participate in lessons, display very positive attitudes and engage in a wide range of physical enrichment activities. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Their keenness and commitment to succeed in PE, school sport and/or dance and their ability to grasp opportunities to extend and improve their performances are exceptional.</p>
2	<p>Good</p> <p>Pupils are making better progress than all pupils nationally in the subject given their starting points. Groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, are also making better progress than similar groups of pupils nationally. Pupils acquire knowledge quickly and are secure in their understanding of the subject. They develop and apply a range of skills well, including reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills that will ensure they are well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment. The standards of attainment of the large majority of groups of pupils are likely to be at least in line with national averages for all pupils. Where standards of any group of pupils are below those of all pupils nationally, the gaps are closing. In exceptional circumstances, where attainment is low overall, it is improving at a faster rate than nationally over a sustained period.</p>	<p>Pupils are able to work independently when given the opportunity, taking the initiative in their work and when working with others. They gain new subject knowledge, skills and understanding at a good rate. Pupils confidently explore and experiment with techniques, tactics and compositional ideas in different types of physical activity to produce good outcomes. They demonstrate originality, imagination or creativity in their subject work. They demonstrate good levels of physical fitness. A high proportion regularly engages in a range of physical enrichment activities. Pupils have a well developed understanding of making healthy lifestyle choices and of being safe. Most pupils can swim at least 25 metres and perform basic water skills (KS2 and above). They develop their mental determination and physical strength, stamina, speed and flexibility to cope with the demands of different activities. Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils apply themselves and are effective at evaluating, making adjustments and adaptations when performing in different contexts. They enjoy the subject and can explain its value.</p>
3	<p>Satisfactory</p> <p>Pupils are progressing at least as well in the subject as all pupils nationally given their starting points. Groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, are also making progress in line with similar groups of pupils nationally. Pupils generally learn well in the subject, with no major weaknesses. They acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills, including those in reading, writing, communication and mathematics that will ensure they are prepared adequately for the next stage in</p>	<p>Pupils are generally dependent on their teachers and explore and experiment with techniques, tactics and compositional ideas under direction of an adult. They can occasionally work independently and take the initiative in developing their work, but few act as leaders or are willing to take different roles in lessons. Most pupils work effectively when provided with appropriate tasks and guidance but lack confidence in improving the quality of their performances. Pupils make satisfactory gains in skills, knowledge and understanding. Occasionally pupils show creative or original responses in their subject work. They</p>

¹ Grade descriptors are not to be used as a checklist but should be applied adopting a 'best fit' approach.

	<p>their education, training or employment. The standards of attainment of the majority of groups of pupils are likely to be in line with national averages for all pupils. Where standards of groups of pupils are below those of all pupils nationally, the gaps are closing overall. In exceptional circumstances, where attainment is low overall, it is improving over a sustained period.</p>	<p>use skills, tactics and compositional ideas satisfactorily in different types of physical activity but are not always able to work hard for sustained periods of time to improve their performance. Pupils understand healthy lifestyles and being safe but do not always choose to engage fully in lessons and in physical enrichment activities. The majority of pupils can swim at least 25 metres and perform basic water skills (KS2 and above). Pupils know how to make adjustments and adaptations when performing in different contexts and occasionally show high levels of enthusiasm and interest. Behaviour is satisfactory. They are generally interested in the subject.</p>
4	<p>Inadequate</p> <p>Achievement in the subject is likely to be inadequate if any of the following apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pupils' learning and progress, or the learning and progress of particular groups, is consistently below those of all pupils nationally given their starting point. ■ Learning and progress in any key stage, including the sixth form, lead to underachievement. ■ The learning, quality of work and progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs show that this group is underachieving. ■ Pupils' communication skills, including in reading and writing and proficiency in mathematics overall, or those of particular groups, are not sufficient for the next stage of education or training. ■ Attainment is consistently low showing little, fragile or inconsistent improvement, or is in decline. ■ There are wide gaps in attainment and in learning and progress between different groups of pupils and of all pupils nationally that are showing little sign of closing or are widening. 	<p>Pupils rarely show the ability to work independently or take the initiative in their work. Pupils make limited progress in gaining skills, knowledge and understanding. Too many fail to work effectively and give up too easily unless closely directed by an adult. Behaviour is inadequate. Pupils rarely demonstrate creativity or originality in their subject work. A majority of pupils cannot swim 25 metres (KS2 and above). Pupils lack interest and enthusiasm for the subject and a small but significant proportion do not fully engage in physical activity. Pupils do not actively choose a healthy lifestyle and are not able to make decisions about being safe without adult direction. Very few engage in physical enrichment activities or demonstrate leadership qualities.</p>

Grade descriptors:² the quality of teaching in PE³

	Generic	Supplementary subject-specific
1	<p>Outstanding</p> <p>Much of the teaching in the subject is outstanding and never less than consistently good. As a result, almost all pupils are making rapid and sustained progress. All teachers have consistently high expectations of all pupils. Drawing on excellent subject knowledge, teachers plan astutely and set challenging tasks based on systematic, accurate assessment of pupils' prior skills, knowledge and understanding. They use well judged and often imaginative teaching strategies that, together with sharply focused and timely support and intervention, match individual needs accurately. Consequently, pupils learn exceptionally well. Teaching promotes pupils' high levels of resilience, confidence and independence when they tackle challenging activities. Teachers systematically and effectively check pupils' understanding throughout lessons, anticipating where they may need to intervene and doing so with notable impact on the quality of learning. Time is used very well and every opportunity is taken to successfully develop crucial skills, including being able to use their literacy and numeracy skills. Appropriate and regular homework contributes very well to pupils' learning. Marking and constructive feedback from teachers and pupils are frequent and of a consistently high quality, leading to high levels of engagement and</p>	<p>Teachers communicate high expectations, enthusiasm and passion about their subject to pupils. Teachers and external coaches/practitioners have a high level of confidence and expertise both in terms of their specialist knowledge across a range of activities and their understanding of effective learning in the subject. As a result, they use a very wide range of innovative and imaginative resources and teaching strategies to stimulate all pupils' active participation in their learning and secure outstanding progress across all aspects of the subject. ICT is used very effectively to support observation and analysis to improve work further. Teachers ensure that pupils of all abilities learn new skills, find out how to use them in different ways, and link them to accurately repeat actions, sequences or team tactics. Pupils are expected to work hard for sustained periods of time and persevere when they begin to tire. Non-performing pupils are engaged purposefully with other roles, such as observation and feedback, coaching, umpiring and refereeing. External coaches'/practitioners' and other adults' support is well focused and makes a significant contribution to the quality of learning. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to assess their own and others' performances and make suggestions for how they could be improved.</p>

² Grade descriptors are not to be used as a checklist but should be applied adopting a 'best fit' approach.

³ These grade descriptors describe the quality of teaching in the subject taking account of evidence over time. While they include some characteristics of individual lessons, they are not designed to be used to judge individual lessons.

	interest.	
2	<p>Good</p> <p>As a result of teaching that is mainly good, with examples of outstanding teaching, most pupils and groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, are achieving well in the subject over time. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils. Teachers use their well developed subject knowledge and their accurate assessment of pupils' prior skills, knowledge and understanding to plan effectively and set challenging tasks. They use effective teaching strategies that, together with appropriately targeted support and intervention, match most pupils' individual needs so that pupils learn well. Teaching generally promotes pupils' resilience, confidence and independence when tackling challenging activities. Teachers regularly listen astutely to, carefully observe and skilfully question groups of pupils and individuals during lessons in order to reshape tasks and explanations to improve learning. Teaching consistently deepens pupils' knowledge and understanding and teaches them a range of skills including literacy and numeracy skills. Appropriate and regular homework contributes well to pupils' learning. Teachers assess pupils' progress regularly and accurately and discuss assessments with them so that pupils know how well they have done and what they need to do to improve.</p>	<p>Teachers have a clear understanding of the value of their subject which they communicate effectively to pupils. Teachers and external coaches/practitioners have a good level of specialist expertise which enthuses and challenges most pupils and is used well in planning and teaching their subject. As a result, they use a wide range of resources and teaching strategies to promote good learning across all aspects of the subject. The use of ICT enhances opportunities to observe and analyse work for improvement. Teachers ensure that pupils are active and engaged in physical activities throughout the lesson. They expect pupils to work hard for sustained periods of time. Activities develop pupils' physical competence and knowledge of the body in action. Non-performing pupils are engaged purposefully with other roles, such as observation and feedback, coaching, umpiring/refereeing. Pupils are encouraged to perform at maximum levels in relation to speed, height, distance, strength and accuracy. External coaches/practitioners' and other adults' support is well focused and makes a positive contribution to the quality of learning. Pupils assess their own and others' performances and suggest improvements.</p>
3	<p>Satisfactory</p> <p>Teaching results in most pupils, and groups of pupils, currently in the school making progress in the subject broadly in line with that made by pupils nationally with similar starting points. There is likely to be some good teaching and there are no endemic inadequacies across year groups or for particular groups of pupils. Teachers' expectations enable most pupils to work hard and achieve satisfactorily and encourage them to make progress. Due attention is often given to the careful assessment of pupils' learning but this is not always conducted rigorously enough and may result in some unnecessary repetition of work for pupils and tasks being planned and set that do not fully challenge. Teachers monitor pupils' work during lessons, picking up any general misconceptions and adjust their plans accordingly to support learning. These adaptations are usually successful but occasionally are not timely or relevant and this slows learning for some pupils. Teaching strategies ensure that the individual needs of pupils are usually met. Teachers carefully deploy any available additional support and set appropriate homework and these contribute reasonably well to the quality of learning for pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Pupils are informed about the progress they are making and how to improve further through marking and dialogue with adults that is usually timely and encouraging. This approach ensures that most pupils want to work hard and improve.</p>	<p>Teachers understand how to maintain pupils' interest in the subject. Teachers and external coaches/practitioners have a satisfactory level of subject expertise which they use in their planning and teaching. As a result, they use a range of resources and teaching strategies to promote a satisfactory level of learning across most aspects of the subject. Support provided by external coaches/practitioners is effectively deployed. Activity rates are satisfactory. Pupils occasionally have opportunities to assess their own learning and look for improvements.</p>
4	<p>Inadequate</p> <p>Teaching in the subject is likely to be inadequate where any of the following apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ As a result of weak teaching, pupils or groups of pupils currently in the school are making inadequate progress. ■ Teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations and teaching over time fails to excite, enthuse, engage or motivate particular groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. ■ Pupils cannot communicate, read, write or use mathematics as well as they should, as appropriate, in the subject. 	<p>Teachers are not able to engage or retain pupils' interest in the subject. Their subject expertise is limited and, as a result, they do not provide the resources or teaching strategies to promote effective subject learning. Teaching fails to promote high quality performance. Pupils are allowed to be inactive for extended periods of time. There are low expectations for pupils' physical and/or verbal input in lessons. Too much time in lessons is wasted. Pupils are not given opportunities to observe, evaluate and feedback to others to improve their performances. Pupils are not given long enough to practise and refine their skills. At worst, lessons are disorderly and/or unsafe.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Learning activities are not sufficiently well matched to the needs of pupils so that they make inadequate progress. 	
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Grade descriptors: the curriculum in PE⁴

	Generic⁵	Supplementary subject-specific
1	<p>Outstanding</p> <p>The curriculum in the subject provides highly positive, memorable experiences and rich opportunities for high quality learning, has a very positive impact on pupils' behaviour and, where appropriate, their safety, and contributes very well to pupils' achievement and, where appropriate, to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.</p>	<p>The imaginative and stimulating subject curriculum is skilfully designed to match the full range of pupils' needs and to ensure highly effective continuity and progression in their learning. All pupils are likely to access at least two hours high quality PE in the curriculum each week, including swimming in primary schools. Excellent partnerships are forged with other local schools and the wider sporting community to provide a wide range of physical enrichment activities that promote and extend pupils' learning and engagement. The programme enables pupils to reach a high level of performance and achieve exceptionally well in a wide range of physical activities. Secondary schools provide a strong and varied programme of accredited courses, including sports leadership and vocational options. Education for safety and health is strong. The vast majority of pupils take up opportunities for at least one additional hour of school sport and/or dance each week in teams and as individuals.</p>
2	<p>Good</p> <p>The curriculum in the subject provides well organised, imaginative and effective opportunities for learning for all groups of pupils including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, promotes positive behaviour and, where appropriate, their safety, and provides a broad range of experiences that contribute well to the pupils' achievement and, where appropriate, to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.</p>	<p>The curriculum is broad, balanced and well informed by current initiatives in the subject. It is designed to match a range of pupils' needs and ensure effective continuity and progression in their learning in the subject. Almost all pupils have access to at least two hours high quality PE in the curriculum each week, including swimming in primary schools. Good partnerships are forged with other local schools and the wider sporting community to provide a wide range of physical enrichment activities to promote and extend pupils' learning and engagement with the subject. The programme enables pupils to reach a good level of performance and achieve well in a range of physical activities. Progression routes are clear, well established and promote lifelong participation in physical activities. Secondary schools provide a good programme of accredited courses, including sports leadership and vocational options. Education for safety and health is good. A majority of pupils access at least one additional hour of school sport and/or dance each week.</p>
3	<p>Satisfactory</p> <p>The curriculum in the subject is generally matched to pupils' needs, interests and aspirations and provides adequate preparation for the next stage of their lives, whatever their starting points.</p>	<p>The curriculum secures the pupils' broad and balanced entitlement in the subject and meets any statutory requirements which apply. It provides for a range of pupils' needs and ensures they make satisfactory progress in their learning. Most pupils have access to two hours high quality PE in the curriculum each week, including swimming in primary schools. Some partnerships are forged with other local schools and the wider sporting community, but the range of activity provided to enrich pupils' interest and learning is modest. The programme enables pupils to reach an appropriate level of performance and achieve satisfactorily in some activities. Secondary schools provide a narrow range of accredited courses. Education for safety and health is at least satisfactory. A minority of pupils access a minimum of one additional hour of school sport and/or dance each week.</p>

⁴ The generic grade descriptors are drawn from the leadership and management section of *The evaluation schedule for the inspection of schools and academies, January 2012*

4	<p>Inadequate</p> <p>The curriculum in the subject fails to meet the needs of pupils or particular groups of pupils.</p>	<p>The curriculum does not ensure pupils' entitlement to the subject and does not secure continuity in their learning. There is little by way of enrichment activity in the subject. The majority of pupils do not have access to two hours high quality PE, including swimming. Pupils' behaviour raises concerns about their safety, health and engagement in lifelong activity. There is inadequate provision for education in safety and health and in promoting lifelong participation. There are limited opportunities for taking part in sport and/or dance outside lessons.</p>
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Grade descriptors:⁶ quality of leadership and management of PE

	Generic	Supplementary subject-specific
1	<p>Outstanding</p> <p>The pursuit of excellence in all activities relating to the subject is demonstrated by an uncompromising and highly successful drive to strongly improve achievement, or maintain the highest levels of achievement, for all pupils including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, over a sustained period of time. Actions are based on a deep and accurate understanding of performance in the subject. Key leaders focus relentlessly on improving teaching and learning, resulting in teaching that is likely to be outstanding and at least consistently good.</p>	<p>Leadership is well-informed by a high level of subject expertise and vision. There is an outstanding track record of innovation. Subject reviews, self-evaluation and improvement planning are well-informed by current best practice in the subject and in education generally. Subject leadership inspires confidence and whole-hearted commitment from pupils and colleagues. There are excellent strategies to delegate subject responsibilities where appropriate and to share good practice and secure high quality professional development in the subject. PE, sport and dance have a very high profile in the life of the school. Subject leadership has established highly effective links with other schools and outside agencies to promote and support the development of the subject.</p>
2	<p>Good</p> <p>Key leaders and managers consistently communicate high expectations and ambition in the subject. They model good practice and demonstrably work to monitor, improve and support teaching, encouraging the enthusiasm of staff and channelling their efforts and skills to good effect. As a result, teaching is improving and is at least satisfactory, with much that is good. Planned actions based on accurate self-evaluation to overcome weaknesses have been concerted and effective. As a result, achievement has improved or consolidated previous good performance.</p>	<p>Leadership is informed by current developments in PE, school sport and dance. Subject reviews, self-evaluation and improvement planning are clearly focused on raising standards and improving the provision in PE, sport and dance. There is a shared common purpose amongst those involved in teaching PE and/or dance with good opportunities to share practice and access subject training. Provision and outcomes in PE reflect wider whole school priorities and have a prominent profile in the school. Links with other schools and outside agencies support the subject's work well.</p>
3	<p>Satisfactory</p> <p>Key leaders and managers provide a concerted approach to improvement in the subject. Planned actions by leaders and managers have improved the quality of teaching so that very little is inadequate. Capacity to secure improvements in the subject is demonstrated by a trend of sustained improvement in achievement although a few significant weaknesses remain.</p>	<p>Leadership is aware of current developments in PE, school sport and dance and incorporates these within its practice. Provision for PE is monitored and reviewed regularly and there is a sound understanding of the strengths and priorities for improvement. There is some sharing of good practice, with modest access to subject-specific professional development. Subject leadership has established links with other schools and outside agencies satisfactorily to support the subject's work.</p>
4	<p>Inadequate</p> <p>Leadership and management of the subject are likely to be inadequate if any of the following apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Capacity for further improvement is limited because current leaders and managers have been ineffective in securing essential improvements. ■ Leaders and managers are not taking effective steps to secure satisfactory and better teaching for all groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. ■ Despite remedying a few small areas of weakness, perhaps recently, improvements are fragile, too slow or depend on external support. 	<p>Leadership is not well-informed about current initiatives in PE, school sport and dance. Self-evaluation is weak and not informed by good practice in the subject. PE, sport and dance have a low profile in the life of the school. Links with other schools and outside agencies are under-developed or non-existent. Sporting links with other schools and outside agencies are weak and lack impact. Key statutory requirements for the subject are not met. Opportunities for professional development in the subject are limited and, as a result, some staff lack the confidence and expertise to deliver it effectively.</p>

⁶ Grade descriptors are not to be used as a checklist but should be applied adopting a 'best fit' approach.

Grade descriptors:⁷ the overall effectiveness of PE

Outstanding (1)	<p>Practice in the subject consistently reflects the highest aspirations for pupils and expectations of staff. Best practice is spread effectively in a drive for continuous improvement. Teaching in the subject is likely to be outstanding and together with a rich curriculum, which is highly relevant to pupils' needs, it contributes to outstanding learning and achievement or, in exceptional circumstances, achievement that is good and rapidly improving. Thoughtful and wide-ranging promotion of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the subject enables them to thrive. Consequently, pupils and groups of pupils have excellent experiences in the subject, ensuring they are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.</p>
Good (2)	<p>Effective action is taken in the subject to enable most pupils to reach their potential. Pupils benefit from teaching that is at least good. This promotes very positive attitudes to learning and ensures that achievement in the subject is at least good. Leadership and management of the subject play a significant role in this and are good overall. Deliberate and effective action is taken to promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A positive climate for learning exists and pupils and groups of pupils have highly positive experiences in the subject so that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment.</p>
Satisfactory (3)	<p>Achievement, the quality of teaching and learning and leadership and management of the subject are all likely to be at least satisfactory with some significant good practice. Reasonable steps are taken to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils and groups of pupils have a generally positive experience in the subject and are not disadvantaged as they move to the next stage of their education, training or employment.</p>
Inadequate (4)	<p>Overall effectiveness in the subject is likely to be inadequate if any of the following apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Achievement is inadequate. ■ The quality of teaching is inadequate. ■ The curriculum is inadequate. ■ Leadership and management are inadequate. ■ There are important weaknesses in the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development resulting in a poor climate for learning in the subject where pupils or groups of pupils are unable to thrive.

⁷ Grade descriptors are not to be used as a checklist but should be applied adopting a 'best fit' approach.