

SPORTS

Policy

The Board of Management (BOM) believes strongly in the importance of physical activity for the wellbeing of the school's pupils, their families and school staff. It recognises that regular exercise is essential for physical development and contributes to fitness and long-term health. It acknowledges that competitive and non-competitive sporting activity can also offer many other direct and indirect benefits, including improved day-to-day behaviour, enhanced concentration, better teamwork, heightened independence and other boosts in social and emotional development. Furthermore, it believes that participation in sport outside of the ordinary school setting is positive for community development. The BOM understands that children's physical activity is part of a complex interplay between home, school and the wider environment. It therefore adopts a proactive and integrated approach to promoting and supporting physical activity in a manner that is inclusive, safe, energising and enjoyable for all.

This policy must be read in conjunction with other school policies, especially behaviour, child protection, health and safety, play and special educational needs.

Procedures

1 Responsibilities

1.1 BOM

It is the responsibility of the BOM to ensure that the sports policy is upheld and that the policy and procedures are kept up-to-date. It will allocate sufficient resources for these purposes.

1.2 Principal

The Principal is responsible for ensuring that the sports procedures are implemented.

1.3 Other employees

All teachers are qualified to teach the primary curriculum, which includes physical education (PE). As such, PE is a subject that is the responsibility of all teachers. All teaching staff are expected to play their part in developing sport and physical activity within the school and to undertake appropriate professional development in this regard. They are also expected to lead by example in the promotion of sport and other physical activity.

School staff will follow agreed health and safety procedures and will adopt common sense to ensure no one is put at undue risk when doing sport. In particular, staff must remember to inform parents/guardians and children when sport will take place and remind them of the need to wear appropriate clothing and footwear (and ensure no loose jewellery is worn).

The Secretary plays a minor role in the administration of sporting activity. The Caretaker plays a role in maintaining and moving sports equipment. Special Needs Assistants are involved in sporting activities as appropriate to their role in the school.

1.4 Parents and guardians

Parents and guardians are presumed to have given consent for their child(ren) to undertake any sporting activity organised by the school. They must inform the school of any special needs issues that their children may have in relation to sport. They must ensure their children are dressed appropriately for physical activity at all times, but especially on defined PE days. Appropriate footwear and the avoidance of loose jewellery is particularly important. Parents and guardians are urged to promote physical activity to their children and set an example where possible. Voluntary involvement of parents and guardians in school sports is encouraged.

1.5 Pupils

Teachers will advise children of any relevant health and safety and behaviour procedures in relation to sports and children are required to comply with the staff in implementing these procedures. These apply to activities both during and outside of the school day.

1.6 External bodies

As time allows, the school will engage with relevant and quality sporting bodies and programmes. This may take various forms. External coaches from local, regional or national clubs/organisations may work with children directly or may engage with teachers. External programmes may be brought into the school setting either during the school day, as part of the extracurricular programme or through external hire of the school premises. Additionally, children may represent the school in external sporting events.

2 Maximising participation

2.1 Sport is for everyone

All pupils are expected to take part in school sports, except where doing so would create a situation of unacceptable risk. An emphasis is placed on 'sporting behaviour'. It is the school's goal to give all children as wide a range of opportunities for sport as time and other resources allow. All pupils have a right to enjoy the full range of available activities and sports settings. By trying out as many different activities as possible, children have the chance to learn different skills and discover what they enjoy and where their abilities lie. In a case where a child with special educational needs has difficulty in participating in class PE sessions, the SEN teachers will work with the child in small group sessions to develop skills and confidence, with the aim of helping the child overcome the difficulty and return to class PE sessions.

2.2 Selection

Selection of students to compete in competitive sports, either as individuals or in teams, will not always be required, but if necessary, will be done by way of lottery, trial or teacher decision. Children themselves do not partake in the selection process.

2.3 Costs

Some sporting activities have a cost associated with them; an inability to pay for sporting activity will never be a barrier to a pupil taking part in school sports.

2.4 Gender

As a co-educational school, all sporting and associated activities are undertaken on a mixed gender basis. The only exceptions to this rule are where children need to get undressed (for example, changing facilities at swimming lessons) and where a segregation of the sexes is explicitly required by outside bodies (for example, interschools competitions).

2.5 Weather

Inclement weather will not prevent sporting activity, except where doing so would place people at an unacceptable level of risk. If at all possible, activities will be moved indoors. The final decision to modify or cancel sporting activity rests with class teachers (or extra-curricular teachers in the case of extra-curricular activity).

3 Curricular sports

3.1 PE classes

PE forms an integral part of the primary curriculum, from junior infants up to sixth class. Some PE activities are non-competitive and focus primarily on keeping fit, whereas others are more competitive and develop sports-specific skills. The current range of sports includes: athletics, basketball, cycling, dance, football, gymnastics, hurling, soccer, swimming and tag rugby, but this list varies from class to class and from year to year. Pupils in sixth class generally go on a one-day outdoor pursuits trip.

3.2 Cross-curricular activity

Where feasible, efforts are made to incorporate physical activity across other subject areas in the curriculum. Examples include using movement exercises in the teaching of mathematics or Gaeilge, or undertaking local geography or history field trips on foot. Furthermore, each summer, the whole school undertakes a sponsored walk and takes part in a sports day.

4 Extracurricular sports

Extracurricular sporting activity can play an important role in the promotion of generic exercise and specific sports. However, there is a potential for conflict between different types of activities. It is important to note that curricular sport takes priority over extracurricular sport. Furthermore, when choices have to be made by the BOM and staff about extracurricular sports, this must be done in the following order:

4.1 Priority 1

The main goal is to normalise physical activity for all. Everyone within the school community is encouraged, where practicable, to travel to school on foot, by bicycle or using similar non-motorised forms of transport, in line with the Green-Schools initiative. Children are encouraged to engage in physical play during outdoor break times. However, health and safety issues in a busy and constricted physical environment restrict the range of acceptable activities (for example, informal soccer may not be played in the school grounds).

4.2 Priority 2

Children are also encouraged to take part in interschool sports. Each year, the school aims to send an athletics team to the Santry sports event for primary schools in Dublin. It also has boys' and girls' soccer teams for fifth and sixth class, which take part in a local league. Further interschool sporting possibilities are being investigated.

If competitions involve travel, more than one adult (at least one of whom must be a teacher), will always be present. In such cases, it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that s/he has a working mobile phone, relevant emergency contact details, a first aid kit (and any medications for children who may require them, provided that parents/guardians have made the appropriate arrangements outlined in the school's health and safety policy). All children return to school after the sporting event unless prior agreement had been made with parents/guardians for alternative collection arrangements.

4.3 Priority 3

In addition, extracurricular sporting activity is arranged as part of the school's formal extracurricular programme delivered in conjunction with the Parents Association. These activities are open only to children that attend RETNS.

4.4 Priority 4

Finally, the school hires its premises to appropriate sports providers outside the school day. Activities are run for both children and adults, who may have no connection with the school.

5 Facilities and equipment

The school has a large hall that can be used for indoor sports. Some indoor activities can also take place in the multipurpose room. It also has a hard surface school yard with rings and markings for basketball and some ancillary grassed space. Local parks including Loreto, St Enda's, Marlay and Rathfarnham Castle are used occasionally and Meadowbrook Sports Centre is used for swimming lessons.

The school has a wide range of sporting equipment. Sporting equipment is checked as part of regular safety and maintenance audits.

Where necessary, children wear appropriate safety equipment (for example, helmets during hurling). Children taking part in interschools sports wear a sports kit that displays the school's name and logo.

6 Review

The whole sports environment will be monitored and improved on an ongoing basis. In doing so, it is important that the views of staff, children and their parents/guardians are taken into consideration. If necessary, this policy and these procedures will be amended as a result of changed circumstances, and shall in any case undergo full review in 2015.

Approved by the BOM on 25 September 2012