**Teaching & Learning in Primary Games**

**Course Notes: 18/11/2022**

Recap of National Curriculum requirements and how these relate to Games as an area of activity within the NCPE 2014. (Separate refresher sheet provided)

Games are part of PE, not separate to it or as well as:

Curriculum PE – often described as having six areas:

1. Gymnastics
2. Games
3. Dance
4. OAA
5. Athletics
6. Swimming

Within the area of activity known as Games we can also divide this category into four sub-categories:

1. **Target Games** – the simplest form of activities which as the name suggest, involve aiming at / knocking down / hitting targets. These can be played with defenders or without.
2. **Striking & Fielding Games** – such as Cricket, Rounders, Softball, Stoolball, Tri-Golf
3. **Net / Wall Games** - such as Volleyball, Badminton, Tennis, Table-Tennis, Squash
4. **Invasion Games** – perhaps the trickiest to master, such as Netball, Korfball, Basketball, Rugby and Handball

There are so many different sports, variants of sports, rule differences etc. that it is impossible to teach all in a single day’s course. In fact, it is not necessary. We will focus on common principles and promoting a deeper understanding of how to play such games to promote mastery.

We will be looking at:

* **Sending & Receiving**

**Transferable Skills, Knowledge & Understanding**

* **Keeping Possession & Re-gaining Possession**
* **Creating Space & Limiting Space**

Our job as teachers of high-quality PE is to help facilitate pupils’ greater understanding and ability to select and apply the right skills, at the right time to be successful. We need to ensure that there is sufficient time to practice the physical skill and master it but equally provide contextual opportunities through which they can select the skill to answer the demands of a game’s situation.

Carousel activities which teach separate activities and which make no link between similar areas of activity / prior learning are to be avoided. Transference of learning and application of prior knowledge are key to effective learning in and across the games categories.

**Group and Class Management:** (please see also the main handout)

We set up a 5x5 grid square using the ordinary marker cones found commonly in schools

Every game / sport has a common dimension in that they take part within a boundary, defining the area of play in terms of a court, pitch etc. We want the pupils to stay within such areas even in warm-ups. Why? Because if you transgress the boundaries when in possession, or the ball you throw, hit etc. bounces outside them, for example, you either lose a point or lose possession. This ultimately leads to loosing or not doing as well.

1. **Spatial Awareness Game:**

We stayed within the large 5 x 5 grid and pretended we were bouncing off the internal sides of the square. In doing so we said “Boing” very loudly as we bounced off! We ran in straight lines towards the edge, if we needed to avoid anyone else, we said “Beep! Beep!” and moved to avoid contact.

R/KS1 – you may wish to consider having the pupils imagine that they are driving cars for instance, looking not to ‘crash’.

KS 2 Pupils may be better off thinking about this as pinball, or a ricochet type activity.

Skill development / teaching: Changing direction at speed. We used a longer last stride to the side, lowering our hips and shoulders. We then pushed off from the planted foot low and hard, using a ‘V’ shaped move. This was to encourage rapid change of direction and effective, efficient movement. Core basic skills – Agility – Balance – Coordination.

1. **Run and find space, move off, find more!**

We played a variant of the above where the emphasis was no longer on the sides and boundaries and rapid changes of direction. This game was all about finding space in a busy square (pitch, court etc). Players kept their heads up, looking for space to run into. For fun we just said “Hallelujah” when we got into a space, then quickly moved off to find more. This also links to ***Movement Off the Ball*** – vital in many types of games.

This game can be played whilst dribbling a ball (hockey, football), bouncing a ball (basketball) or carrying a ball (rugby).

It encourages the pupils to look past the rapidly moving others to see where spaces exist or will become available. This is helping to develop ‘Field Independence’ within the pupils where they can see more than just the immediate. Field Dependant pupils will find this very hard as they are unable to focus on anything beyond the moving pupils.

Both these games were set up to be fun but yet had a very serious learning point. The key to teaching games well is to make sure that the pupils understanding what they are trying to achieve and why. Games practices and drills need to be contextual so that pupils get the concepts, can store this information, bring it back when required quickly within a game.

1. **Knock out – Tennis**

This game involved helping the pupils to understand the importance of the racket head and that wherever the face of the racket points the ball tends to follow. It involved hand eye coordination, focus, agility and balance – as well as strategy and awareness in the space(s) used.

When considering all these ‘games’ type activities it is important that the teacher sets the learning in context – provides the bigger picture to help the pupils learn. We sometimes refer to this as **T.I.B.s** – ***This Is Because***. It helps the learner to see why.

Refer again to main handout. We then looked at how the 5 x 5 Grid square could be used to help teach games. We had been doing everything within the large grid square made by the 5 x 5 cones so far. I sub-divided the square by placing 5 cones in the centre to give four separate playing areas or zones, pitches, courts etc.

We then played:

**Truck and Trailer** - using a rugby ball and developed some rugby skills using this simple activity. In four groups, occupying a single space each we lined up behind the first person who had a rugby ball. On the word ‘go’ they started to run around within their space followed, as if a trailer, by the rest of the group. They then held out the ball to one side, slowed down and allowed the next person to speed forward, take the ball and lead the group before going to join the end of the line. This was repeated several times building stamina, increasing speed and confidence of taking ball and how the activity was played.

**From the warm-up / introductory activity**

**Skill Development: - bring in the main learning**

The ball carrier now popped the ball up into the air for the next person to take, at speed into space. This is called a ‘Pop Pass’ in rugby is all about continuity and progression towards the try-line. Next player ‘accelerates’ onto ball, changes direction looking for space in which to move.

Players running onto ball – signal by:

* Hands up to show they are ready and where they want the ball
* Say ‘Yes’ to indicate readiness to receive

Player with ball:

* Looks back to see players hands, hear call before ‘popping the ball up’.
* Provides an accurate place

We then had two groups play Truck and Trailer in a space making it more complicated and less space in which to work before bringing all four groups into one court!

**S.T.E.P.** – **Space**, consider how this can be used to challenge or enable. Generally moving things further away can make them more challenging whilst bringing targets / players closer can make them easier.

* Having a larger space to hit into – easier
* Having a smaller space to hit into – more challenging

**Rob the Chest** – a fielding and striking game activity

In this game we were divided into four roughly equal groups around a square playing area. Each team was based in a corner and had a hoop to donate the front of the line. Another hoop was placed in the centre of the square equidistant from all teams. In this hoop was placed 20+ tennis balls.

Objective:

Each team sends one runner out to the centre hoop (‘Chest’) to ‘Rob’ / take a ball. This means that there is a maximum of 4 runners running in the space at any time for safety.

SAFETY POINT!

Always bend the knees to pick up and keep head up and looking around. Do not bend at waist and ‘dip’ head low.

Ball can be:

1. Taken back to team corner and put in hoop before next player from the team goes out (retrieval)
2. Rolled back to team corner, stopped (Long Barrier) and put in Hoop (Cricket skill)
3. Thrown underarm back to be caught by team mate standing in hoop (Fielding general)
4. Thrown back overarm to be caught by team mate standing in hoop (fielding general)
5. Thrown back to corner towards a set of stumps (cricket), base (rounders)

Note the progressive development

Once all balls are taken from the middle – we ‘Robbed’ from other team’s hoops – still only one runner going out at a time from any team. Insist on this. You can introduce more teams to reduce waiting and increase work rate / work load.

**Skill development:**

There is obviously the skill of running fast, retrieval and throwing accurately. Also consider the fielding skills of:

* Stopping a rolling / bouncing ball (long / short barrier)
* Keeping body in line and behind the ball
* Moving towards the rolling ball to get to it quicker (cricket, rounders type fielding)
* Hitting a base (catcher), Hitting base – thrower (out in cricket) – hitting base catcher (stumping in cricket)

This way a fun warm up can be seen to develop and enhance skills used in contextual situations from the games that the pupils will want to play.

We also looked at ‘Decision-making’ via having balls which were in the chest but worth more points than the others e.g., double. You can also play the game with a ‘Golden Snitch’ – whichever team has this at the end wins outright!

**Cooperative Rallies (Net / Wall Games)**

Using another 4 cones we can split the 5 x 5 grid down even further to give 16 individual work spaces. These could be used to help develop basic tennis skills for example:

Catch and Throw (KS1)

Hand Tennis – KS1/2

**S.T.E.P. – Task**, consider how changing or adapting the task (differentiate) can help extend the more able and help engage the less able. Layering the success criteria (or W.I.L.F. – What I am Looking For) can work very well.

**Webs and Fans: (diagrams in Games Booklet)**

This is a great use of organisation to allow for safety and maximum activity. We used examples from rounders, athletics (mentioned only) and cricket.

Think also of these as a large pizza – the slices can be playing or throwing into areas because we condition the activity to make it safe and provide greater control to the striker (hitter).

Remember to have a ‘safe zone’ in the centre for you as teacher, storage of any resources etc. Hitters hit out from the centre into the increasingly wider triangular slices.

We also introduced the concepts of using hitting tees – either specialist, bought tees such as in the Kwik Cricket kits or our old friends – marker cones, highly versatile, cheap, and available in large quantities in most primary schools.

We played **Rounders** using four games at once to avoid the classic half the class batting, half fielding and the teacher bowling! We had No bowler and No bat-stop (wicket-keeper)

We used different equipment in each quarter of the space so that we could you how pupils can be more successful in hitting the ball into space, away from fielders – principle of the games. This way as well pupils get far more access to hitting practice. Each batter has at least 3 goes before changing batter allowing them to build on the kinaesthetic feel and success of previous hits. Small group size allows this easier and fielders can rotate round roles e.g. bases, deeper fielding etc.

Add conditions such as score a point per base reached before being stumped or four points for the full rounder. Build your score over the three / four hits. If ‘out’ – score goes to zero

**S.T.E.P. – Equipment,** Consider here how changing or using a wider variety of the same piece of equipment can help promote greater learning. In tennis we have sponge balls, low compression balls, tennis balls.

**Teaching and Learning:**

Variants of hitting also allow the pupils to learn the mechanics of the game – allowing you the teacher to focus on the principles of striking / fielding games. **Why is this important?** Because we are teachers, educating our pupils, allowing them to engage in such wider learning as decision-making, analysis, perseverance, communication etc. Use PPPBP to pose questions like – ‘As the coach of a team, where are you asking / encouraging batters to hit?’ ‘As fielders what are you trying to do?’

**Play, think, evaluate, improve – learn.**

**Tag Games**

Warm-ups / spatial awareness / dodging / creating & limiting space – lots of reasons why you should use these. However, use sparingly, not ever lesson and be sure to bring out the learning by asking them questions – ‘what are you doing when...’ ‘How are you trying to limit space?’ ‘How can you create space in which to move?’

We discussed issues of some pupils ‘opting-out’ during traditional approaches to tag games so we showed you some variants to encourage all and allow pupils to think about what is going-on.

1. **Four squares** – we used four teams of 6/7 in a space denoted by cones (remember to ensure that the pupils were aware of the space / court in which they are working – relates to the real Games)

**Object of the game:**

* Ball carrier must always have two hands on the ball
* Ball carrier must ‘tag’ a player by tagging the ball on the torso of the other players – score 1 each tag
* Cannot tag the same person again until they have tagged someone else
* All players can move, dodge around the space to try and ensure that they make it harder for tagger to keep his/her score low
* Motivation for players to try and beat previous scores
* 25-30 secs each tagger, then 10 secs to handover bib, ball etc. (this keeps the game fast paced and packed; pupils have little time to go off task but whole warm-up / skill development can take a matter of minutes only).

Exhausting! However very effective. Do not forget to ask pupils ‘How can you be successful?’ ‘What are you trying to do to be successful?’

1. **Corner Ball** – similar set up to above, however the emphasis shifts to the rest of the players against a single player. The objective is to pass the ball around the space to ‘corner’ or tag the solo player. Players cannot move with the ball but must limit the space through passing the ball to limit options for the player moving. Ask pupils how, why etc? Thinking STEP, you can adapt the space to make easier / harder, condition the Task, modify the Equipment to allow pupils success and to consider their needs, adapt the number of People / pupils in each group etc.
2. **Octopus** – a variant allowing a larger group to take part at one go. Play: - mark out a larger grid square. Have three catchers who stand in middle of square. Remaining players line up on one side. On the word ‘go’ players must try and cross the square to the other side without being tagged (two hands on hips). If caught players become ‘tentacles’ – stay where they were caught. They can then catch others who come within their reach (as they cannot move feet). This effectively limits the space available gradually, just as in an invasion game. Lots of decision-making, dodging and weaving. Catchers can communicate and collaborate to be more effective.

**S.T.E.P. – People:** Consider how the number of people involved in a game can increase engagement and the ability to practice / apply and learn. Using players of different abilities, same abilities can be useful at different times and allow more able to demonstrate their wider understanding and security of knowledge.

**Keeping Possession** – a key in invasion games

**Play ‘Piggy-in-Middle’ – a real ‘classic’ teaching game**

We did this and discussed how people felt, what was the point? How do you become successful as the Piggy? How can you exploit situation as the group?

Looked at getting in the ‘face’ of ball holder to pressure them, limit the angles in which they can pass and perhaps forcing a mistake. Marking is essential to limit space, sometimes we ‘mark’ space, sometimes the players. Pupils need experiences and contextual activities to help master this.

STEP – we adapted this so that the team were trying to successfully pass the ball 5 times. If they managed this then swop person in the middle. Team then try and get 6 passes etc. If defender (piggy) touches the ball, the ball touches the floor, goes out of court or team drops the ball then defender (piggy) gets a point. Each person will have a couple of goes as piggy to try and ‘score’. How were people successful as piggies? How did team work to be successful? What did you learn?

**End Ball**

Keep the activity contextual to allow the pupils to develop a greater depth of understanding of the mechanics of invasion games. Essentially you are now playing piggy-in-the-middle but moving the ball towards the end-line or goal. If a pass is made successfully to a team mate on or over the end line then a point is scored by all in team. If Piggy (defender) touches the ball, team make a mistake etc then Piggy gets the point!

**Adapt to have:**

* 3 hoops on end line – shot to bounce ball in any hoop (similar to netball, basketball type games
* Use adapted goals from cones or small sided goals but have two on each end
* Play 3v1 to start, build to 2v2 gradually

We also looked at using the side channels for having players out of the playing area who could be passed to in order that an overload can be created. This effectively means when you are in possession you have extra players to help exploit the width of the playing area and try and create more space for the defenders to try and cover/mark/limit. This is a great application of the STEP framework.

We also introduced **semi-passive** defence – this was where they could not move until you came into their half – allowing the attacking team to build up some momentum in attack.

Finally, in this section we played a game where you can score on any side of the square making it a very fast reaction game. Once you scored - ball to centre of square, the other team, pass out. Here the transition from attack to defence is rapid and a single pass can be a winner. Top end of KS2 as requires very rapid processing of information and decision-making. Only works if players understand that they have set roles in terms of getting free (creating space to exploit) or marking (limiting space and dominating area).

Consider the use of these games as you can adapt the principal game to be any invasion sport through STEP. Equipment, changing ball size, using a stick, Task – using feet only, dribbling ball with hands only, Space – smaller zones, thirds, certain spaces for certain roles, bigger space to allow more time on ball such as football or lacrosse, People – smaller numbers, larger numbers, channels, safe spaces, players who are either team when any team is in attack only. Get the idea?

**Drills** – we also looked at passing along a chain e.g., Tag Rugby, football, netball using the cones as ‘channels’ which help to signify when to pass, or limit a passive / active defender etc.

We played **Chain Gang** to finish. This is in the main Games Teaching pack. This variant of striking and fielding game is fun as it engages all fielders and all batters in activity all the time.

You should also look at the separate sheet about common principles. Please, when considering games, teach principles and ask questions. Do not block out six weeks on football but rather use football, handball, korfball, hockey etc. to get the message across about how games are played and to help players (pupils) understand how to become successful.

Use contextual games to facilitate this deeper understanding.

Use good organisational skills to ensure pupils can practice and develop their skills, try and take risks with different strategies, tactics, ideas to exploit space, limit it, regain possession, keep possession etc.

**But most of all – approach it from a LEARNING point of view – what will the pupils learn today?**