



# STRETCHING BUDGETS AS WELL AS MUSCLES



Cuts in school funding are starting to bite, with nearly 75% of Headteachers expecting their budgets to be in the red in the coming year. A recent poll from the NAHT found that more than a third have had to reduce the number or hours of teaching staff.

Of all subjects, PE can be the most vulnerable to such cuts. Often demoted or deprioritised in favour of the “core” academic subjects, it can be regarded as the “Cinderella subject”, struggling even in good times for timetable space, resources, or credibility. But the need for regular and effective PE is shown by its benefits, which are becoming increasingly well known.

For example, Fitmedia’s recent study showed how a daily running programme could have a positive impact on academic attainment, with participants performing up to 25% higher in reading, writing and maths. They were also fitter, more confident and better behaved.

At Fitmedia we believe proper evaluation is essential and should be the foundation of all PE/sport programmes. It can play a key role in ensuring effective PE provision - whatever the budget.

This is true at each level of development.

For example, during primary school, particularly at Key Stage 1, the most important thing is for kids to develop Fundamental Movement Skills—throwing,

catching, jumping. Mastering these are crucial for developing full physical literacy—and for allowing them to engage in sports and physical activity as they grow.

For primary teachers, knowing what skills their students have can help them plan lessons effectively. If a teacher knows her class are strong in running, but weak on catching, they can focus their lessons and resources accordingly.

At secondary school, it is presumed that children have developed these skills and the emphasis becomes more on participation and success in team sports. This is also the age at which obesity starts to become more prevalent. This means that fitness becomes more important.

For secondary teachers, assessing their students’ fitness levels can identify those most at risk—for example, through obesity or low fitness levels. Teachers can then target specific resources to where they are needed most.

Evaluation can also help identify natural physical talents and aptitudes, which can aid selection for teams, and it can be equally helpful with outsourced lessons, such as those provided by third party PE providers, to ensure they are fit for purpose and effective.

It can also help teachers decide how and where to spend additional funding, such

as the PE and Sport Premium. This is an excellent resource, but can only be used efficiently if properly monitored. Effective evaluation will provide important data, showing how and where it is impacting on students’ physical skills and wellbeing, and prevent its funding being spent on ineffective or inappropriate programmes.

Crucially, evaluation allows teachers to alter their teaching to suit the children in front of them. This means that their resources – whether it is teaching time, equipment or funding – goes to where they will be most effective.

When resources are in good supply, this is useful in ensuring the children have a PE programme that brings out the best in each child.

When resources are limited, it could be crucial in ensuring the children have a PE programme at all.

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