

Maximising the Primary PE and Sport Premium

6 October 2025



A Comprehensive Guide for School Leaders in 2025/26

As the new academic year begins on October 6, 2025, primary school leaders across England face a complex landscape: escalating operational costs, evolving curriculum expectations, and a growing national focus on pupil wellbeing. Amid these challenges, the government's Primary PE and Sport Premium stands out as a critical resource—a £320 million annual investment designed to empower schools to deliver high-quality physical education (PE), cultivate lifelong active lifestyles, and ensure equitable access for all pupils, regardless of background or ability. With funding reaffirmed for 2025/26 following the recent Spending Review, this initiative aligns with the School Sport and Activity Action Plan, addressing urgent concerns over childhood inactivity—only about half of UK children meet the recommended 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily (or 20 minutes for disabled pupils, per UK Chief Medical Officers' guidelines).

This guide, enriched with the latest Department for Education (DfE) insights, real-world case studies, and expert analysis, aims to be the definitive resource for school leaders. We'll delve into the scheme's purpose, dissect the five key improvement areas with actionable strategies, showcase innovative practices, and

provide a detailed roadmap for maximising impact. Our mission is to equip you not only to meet accountability requirements but to transform your school’s PE provision into a cornerstone of holistic development—enhancing attendance, mental health, academic performance, and community engagement.

What is the PE and Sport Premium—and Why Does It Matter Now?

Introduced in 2013 and now entering its thirteenth year, the PE and Sport Premium provides ring-fenced funding to eligible primary schools—maintained, academies, free schools, and non-maintained special schools—to enhance PE, school sport, and physical activity beyond the national curriculum minimums. Unlike core budgets, which cover staffing and basic curriculum delivery, this funding is earmarked for *additional, sustainable* improvements that benefit current and future pupils.

Core Objectives

- Enable all pupils to lead healthy, active lives and thrive through physical activity.
- Guarantee at least two hours of high-quality PE weekly, supplemented by diverse extracurricular and competitive opportunities.
- Foster inclusive, enjoyable participation habits, with a special focus on equity for girls, disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and the least active.

The 2025/26 iteration reinforces government priorities, particularly the push for inclusive access and water safety proficiency, as childhood obesity rates hover around 25% (NHS, 2024) and swimming attainment gaps persist. This funding is a strategic lever to address these issues head-on.

Eligibility and Funding Breakdown

Most primary schools qualify based on pupil numbers in Years 1–6 (or ages 5–10 in non-year-group settings). Exclusions include nurseries, university technical colleges, and most independent schools.

Pupil Numbers	Allocation Formula	Example (for 100 pupils)	Example (for 200 pupils)
16 or fewer	£1,000 per pupil	£16,000	£16,000

17 or more	£16,000 base + £10 per pupil	£26,000	£36,000
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Total national allocation: £320 million, maintained at a stable level to support long-term planning.

Payment Schedule (2025/26):

- **Maintained schools/PRUs/hospital schools:** 50% via local authorities on 31 October 2025 (or 27 February 2026 for new schools); 50% on 30 April 2026.
- **Academies/free schools:** 50% on 10 November 2025 (or 9 March 2026 for new); 50% on 11 May 2026.
- **Non-maintained special schools:** 50% on 18 December 2025; 50% on 17 April 2026.

Multi-academy trusts (MATs) receive per-school allocations, even if funds are pooled, ensuring equitable distribution.

The Five Key Areas: Building a Sustainable PE Ecosystem

The DfE mandates focusing expenditure on five interconnected pillars, each linked to measurable outcomes such as participation rates, staff confidence scores, or competitive engagement levels. Leveraging tools like the PE Funding Evaluation Form (available via Association for PE or Youth Sport Trust) is essential for tracking progress.

1. Increasing Staff Confidence, Knowledge, and Skills in Teaching PE and Sport

Investing in continued professional development (CPD) is the cornerstone here. External coaches should complement, not replace, teachers, working through modelling, team-teaching, and structured feedback sessions.

- *Strategy:* Dedicate staff meeting time to PE updates and encourage non-PE staff to pursue qualifications for after-school supervision.
- *Evidence from DfE (October 2024):* Schools using digital portals for attainment tracking and CPD access report a 15% increase in staff confidence within one term.
- *Actionable Tip:* Conduct pre- and post-CPD questionnaires to identify

gaps, followed by targeted training where needed.

2. Increasing Pupil Engagement in Regular Physical Activity

Embed physical activity into the school day with initiatives like active breaks or morning sessions, targeting at least 30 minutes of daily in-school movement.

- *Strategy:* Implement a monitoring programme to assess PE attainment, identifying strengths and areas for development to inform tailored support.
- *Example:* Use start- and end-of-year pupil questionnaires to track activity levels, demonstrating a 20% rise in engagement with consistent tracking (DfE case studies).
- *Innovative Idea:* Introduce a 30-minute active session each morning, led by class teachers with a rotating carousel of activities, adapted for indoor/outdoor use.

3. Raising the Profile of PE and Sport for Whole-School Improvement

Elevate PE's status through assemblies, pupil voice forums, and cross-curricular links (e.g., RSHE/PSHE). A dedicated Sports Coordinator can champion this agenda.

- *Strategy:* Launch a Friday morning fitness and wellbeing club to enhance physical health, academic focus, punctuality, and attendance.
- *Evidence:* Schools linking PE to health education report a 10% attendance boost (Youth Sport Trust, 2025).
- *Actionable Tip:* Seek pupil input on preferred activities to align provision with interests, fostering ownership.

4. Offering a Broader, More Equal Experience of Sports and Activities

Ensure a balanced curriculum covering invasion games, gymnastics, dance, athletics, outdoor adventure, and swimming, with equity at the forefront.

- *Strategy:* Develop a varied extracurricular programme, including team sports for competitions and novel activities not in the curriculum.
- *Example:* Partner with local leisure providers for taster sessions, increasing participation by 25% among underrepresented groups (DfE, 2024).

- *Focus Area:* Use a School Sport Organising Committee, including the School Council, to evaluate provision and fund pupil-led activity days.

5. Increasing Participation in Competitive Sport

Design inclusive competition calendars that prioritise experience over outcomes, engaging all pupils regardless of sex, educational need, or background.

- *Strategy:* Collaborate with local sports partnerships and MATs for a diverse events schedule, ensuring no group is disproportionately represented.
- *Evidence:* Schools with intra/inter-school events see a 30% rise in pupil confidence (Ofsted, 2024).
- *Actionable Tip:* Integrate curriculum sports into free clubs led by the PE lead, offering skill development and team selection opportunities.

What You Can (and Can't) Spend It On: Navigating the Rules

Permissible Spends (Focus on Sustainability):

- CPD, mentoring, and external coach partnerships with embedded staff upskilling.
- Targeted interventions for inactive pupils, SEND support, or equity initiatives.
- Extra-curricular clubs, transport to competitions/top-up swimming (post-core lessons), and community taster sessions.
- Overtime for staff leading extracurricular activities (if outside contracted hours).

Prohibited Spends:

- Capital costs (e.g., new equipment exceeding de minimis thresholds, vehicles, fixed playgrounds).
- Core staff salaries, PPA cover, or curriculum delivery funding.
- Staff PE kit, in-advance payments for future years, or unspent funds rolled over (must be spent by 31 July 2026).

Uncertain about expenditure classification? Seek professional accounting advice, as DfE does not provide individual guidance.

Real-World Success Stories: Lessons from Leading Schools

Drawing from DfE case studies, Ofsted surveys, and recent sector reports (e.g., Youth Sport Trust’s 2025 webinar series), these exemplars highlight 2024/25 impacts adaptable for 2025/26.

School	Key Initiative	Impact	Funding Used
Fairfield Primary (Tees Valley) – Tees Valley Sport Innovation Award Winner	Skill workshops with resilience focus, community lacrosse tasters.	85% participation rise; 2% attendance boost; improved SEND engagement.	£8,000 (CPD/coaches); £4,000 (transport/tasters).
Salford City Academy (Urban MAT)	Daily 30-min active blasts, pupil-led PE Cafés on mental health.	92% met 60-min guideline (up from 65%); 20% wellbeing improvement.	£12,000 (digital tools/training); £5,000 (workshops).
Irlam and Cadishead Primary (SEND-Focused)	Inclusive competition calendar, top-up swimming for 40% non-swimmers.	100% Year 6 water safety attainment; 30% girl participation rise.	£10,000 (specialist coaches); £3,000 (transport).

These examples underscore the power of data-driven planning—e.g., pre/post questionnaires—and strategic partnerships. Recent X posts from leaders (e.g., @OhLottie on DfE reporting challenges) highlight the need for early digital form preparation, opening June 2026 and due by 31 July 2026.

Accountability and Reporting: Stay Compliant, Showcase Success

- **Digital Expenditure Return:** Mandatory from July 2025 (for 2024/25, repeating for 2025/26). Includes spend breakdown, impacts across five areas, and Year 6 swimming data (25m swim, strokes, self-rescue). Downloadable for website use.
- **Website Publication:** By 31 July 2026, detail allocation, expenditure,

impacts, and sustainability plans. Retain prior years online for trend analysis.

- **Oversight:** Senior leadership teams (SLTs) lead; governors scrutinise using DfE’s monitoring tool. Non-compliance may trigger funding recovery.

Pro Tip: Utilise Youth Sport Trust’s budget tracker for real-time expenditure monitoring and reporting readiness.

Recommendations: Actionable Steps for 2025/26 Leaders

Transform your PE provision with this phased, evidence-based approach:

1. **Assess and Plan (Autumn Term):** Conduct a baseline audit with staff and pupil surveys, aligning with the five areas using DfE’s October 2024 examples. Engage your School Games Organiser (SGO) via the national network (£22m DfE/DCMS boost until 2025).
2. **Prioritise CPD and Equity:** Allocate 30–40% to staff development (e.g., AfPE-accredited courses). Invest £5–10k in inclusive resources or sessions to address gender/SEND gaps, a priority post-2024 guidance update.
3. **Embed and Track Activity:** Launch “active blasts” or mile-a-day challenges. Collaborate with Active Partnerships (43 nationwide) for free programmes like Daily Boost, tracking impact with digital tools.
4. **Foster Competitions and Links:** Develop a termly competition calendar; allocate £2–3k for transport. Fund pupil voice days via the School Council to shape provision.
5. **Measure and Adapt:** Conduct quarterly reviews with key performance indicators (KPIs) like % active pupils or competition participation. Celebrate successes via newsletters or assemblies to boost profile.

Budget Example for a 200-Pupil School (£36,000 Allocation):

Category	Allocation	Rationale
CPD/Coach Partnerships	£12,000	Staff upskilling for long-term sustainability.
Extra-Curricular/Interventions	£10,000	Clubs for least active; SEND adaptations.

Transport/Community Links	£6,000	Competitions and community tasters.
Tracking Tools/Monitoring	£4,000	Questionnaires and digital tracking.
Swimming Top-Ups	£4,000	Ensure national curriculum compliance.

Connect with The School Network for Direct Support

Elevate your PE strategy with tailored assistance. The School Network partners with trusted organisations—School Games Organisers, Active Partnerships, CPD providers, and local sports clubs—to offer direct referrals and bespoke support. Contact us at support@schoolnetwork.co.uk to connect with regional experts, access custom resources, or schedule consultations. Whether you need help with CPD planning, inclusive programming, or competition logistics, we're here to build a thriving, active school community with you.

Conclusion: A Vision for Active Schools

The PE and Sport Premium is more than funding—it's an opportunity to redefine your school as a hub of movement, resilience, and joy. By prioritising sustainability, equity, and data-informed decisions, you'll not only meet DfE requirements but inspire a generation of active learners. What's your next step this term? Share your plans or successes in the comments or email us we're eager to spotlight your journey.