

Education Excellence Everywhere

'Every child and young person can access high quality provision, achieving to the best of his or her ability, regardless of location and prior attainment of background'

The Government's White Paper, [Education Excellence Everywhere, strategy overview](#) (March 2016) and the intention to make all schools Academies by 2020 is causing concern. Threats to strike over the push towards academisation are being backed by unions as this goes to press – however, I would like to use the key elements, taken from the White Paper, as a framework to highlight key points raised in the paper. Let's also take time to reflect on Physical Education and Sport (PESS) and the use of external providers in schools and academies...

We would be hard pushed to disagree with the title of the paper – **Education Excellence Everywhere!** Having worked in Birmingham and a significant number of Local Authorities in Merseyside, Cheshire and Greater Manchester, I strongly agree that 'Education does have the power to transform lives and does extend opportunities for every child, wherever they live and whatever their background'. However, we do need the best-placed and experienced staff to deliver, in order to transform lives and engage children in relevant opportunities that are life changing.

The white paper talks of children getting only one chance at education, and that every child deserves the opportunity to reach their full potential. It also identifies the government's strategy to achieve this from 2015 – 2020, highlighting a number of elements as tools to secure education excellence everywhere.



1. Our vision for Education Excellence Everywhere

The white paper specifies clearly the government's goals, delivery priorities and principles underpinning its practice. (See Strategy Overview 2015 - 2020)

PESS over the last 15 years has had from the different government strategies a significant number of financial grants, of millions of pounds, to support children and their opportunities through Physical Education and School Sport. Currently, an annual Sport Premium is given to primary schools to make a difference to standards of PE provision and increased participation in sport. If provision is to be sustained, and every child is to achieve through PESS, I would ask - **is it clear what the school's vision is for PESS and the contribution it makes to children, their learning and development** - so when the money runs out, the goals, priorities and principles which make PESS a critical factor in a child's education is not left back in the changing rooms after 2020. We should all be clear about what we are trying to achieve through PESS, then we can get the right people delivering it and know what the impact has been.



If an external provider is unable to support what you are setting out to achieve, they should not be part of the school's team.

When using an external PESS provider, consider –

- What expertise can they bring to support your vision for the school, each child, and PESS?
- Are they able to articulate what they can contribute to the school's children, staff, culture and curriculum?
- Do they listen to the needs and requirements of the school and its children, or focus on themselves and their products, programmes and packages?

2. Great teachers – everywhere they are needed

The white paper focuses on this element in terms of the quality of teaching being most important to securing pupil outcomes. The paper recognises that recruitment, retention, training and development are critical to this, and school leaders play a central role in ensuring this happens effectively. Reducing bureaucracy, supporting teacher workload and capacity, whilst providing the right sort of professional training and teaching materials, will all contribute to a stronger profession.

From the point of view of PESS, the critical role of school leaders to ensure children get the best quality teaching is an important one. Too often are sports coaches and other external providers brought into schools with minimal accountability for the curriculum offered, the quality of provision, and its impact upon pupil outcomes.

Leaders can support their staff in the way they source; communicate their vision as well as monitoring/evaluating effectiveness and value for money from external providers. This will ensure that quality learning and teaching is integral to their provision. This also contributes to the wellbeing and capacity of the school to achieve excellence through a deployment strategy. This outward thinking will ensure the best for the children and teaching staff.

When using an external PESS provider, consider –

- Have they agreed a clear partnership which is underpinned by the school's vision, rather than their own?
- Can they be deployed within/across a number of schools where they are needed, and are they able to commit to experienced, trained staff supporting each school?
- Is it clear what expertise, experience and qualifications they can contribute to children's learning and staff development?

3. Great leaders at the heart of our system

The white paper talks of an autonomous school system that is led by outstanding educational leaders. A main strategy linked to the self improving school system is aligned to building capacity in the areas most in need, and using effectively the collaborative infrastructures of Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs), and Teaching Schools Alliance's (TSAs).

A significant factor for selecting the 'right' PESS external provider would link to their effective leadership and national reach with both local and regional leaders, to support the system. Their credibility is strengthened by the wrap around accountability, ability to illustrate best practice, and impact when working in schools across more than one locality. Working collaboratively with school and academy leaders to provide support, and closing gaps across/within groups of schools and academies should also be a significant factor. This is important to ensure all children are able to access high quality PESS provision, and are given strategic steps and transition from curriculum PESS towards wider community participation and sporting excellence. There is a responsibility upon schools, academies and external PESS providers to look carefully at the vision for PESS; how its effective leadership and strategic alignment for all children can be transitioned effectively, locally and nationally, across collaborative groups of schools and academies. This is how effective practice can be identified, shared and can contribute to a world leading sporting arena. The leaders within the system have an ideal opportunity to look at how this can be led effectively with the best external PESS provider(s).



When using an external PESS provider, consider –

- Is the provider supported by a national infrastructure and standards with local leaders, and is succession embedded, so schools can be secure they get the right people at the right time?
- How well are provider's lead officers trained and prepared to support strategic implementation of PESS within a school's curriculum?
- How effective are their leaders at working flexibly with school/academy leaders, to create best-fit models of provision that raise standards?

4. A school led system – greater collaboration to drive up standards

The white paper has caused division with its focus in this area upon every school becoming an academy. However, no one would argue that we need all schools to be great schools, and within the current education landscape, a collaborative partnership is one which can: support identification and sharing of excellent practice, gather intelligence about local areas in order to close gaps, and increase opportunity - at the same time, reducing underperformance with the increased challenge on collective accountability, that longer term could prevent underperformance.

PESS for many years has had a strong, collaborative infrastructure, particularly linked to inter school sporting competition. But it is based, in the main, on individual school involvement, finance, and subject leadership. The transition in primary schools, their networks, strategic partnership and locally derived school cluster groups, provides an ideal backdrop for looking more creatively at the way in which external PESS providers can work within a school-led, collaborative model. With the right credibility, providers can show clear accountability, and belonging to each network/group of schools. Identifying a range of personnel, PESS activities intra and inter school provision would contribute to increased capacity, without losing the unique need(s) of each individual schools within the collaborative.



When using an external PESS provider, consider –

- Has the provider got the capacity and ability to deploy staff, with the relevant expertise, across a number of schools/academies?
- Is the provider able to illustrate clearly other effective practice, and engage parents to support their children's learning?
- In what way is the provider aware of the education landscape, and can they promote the school and its increased collaboration to ensure a world class PESS provision for each school within the collaborative?

5. High expectations and a world-class curriculum for all – a curriculum for the 21st century.

The white paper focuses here on each child deserving to leave education with the knowledge and skills that open access to the best opportunities in life. To achieve this, the paper cites a world leading curricula, providing stability and a knowledge -based curriculum as an ambitious benchmark with increased stretch. Changes to assessment and a key focus on character traits and resilience are key to the curriculum and success for all. Alongside these changes, additional funding is being made available to secondary schools to extend the school day, to expand the range of evidence-based character building opportunities they provide to pupils with activities like sport.



For PESS, the new focus on support of character is one to be celebrated. The way in which PESS activities, including team games, creative activities such as dance and water based sports (e.g. swimming) are taught, the processes and protocols involved when working with children in a team, group and with each individual all contribute to the way in which children listen, are resilient; work effectively in or lead teams; cooperate; share; make decisions based on tactical problems –all these behaviours should be more explicit in learning outcomes expected from PESS activity – having an explicit connection to the behaviours involved in learning 'through' the physical alongside the improved physical competence will increase the value and transferability of a child's learning through the physical into other curriculum and life areas.

The design of the PESS curriculum – its range and relevance to 21st century children and how the activities are chosen to create the right culture and climate to learn, will need increased support for teachers as well as the right expertise from experienced provider to ensure the curriculum programme offer is the best it can be.

The needs of every child will need to be considered rather than the resources and space available. How we meet each child's need through PESS should not be determined by national curriculum alone. A great school does also need to take into account the best way to provide a 'child – leading' curriculum. Knowing what this will achieve for each child, tracking their progress and celebrate their achievement.

When using an external PESS provider consider –

- If external staff are capable of providing support for 'in school' staff and a relevant curriculum for children to learn?
- In what way are they able to monitor, track and identify critical intervention of children so that progress and achievement is recognised?
- Can they help provide the right support/additional capacity to challenge and support children of differing abilities?

6. Fair stretching accountability, ambitious for every child

The white paper links the autonomous school led system to effective accountability that ensures professionals are held accountable for the outcomes of their decisions. The roles of Ofsted, Regional School Commissioners and Headteacher Boards will support external judgments of school/academy impact and effectiveness with minimal interference where schools are doing well!

PESS has had significant funding over the years and currently all primary schools receive a Sport Premium Grant with an aim of raising standards in curriculum and increased range of opportunities for participating in PESS. This is where schools should be clear about what differences schools and providers are expecting to see in their children. Tracking each child's progress and the quality of delivery is where judgments must be made – if we are not achieving what we set out to achieve then why not?

When using an external PESS provider consider –

Have they got in place protocols and procedures aligned to the quality and standard expected for provision

Can/will these accountability measures be checked and monitored together with the school/academy leader and agreed procedures in place tracked to school policy?

Have they got in place evidence nationally and locally of their impact and contribution to children – their PESS learning and participation in after school sport?

I hope using the White paper key elements as a framework for reflection does help both School Leaders and Area Leads from Premier Education to consider their practice, protocols and policy and together they will be able to use this to evaluate how effective provision is as well as identify any developments needed to be even better in ensuring –



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