



Reply to:  
89 Leeds Road  
Rawdon  
Leeds LS19 6NT

Tel 0113 250 9722  
Mob 07904 891832

RT Hon Gordon Brown MP  
The Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 2AA

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Dear Prime Minister

### **Physical Education and School Sport: an open letter**

The Association for Physical Education (afPE) and the physical education community warmly welcome your 13<sup>th</sup> July announcement, of the Government's strategy to offer children aged 5-16, five hours' physical education and school sport each week, including 2 hours' physical education within curriculum time.

The commitment to raising the amount of curriculum time delivery is particularly welcome, because it is the only comprehensive means of ensuring that *all* children learn the skills and confidence for life long participation in physical activity. Indeed, last year's achievement of the PESSCL PSA target of 75% of children receiving 2 hours' high quality physical education and school sport inside and outside the curriculum, was heavily dependent on curriculum time delivery of physical education.

The PESSCL partnership between afPE, the Youth Sport Trust and sportscoach UK is currently focusing on ensuring "high quality"; and addressing the particular challenges of the strategy, at key stages 1 and 4, while also assisting in the implementation of the new secondary curriculum.

However, I write now to draw your attention to a **serious systemic weakness in the delivery system**, which is undermining, and will continue to undermine, the Government's strategy. A very large proportion (our data implies at least 40%) of providers of initial teacher training allocate 6 hours or less preparation in physical education, for their trainees for primary schools. This is totally inadequate, and means that many newly qualified primary teachers, through no fault of their own, lack the skills and confidence to deliver good quality physical education to children of primary age. You will be aware that future participation depends on children in this age range receiving good quality introduction to the basic skills which are prerequisites for developing physical competence and talent. Using primary teachers is the most sustainable and appropriate means of delivery, especially supported and enriched by coaches, development officers and assistant teachers, as intended by the current coaching framework.

There is also a significant safety issue. The Declaration on Physical Education from the 2005 National Summit, as well as the Charter for Physical Education and School Sport, issued by CCPR in 2002, both recommend a minimum preparation for initial teacher training, of 30 hours. Our legal advice is that, should there be an accident and injury to a child which could be attributed to the poor training of a newly qualified teacher, then liability would be likely to be shared between the head teacher and governors as the employer, and the initial training provider.

afPE has issued guidelines on deployment of appropriately qualified persons, which were commended by the Government in the House in December 2005; and have been adopted by Sport England and many national governing bodies of sport. We are also committed to ensuring that head teachers are aware of both quality and safety issues. However, we have been disappointed that having raised our concerns with the Training and Development Agency, which is responsible for the quality and supply of the teaching workforce, there has been no commitment to address this issue. At least one provider has depended on the inaction of the TDA, in defending its decision to halve the number of hours allocated for preparing its primary trainees to teach physical education. This is regrettable, since we also know that many training providers do manage to make adequate provision for physical education; it is therefore difficult to see why the TDA does not intervene with those providers who do not.

We have recent market research which indicates that **92% of parents of primary age children are concerned about the fact that so many primary teachers are so woefully under-prepared to teach physical education. 99% of parents believe that physical education is important for their children.** On the basis of our information, we are committed to a campaign during the coming months, to raise awareness of this issue, which will be targeted at parents, head teachers and school governors, and the wider sporting public.

We would appreciate an opportunity to discuss with the appropriate Ministers and officials, how this apparent lack of commitment to quality and safety by TDA and some ITT providers, can be urgently addressed. We would also wish to continue the discussion, begun with Tessa Jowell while she was Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, on the wider issue of teacher supply and quality for physical education: she did commit to a dialogue with her counterpart in Education and Skills, and we believe that it would now be timely and appropriate for this to take place.

We would be happy to provide further information and background, should you require it.

With best wishes  
Yours sincerely

Professor Margaret Talbot, PhD OBE FRSA  
Chief Executive

Cc Rt Hon Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, Families and Schools  
Mr Paul Moses, Training and Development Agency