

Fundamental Movement Skills in Primary Physical Education

Guidelines (developed by PE staff in Irish colleges of education*) on providing opportunities for children to develop fundamental movement skills (FMS) within programmes of PE in primary schools

Physical Education provides children with learning opportunities through the medium of movement and contributes to their overall development by helping them to lead full, active and healthy lives (Physical Education Curriculum, 1999). To encourage the development of a physically educated child it is essential that a programme provides for the physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs of the child. The Physical Education Curriculum acknowledges the importance of acquiring an appropriate range of movement skills in a variety of contexts. While the PE Curriculum refers to physical and motor development, these movement skills are often referred to as **fundamental movement skills (FMS)**. **FMS are foundation movements (run, hop, jump, throw, catch, skip, strike, dodge etc) which are the basis of many physical activities and contribute to the development of agility, balance, co-ordination and speed (ABCs)**. They underpin activities across the six strands of the PE curriculum, and form one important element of a child's learning in PE. The primary school years provide the most important window for the development of these skills. If children acquire these skills in their primary school years, they are more likely to be more skilful and confident to participate in lifelong physical activities. Hence, the primary teacher (and in particular the teacher of junior classes) has a key role to play in planning PE lessons that will provide children with a myriad of opportunities for development of FMS.

FMS and Primary Physical Education

FMS can be developed through all strands of the curriculum as children engage in PE classes. Some examples are presented below.

A child can learn to **jump** proficiently through activities in

- gymnastics as they jump across a balance bench
- athletics as they try to jump further taking off from two feet and landing on two feet
- dance as they jump, twist and land exploring the theme of wind in a lesson using a balloon as a stimulus
- aquatics as they jump, twist and land making a big splash.

Similarly, **throwing** skills can be promoted in

- water-based ball games as part of an aquatics lesson
- athletics as they experiment with throwing beanbags, balls, quoits, foam javelin or primary discus
- games as they try to hit a target with a ball in a game of rounders or pass a ball in basketball or rugby.

Balancing, dodging, hopping, leaping and galloping skills can be developed as children engage in chasing and playground games, contributing to the development of further fundamental skills.

While schools and teachers may be presented with a variety of commercial resources related to FMS, it is important they should only be referenced in planning for a broad and balanced programme of physical education. **Such resources can inform a programme but should not become the sole focus of any PE programme.**

FMS and Initial Teacher Education

All physical education programmes in the Colleges of Education provide opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding of FMS and to practise the skills in practical contexts. The programmes emphasise that the development of FMS can be facilitated best by (a) demonstration by the teacher or by a child, (b) provision of opportunities for exploration and practice by the children, (c) provision of relevant and specific positive feedback by the teacher based on observation and assessment of learning or indeed feedback by children in the form of peer feedback. At the end of their initial teacher education programme, a beginning teacher is aware of the important role of the teacher in providing opportunities for children to develop their FMS within a balanced physical education experience for children in primary schools.

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