

afPE HEALTH AND SAFETY

Frequently Asked Questions Relating to Safe Practice

	Question	Answer	Reference in Safe Practice 2008
1.	When footwear is most appropriate for taking part in physical education?	Pupils should preferably be in bare feet if it is safe to do so when participating in dance or gymnastics though there are many forms of dance and some styles may require footwear. If the dance style is high impact, the footwear should have support to prevent injury. Some floor surfaces may not be conducive to barefoot work. Any footwear worn should be appropriate for the activity, in good repair, close fitting and provide secure footing. Pupils and staff should check the floor prior to the activity to ensure it is safe and suitable.	14.1.5 14.2.6 - 14.2.14
2.	Is it appropriate to have pupils wearing mixed footwear in games activities, e.g. some with boots and studs and others in trainers or plimsolls?	When working inside or out, the footwear should be appropriate for the activity being undertaken and the condition and nature of the playing surface. If a grassed area is wet, staff should give careful consideration to the organisation of the activity, particularly if the pupils wear a range of footwear. Care should be taken to ensure any footwear is close fitting, fit for purpose and provide secure footing. Particularly in competitive situations, similar types of footwear should be worn. If a variety of footwear is worn by pupils the activity or groupings may need to be adjusted after assessing the risk. For example, where some pupils wear studded boots then it may be necessary to condition the game to eliminate tackling or preferably ensure that the groups wearing studs are separated from non-boot groups. Where studded boots are worn it is advisable that pupils wear shin pads.	14.2.14
3.	Can the nursery children use the large apparatus in the hall?	Yes. The use of equipment should be appropriate for the age, developmental needs and physical size of the pupils. If using large apparatus the risk assessment, planning and organisation should be well communicated and clearly understood by staff and, at their own level, by pupils. Staff should have clear aims about how the apparatus is to be used and for what purpose. It is not considered good practice for young children to participate in lessons where the apparatus has already been set out as this prevents them becoming proficient in handling apparatus from the earliest stage.	12.3.1

		Neither would a pre-set arrangement be likely to address effectively their particular needs and stage of development.	
4.	Who has the responsibility for monitoring the use of coaches?	Officially the governors, usually through the head teacher. This task, but not the responsibility, for ensuring competence, may be delegated to the subject leader or class teacher.	4.2.9-4.2.16 Appendix 3b
5.	Staff v Pupil matches – are they recommended?	No. Staff- pupil matches should not be arranged due to the risk of injury to pupils. Matching of pupil strength, experience, previous experience and confidence is a pre-requisite of good practice. Case law indicates that where adults have participated competitively with pupils – in lessons or matches – claims have been successful.	22.2.34
6.	Which athletic activities are suitable for KS2?	Activities should be appropriate for the age, developmental stage, context, prior learning. This particularly applies to distances run and the types of implement thrown. Specific guidance is contained on the UKAthletics website and afPE’s ‘Safe Practice 2008’.	19.2.4 19.2.11
7.	Are goggles appropriate for school swimming lessons?	<p>The afPE guidance on goggles is straight forward.</p> <p>Goggles are not normally recommended for normal swimming lessons, or where swimmers have poor control in the water. The adult’s attention can be distracted by constantly having to help children adjust goggles etc, and limbs that are not controlled can often knock faces and goggles in crowded swimming conditions. Equally, the pupil’s attention can be compromised by the need to adjust and replace goggles.</p> <p>However assuming that water balance is correct, it is reasonable to expect that when delivering a lesson where children spend a considerable amount of time under the water, or with their face in the water, such as when training for competitive swimming, that they may wear goggles if approved by the adult in charge. The adult with the group is responsible for determining whether any pupil wearing goggles is using them safely and for a positive purpose. If they are not then the goggles should be removed</p> <p>Pupils with special eye conditions may also need to be allowed to wear goggles. There may be particular situations, such as in hydrotherapy pools where the higher temperature may affect chemical balance and cause more eye irritation but this should be managed through water treatment strategies rather than recourse to goggles.</p> <p>Any deviation from the guidelines should be noted in the risk assessment for the activity. Knowledge about individual children’s needs remains critical in determining the wearing of goggles</p> <p>Risk management should include the teaching of pupils to put on</p>	26.2.55 – 56

		<p>and take off goggles safely.</p> <p>Basically, take an informed sensible approach, acknowledge that you are aware of the guidelines, and ensure that your children enjoy the experience.</p>	
8.	How should the issue of unsafe facilities/ equipment be managed in practice knowing that something is not safe but told by a member of the leadership team that you must use it?	Verbally notify the leadership of the concerns. If the directive remains the same take reasonable precautions (adaptation of task, equipment and/or organisation of the facility as necessary). Then put your concerns in writing to the leadership group.	12.2.1- 12.2.3
9.	How should any differences be resolved between Local Authorities requiring a regular update on qualifications where national governing bodies harbour a different view?	<p>The employer has jurisdiction over matters relating to health and safety. In this sense it is acceptable for an employer to establish their own in-house accreditation requirements and safety standards. However, national governing body recommendations should be carefully considered when formulating policy.</p> <p>Where competition takes place under the auspices of the national governing body then any directives by that NGB must be followed. Where the activity occurs outside the NGB remit – such as in lessons, out of hours activities or friendly matches – then this changes from a requirement to good advice that should be seriously considered.</p>	1.2.13
10.	Can qualified teachers who are also participants in martial arts lead sessions in schools – is this sufficient qualification?	<p>No. afPE’s position is that a national governing body (NGB) coaching qualification is also required.</p> <p>Leadership in higher risk activities, such as trampolining, contact sports, adventure activities, swimming and martial arts should only be undertaken by suitably accredited personnel.</p>	20.2.2
11.	Can pupils participate in PE if they wear Jewellery?	The basic rule is that all jewellery should be removed as this then removes that particular hazard. Where an item of Jewellery cannot be removed then it is the adult teaching the group’s responsibility to try to establish a safe situation to enable participation by considering how, or if, the context can be made safe by amending the task, conditioning the activity or creating some other management strategy to make participation safe. Where safe participation cannot be assured then the pupil cannot take part. It is good practice to regularly ask if anyone is wearing body Jewellery. If they disclose this then the process of removal or considering whether safe participation can be made possible should apply. If there is no disclosure but some body piercing is	14.1.6 – 14.1.22

		seen during the session then from that point the process above needs to be applied - remove, make safe or take no further participation in the session. Pupils should remove their own Jewellery. This should be made clear to parents and carers. If the child is unable to do this themselves they should not wear any. School policy should explain this from the outset.	
12.	What qualifications are required for working in the fitness room for both teachers and learning assistants?	There is no specific qualification in this area other than a fitness instructor course e.g. YMCA Fitness Industry Training. It is, however, good practice for induction to be provided by the installer and training on a regular basis undertaken through the school to ensure that all adults responsible for this area know the correct techniques, check that excessive weights are not being used and that group movement around the area is well controlled. Whoever is leading the session should be familiar with the principles of fitness, resistance training and progression in order to manage the session safely.	24.2.1
13.	Where and how should goalposts be stored?	In a safe and secure area where they do not create a hazard for the general use of pupils. Portable goal posts should be securely anchored at all times to prevent them toppling over or being dislodged when stored in a work area.	12.2.5 - 12.2.9
14.	What types of large equipment should (or should not) be available in primary schools?	All equipment should be appropriate for the developmental stage of pupils, including their ability to lift, carry and place it safely. Trampolines and trampettes are usually not suitable for primary stage pupils. However, there are signs of emerging practice where primary pupils do participate in basic trampolining activity where supervised by a qualified BG coach.	23.4.1
15.	How can pupils with a range of special needs be effectively included?	All pupils have an entitlement to access physical education and school sport (PESS) in an appropriate form. All special needs exist on a continuum; therefore staff should consider pupil needs on an individual basis taking into account their individual care plan. Staff should be aware of any constraints to participation in PESS as a result of the condition and be able to provide emergency treatment if necessary. Differentiation through STEP (space, task, equipment, progress) principles should be applied.	10.1.1 - 10.1.6 10.1.9-10.1.20 22.2.33 22.3.15

16.	How should trips/visits/fixtures where mini-buses are used be managed in relation to the number of staff that should go? For example, do you need two adults to attend an extra curricular event/match?	<p>Not necessarily. Consult your employer's policy in the first instance. If the employer requires more than one adult on the minibus then the stipulated level of adult supervision must apply. Where no specific requirement is made then one adult may take a group provided they do not infringe British driving legislation and a risk assessment of the journey indicates that one adult can manage the situation. Some employers set different staffing levels between local and more distant journeys because of the extension of the working day. The driver cannot supervise and drive at the same time. S/he must not be distracted whilst driving other than in an emergency. Should the group require direct supervision, possibly because of their behaviour, then the driver must stop and resolve the supervision issue before recommencing driving. This means that supervision requirements need to be determined prior to departing on a journey as this may indicate a need for additional staffing.</p> <p>Having more than one member of staff at an event is desirable in order to deal with any unforeseen incidents. Where this is not possible then reciprocal arrangements should be agreed with the host school whereby should the visiting teacher be required to deal with any incident the host staff are willing to assume responsibility for the rest of the group until another member of the visiting school can arrive to regain responsibility.</p>	<p>16.2.43 16.3.1</p>
17.	What qualifications and experience are appropriate for volunteer drivers?	<p>Drivers who hold a D1 addition to the basic licence may drive a minibus. Anyone without a D1 addition must be over 21 years of age, have held a licence for 2 years, not tow a trailer. The minibus must weigh no more than 3.5 tonnes and be driven under a Section 19 permit. Some employers demand a D1 addition. Where this is not stipulated it is wise to demonstrate some form of additional experience such as the MIDAS award or a local minibus driving test. In England, any volunteer working regularly with young people must hold an enhanced CRB disclosure certificate. afPE deems this to be appropriate in any of the home countries.</p> <p>If using their own vehicle to transport pupils other than their own child then most employers set requirements relating to insurance, condition of the vehicle and a clean licence.</p> <p>Where pupils are less than 12 years of age or less than 135cm in height the correct child restraints must be worn when transported by car (see question 18).</p>	<p>16.2.6 - 16.2.13</p> <p>16.2.26 - 16.2.34</p>

18.	What needs to be done about booster seats?	Children under 135cm and under 12 years of age must use the appropriate child restraint. Note the upper age threshold to the required use of booster seats and cushions, regardless of the height factor. A 7-year-old who is 140 cms tall is over the height for a child restraint and may use an adult seat belt. A 12-year-old who is 130 cms tall is over the age threshold and therefore may use an adult belt despite not attaining the required height. Schools using staff and parents' cars to transport pupils to matches and events will need to apply the requirements on the use of child restraints (booster seats). Secondary schools may fall into the required use of booster seats in cars because of the height/age threshold. The law does not require child restraints to be provided in taxis, private hire vehicles, minicabs, minibuses, buses or coaches, although they must be used if available . Seat belts must be worn, if fitted. It is therefore recommended that schools keep a supply of booster seats to be used as required by law.	16.2.34
19.	Can an adult volunteer help run different sports teams and activities such as playground games in lessons or after school? Do they need qualifications and CRB checks?	Yes they can run teams and activities. It is recommended that initial delivery has been alongside a teacher to assess confidence and competence, qualifications have been checked by the school or employing agency where the volunteer is leading an activity. It is essential that CRB disclosure has been checked.	4.1.2 – 4.2.1 4.2.8 – 4.2.15
20.	How accountable is the teacher if pupils have been asked to do something like remove jewellery and despite checks from the teacher they either don't remove it or put it back on?	Procedures should be in place to ensure the removal of jewellery prior to activity taking place. Staff should, in addition, visually monitor the group to make sure Jewellery has been removed. The member of staff is accountable for the safety of the pupils and thus school policy and safety procedures need to be enforced by not allowing the offending pupil to continue participating. Where pupils persist in ignoring what is school policy then the system for school sanctions should be initiated.	2.2.4 – 2.2.12 14.1.7 14.2.1 14.2.5
21.	If pupils are truanting from lessons and are out on the field do they immediately become the responsibility of the teacher who is out there teaching a class?	No but the teacher on the field would have a duty of care to at least establish that the pupils are safe and ensure someone in the school leadership team is informed. The situation should be monitored by the teacher until another member of staff takes charge of the situation.	2.2.4 – 2.2.12
22.	Should graduate/ITT PE students/trainees leave university with an accredited health & safety/safe practice qualification?	No such qualification exists. Good practice would entail detailed coverage throughout the ITT course of a basic understanding of safe practice standards and risk management principles. However, induction and professional development reviews should seek to remedy any identified shortcomings.	4.2.2


23.	How often should teachers be expected to undertake refresher courses in health & safety/safe practice?	Managing risk is an on-going process and staff should keep abreast of developments in health and safety through accessing the guidance in afPE's Safe Practice in PESS, 2008, and the afPE website. They should also be aware of any requirements their employer makes. It is advisable that all staff undertake some form of update after each publication of Safe Practice in PESS. Good practice is evident where health and safety is a standing item on staff/department meetings as the minutes provide evidence of on-going professional development in this area.	4.2.5
24.	Should teachers have basic training in safe practice before officiating at schools athletics competitions?	Yes. Any member of staff taking a responsibility for an event should clearly understand and apply the rules of the event and understand and apply the relevant safe practice principles relating to its organisation and activity.	19.2.2
25.	Many pupils have expressed an interest in parkour and want access to it. How should one proceed?	<p>afPE do not support parkour in the urban environment though indoor parkour-related activity can provide meaningful challenge.</p> <p>A gymnastic coaching qualification for teaching parkour-related activity may well be appropriate at this stage of the activity's development.</p> <p>A new national governing body for parkour has recently been formed. Staff choosing to offer parkour should carefully consider acquiring accreditation through this body.</p>	<p>25.11.5</p> <p>See H&S pages on: www.afpe.org.uk</p>
26.	What is the role of mats and their effective use?	<p>Mats are designed for very specific purposes.</p> <p>Gymnastic mats, for example, are designed to cushion landings from a height and provide a comfortable work surface for rolling and other gymnastic skills. Should someone fall, mats may reduce the likelihood of injury rather than preventing it. Teaching the technique of safe landings is essential.</p> <p>Safety mattresses (high impact absorbing surfaces) are designed for gymnasts working on high momentum landings experienced in advanced vaulting. They should only be used by appropriately experienced and qualified staff.</p> <p>Safety mattresses may be used in combination for high jump practice only when effectively attached together, have sufficient depth to avoid bottoming out and under a coverall sheet.</p> <p>Within the context of martial arts it is strongly recommended that matting specific to the activity is used.</p>	<p>12.2.16-26</p> <p>23.2.9</p>

27.	Is it necessary to cover a verruca in PE?	<p>Verrucas are caused by a viral infection. Many young people get a verruca at some point in their lives and are more likely to get them than adults. They are often caught from public changing rooms and swimming pools. Getting verrucas has nothing to do with poor hygiene. Children with immune system problems may have an increased risk. The virus is found throughout the environment and is infectious. Most disappear without treatment after a few months or years - 20 per cent of growths disappear within three months.</p> <p>As to whether they should be covered, medical opinion is that by the time they appear the infectious period has passed so it is too late to seek protection, though one can still benefit from treatment if it is painful. The issue is educating and convincing parents of this. Requiring a verruca to be covered is one way of avoiding parental complaint but it runs against medical opinion as to need to cover.</p>	A health issue - not addressed in SP 2008.
28.	A number of pupils, girls in particular, are not participating in swimming, or even all PE activities, due to religious reasons as the classes are mixed and the pool is shared by the public. What strategies are available to address this concern?	<p>Where possible the pool should be for sole school use. If this is not possible, swimwear should be culturally sensitive without compromising safety. If mixed swimming is becoming difficult then the school should investigate the possibility of single sex sessions.</p> <p>Consultation with local faith leaders can often be productive in reaching mutual agreement.</p>	11.2.5
29.	When school governors are responsible for sports provision within "extended services" and when are they not responsible?	<p>This depends on how the extended services are provided. Where it is literally an extension of school provision, albeit for the community, then the governors are responsible for the safe provision and management of activities. Where a school company has been formed, this is a separate legal entity that carries responsibility and the school governors do not. Where the facility is let to outside agencies, such as community groups, then the school governors have the responsibility to ensure the facility is safe for the purpose it is being let and the outside agency has responsibility for the safe management of the session.</p>	6.2.1 - 6.2.3

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