Teaching and Learning in Gymnastics in Primary Schools (KS1-2)

Establishing a common and shared rationale / understanding of Gymnastics as an area of activity to be taught in YOUR school.

What should be taught – *although National Curriculum PE (2014) provides no real 'prescription' on what must be taught we offer some guidance based on best practice, pedagogy and research.*

i. **Understanding key language in teaching Gymnastics:**

COPY REMEMBER REPEAT EXPLORE – what do we mean in gymnastics terms?

- Put into context to help clarify:-
  - **Copy** – this could be from the teacher's suggestion, demonstration *or "look at what others show/or do – Copy it and adapt it to make it your own"*
  - **Remember** "*how you chose to travel on your feet.....can you repeat this?*"
  - **Repeat** "*what you did but now extend your work by adding.....*"
  - **Explore "***different ways of balancing on different parts of your body*"

This needs to be done with increasing levels of **CONTROL** and **CO-ORDINATION** as pupils start to show progress and move towards mastery

In Yr R/1 these levels are going to be more **basic** but they will increase with age and maturation.

ii. **Looking at the 5 Body Actions:**

In order to achieve the expected levels of progress / outcomes in gymnastics activities, we need to use the **5 Basic Body Actions** that make up both Gym and Dance. These are:

TRAVEL JUMP TURN BODY SHAPE BALANCE

Let's look at each of these in turn through a mixture of practical tasks and discussion

- **Travel** (DO) Show me different ways of travelling on your feel (EXPLORE)

  (DO) Can you select three ways of travelling and link them (REMEMBER – REPEAT)

  (DO) Show a partner (Pairs) – Copy each others way. Refine by choosing only 3 from 6 ways

- **Jump** (DO) EXPLORE different types of jumps

  (DO) 5 Basic JUMPS (2:1, !-1, 1 other 1, 1 – 2, 2 – 2) Combine – TRAVEL & JUMP

- **Turn** (DO) Look at Spins – sitting on bottom and also leg spin – A turn at a low level

  (DO) Combine JUMP & TURN – A turn at a high level

  (DO) Combine TRAVEL JUMP & TURN

- **Body Shape** Explore the following 'shapes' with your body

  Tall / long, Wide, arch, symmetrical

  Combine TRAVEL, JUMP & TURN - with a wide body

  - with a tall body

- **Balance** (DO) Can you Balance on 3 points?

  (DO) Can you copy this balance? **V – sit** (basic balance – but show adaptations, progressions)

iii Progression

Progression is everything and we must make sure pupils demonstrate progress in their learning throughout the lesson and across lessons

Some of this progress can be seen in house well pupils **LINK** their movements. This starts to demonstrate better coordination and control.

Reflection – Think about how **You linked** the 3 ways of travelling on your feet earlier so that they were seamless.....

FLOW - how one movement ends and becomes the start of another or how a movement changes e.g.

A turn – first high, knees bend to lower, transfer to bottom spin low

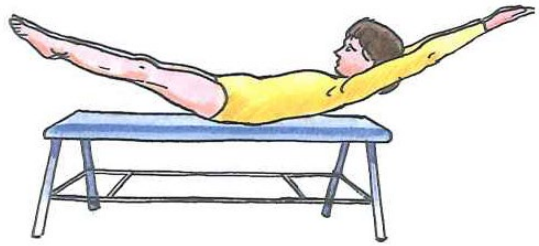
This is known as **LEVELS** e.g. high, medium, low

iv Body Tension

(DO) Lying on back tensing all muscles: Partner lifts feet just off the floor – body should stay rigid

We sometimes talk about this as 'core' strength or 'core' stability. It is vital when being asked to perform gymnastic type moves with confidence, control and coordination.

Plank – a great and simple example along with V-sit, Dish shape and 'Dome shape'



v **Moves** (Do All) Experiencing these are basic moves which can be combined to make complex sequences on floor ad apparatus which flow.

(a) V – sit

(b) log-roll – relate to body tension

(c) shoulder stand

(d) front support, side, back

(e) side roll

(f) Teddy-bear roll

(g) spins

(DO) Can you choose 2, 3, or 4 skills and **LINK** them so that they **FLOW**? *This helps show control, coordination and understanding demonstrating progression in skills, also in knowledge and understanding.*

vi **Starting the lesson:**

Routines ***(Link this to TOP TIPS! sheet)***

Their importance in taking things towards ***Outstanding*** teaching and Learning

- Behaviour
- Expectations and Purpose

vii Warm Ups:

- Common approach is Tag type games but do they help to keep pupils **calm** and **focussed** on **Gymnastics**, or, relate to the learning objectives and outcomes (WALT / WILF)? We need to raise the pulse rate to warm body up first – spaghetti analogy, blu-tac, bubble-gum
- ***"How do you cater for pupils who just 'RUN' round the room – usually boys?"***

  (showing no change of pace or direction). Let's look at some ***really practical*** ways.....

(DO) (a) **Music** – using music to introduce 5 body actions and

"Ways of..... travelling

..... jumping

..... balancing

Regular changes stop running and introduce changes in **DIRECTION, LEVEL & SPEED**.

(DO) (b) **Gears Warm-Up**

- Using familiar concept of cars
- Controls **PACE (SPEED & DIRECTION)**
- Include & teach **REVERSE** (backward)

(DO) (c) **Paint Pot** – *concept of feet covered in paint*

- Can you put footprints <u>all</u> over the room (encourages movement around the working area)
- Can your feet "paint" a pattern e.g. zig-zag, curved, spiral, name (introduction to **PATHWAYS – DIRECTION**)

(DO) (d) **Statues**

- Basic concept but excellent for focusing on **BALANCES** or **BODY SHAPES**
- Could include **MOVES** (e.g. rolls) onto mats out of balances or into

(DO) (e) **Tamba** – use of a tamba to control **SPEED** and response. Pupils also need to listen facilitating concentration and reducing low level noise

(DO) (f) **Aerobics** – teacher leads, or even pupils. Demonstrate a way for ALL pupils to lead and generate the ideas (3-5 min warm up)

(DO) (g) **Resource** – static stretching after 'pulse-raiser' to warm muscles, using spots (available from TTS Group). Example shown of blood circulation and flow – education about the body through warm-up.

viii Stretches

Having got the blood pumping and core body temperature raised, need to stretch and /or mobilise the appropriate muscles and joints.

Why do we warm up? – what will your pupils say? What will be different in Yr 1 to Yr 2 to Yr 6? Is this planned for? Vital role of Subject Leader.

- What happens etc / why? (Blood, heart, oxygen, muscles, fuel, heart rate increases as body needs more oxygen and fuel (carbohydrates/sugars) to work, breathing rate increases, heat generated etc)
- **Names of muscles** - (DO) using a sheet of stickers to see how much pupils have taken in about names of muscles.

ix Themed Session – skill development:

TRAVEL – can you **EXPLORE** lots of different ways of travelling on your feet (include different parts)

(DO) EXTEND: can these be performed High or Low (**LEVELS**)

Which can you do FAST & SLOW (**SPEED**)

(DO) Can you now ***SELECT*** and ***APPLY*** (Choose and use) your 4 favourite ways and **LINK** them so that you move seamlessly from one to the other **FLOW**

(Do this much slower with pupils) – (4.5 steps change etc) – Allow several lessons

KEY QUALITY QUESTION :-

"How could you make what you are doing look better?"

EVALUTE & IMPROVE e.g. What are arms doing?

Really showing control?

Slowing movements down perhaps?

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

- Join with a partner (or 3 if numbers odd)
- 'Teach' your moves to your partner – they now have 6 ways of moving
- SELECT & APPLY (choose) your 3 favourite, put them together (**LINK**) so that they flow

KEY QUALITY QUESTION:-

"How can YOU and your PARTNER make what you are doing look better?"

– use of timing, **CANON, UNISON, TENSION**

Introduce as this point:

CANNON – travel one after another, jump etc

UNISON - travel together at same time, jump etc

x **Development Activity:**

- using your travelling sequence can you

(a) now choose which one will be performed FAST, MEDIUM, SLOW (changes in **Dynamics / SPEED**)

(b) can you now add, change so that you follow different **DIRECTIONS**

(c) can you now add, change so that you perform at different **LEVELS** high, medium, low (adapt as appropriate)

(d) looking back to our balances, can you add in a **BALANCE**?

- either V sit

or shoulder stand

RECAP

You now have a "Sequence" which links and flows hopefully

It includes:-

- □ - Different ways of TRAVELLING (5 basic Body Actions)
- □ - Different SPEEDS (Fast, medium and slow)
- □ - Different LEVELS (high, medium and low)
- □ - Different DIRECTIONS (Pathways)
- □ - A linked BALANCE (5 Basic Body Actions)
- □ - It may include one / both of CANNON or UNISON
- □ - Considered regularly "How can I / we improve what we are going (EVALUATING & IMPROVING)

↓

Can you see how we can add in and build a more complex and longer sequence?

- Add in rolls, turns, jump, more balances etc in keeping with the learning theme e.g. flight or 'Holes and barriers'
- Using contrast to include "Wide and thin", "Arched and stretched" (Body shape)

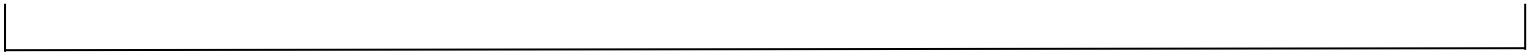
Can you see the benefits of this 'Movement Sentence' type approach – where it is edited, made more complex each lesson but always starting from the prior knowledge, last week's work. This way you can visibly see the PROGRESS but perhaps most importantly – so can the PUPIL.

xi Refining:

At the beginning of each lesson, pupils in their pair/group are given time to focus upon their sequence so far to refine and improve their work.

Pairs can show each other their work in progress so that they can use "Two stars and a wish" type approaches to comment and discuss what is good about each others work (e.g. timing, use of arms) and what could improve (e.g. height and balances)

xii Planning this learning approach



Lesson 1 Lesson?

Approx 8 – 12 teaching hours

Question 1: *Can the lessons be "blocked"? Blocking means both lessons that week for PE would be Gymnastics in this case. Do you understand the benefits?*

Question 2: *Is the amount of time allocated fit for purpose? We recommend 8 – 12 'teaching hours', or actual contact time. How long do you have? (not what appears on the time-table, but what actual is taught)*

Questions 2 is really important as you need to develop the pupils' sequence work over time, allowing them to refine, reflect adapt and improve. You also need to shape it through the teaching of specific types of movements etc to facilitate their work. Depth, Compelling Learning?

Progression – the pupils need time to adapt what they do on the floor to be able to perform using the variety of apparatus – this consolidates their learning, adapting it yet further to include and integrate apparatus (including each other at times – e.g. sports acrobatics).

How is Gymnastics at your school currently planned? This is a reflective task to facilitate discussions

xiii Extending the more able:

Gymnastics is an early specialisation sport. This means children come to it early on when they are young and it is feasible that you can have pupils in your class who are extremely competent, skilled or even county/national champions!

(a) Keep the tasks more **open-ended**. This allows them to work at their level

(b) Use **extension cards** such as in the Val Salsin Gym Manuals (Yellow section at back)

(c) Use them to help others (but not every lesson)

(d) Encourage them to make the movements and balances you are working on ***more fluid*** including moving into and of apparatus

(e) Use **Gymnastic Resource Cards** to introduce new movements/sequence ideas

(f) Use different types of Gymnastics such as **Sports Acrobatics, Rhymic Gymnastics** to provide a new challenge and focus

APPARATUS WORK

Organisation of apparatus within a lesson

One often hears teachers bemoaning the fact that apparatus work is so time consuming that actual teaching time is cut to a minimum. This need not be so, for a well organised teacher with properly trained children should be able to move onto the apparatus quickly, efficiently and safely without significantly interrupting the flow of the lesson. Remember that this is best done not at the end of every lesson but progressively over time. Apply the F.I.T. principle to the time that you have set aside for Gymnastics.

F.I.T.

Frequency – how often does gymnastics get taught (per week? / per year group? / per key stage?)

Intensity – the level to which it is taught (do the vast majority of pupils achieve the expectations or exceed them?)

Time – how long do the pupils spend on gymnastics per module? QCDA recommend 8-12 actual teaching hours.

Apparatus can be moved and used successfully by children from the age of four. In order to make this possible, the teacher must observe these simple rules and teach their pupils how to move it.

- Be totally organised
- Teach the children slowly and carefully the rules of lifting and placing apparatus and **all staff utilise the same effective approach**.
- Use as many children as necessary to lift each piece of apparatus without struggling and so that if one was to drop / slip, then the apparatus is still supported and safe.
- Try to match complexity of layout with age and competence – i.e. four and five year olds should have very simple layouts of apparatus and ten and eleven year olds much more complex and interesting ones. This will ensure progression of work and challenge through the years.

The most important point relating to apparatus in primary schools is that children should take out and put away their own apparatus every lesson – one large set should not be erected in the morning for everyone to use in turn, because:

- The size and complexity of the apparatus will be inappropriate for most groups
- The lay out will not relate to the particular theme, learning objectives and expected outcomes that have been planned
- The children do not experience a progression from floorwork onto apparatus
- They do not learn how to handle the apparatus for themselves, and consequently are losing out on an educational, exciting and satisfying part of the lesson.

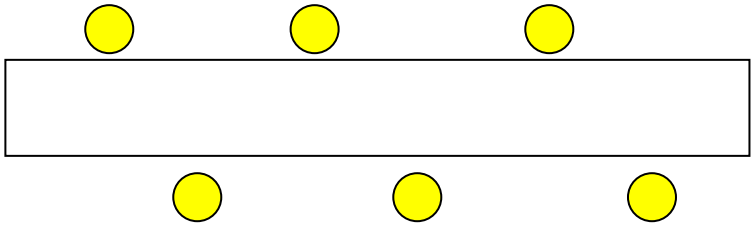
First Steps

Establishing the rules

When a reception class first begins activities leading towards gymnastics, children will spend several lessons learning to respond to instructions, how to travel on feet in various ways, identifying different body parts, how to find space, and how to use space. When they have passed through this stage, they can progress to using simple apparatus.

In order to facilitate easy movement of apparatus for young children, basic organisational points should be observed if the room allows.

- Always have the mats in different corners, or at least in two different piles on opposite sides of the room if at all possible in order to minimise crush and speed up mat getting out.
- Benches are always more easily accessible if they are spread around the outside edges of the room
- To enable safe and open access it is also helpful to place any main moveable apparatus, e.g tables, around the side of the room. Access can be very difficult if all apparatus and mats are stored at one end of the hall or in a tight narrow storage cupboard. If apparatus has to be stored in one place, key pieces could be moved ready for the later parts of the lesson, to the sides around the space.
- Because the children are so small, and the apparatus relatively heavy, it is imperative that the children are taught the “buddie” system of lifting e.g. when lifting a bench, a group of children should all work together to ensure safety.



The teacher should use as many children as necessary to lift a bench but it is essential that the lifting is conducted as below:

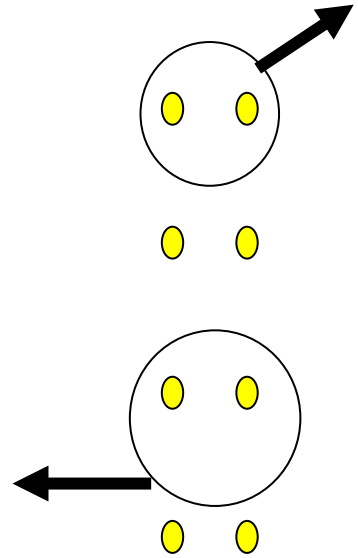
- Children are spaced along each side of the bench, ***NEVER AT THE ENDS*** – because this would mean that a child would have to walk backwards and in the early stages this can be unsafe.
- They all prepare (under the guidance of the teacher initially) "Bend knees, back straight, head up, hold the bench firmly with both hands".
- A "Boss" or "Manager" speaks clearly, and says "1,2,3,lift!". They all then lift at the same time.
- The bench is pointed in the direction in which it is to travel, so no child walks backwards. (Point the nose where you want to go!)
- When it has been carried to its appointed place in the room, the manager says "1,2,3,Down" and the children gently lower the bench to the floor and quietly sit on the floor next to the bench.

N.B. With young children, it is advisable to move all apparatus in this way and establish a recognised safe procedure. This practice can become the single policy for the entire school creating a common and shared approach to best practice and ultimately safe practice.

APPARATUS HANDLING POLICY

The following points can be made into a Safe Apparatus Handling Policy for display in Gym, staff room, handbook for teachers / supply.

- Never touch apparatus unless instructed to by the teacher
- Carry apparatus – never drag it across the floor
- When lifting apparatus children should know:
    - How many children should be holding it
    - Where they have to grip the apparatus
    - To have knees bent, straight back and head up, ready to lift
- Only to lift when everyone is ready
- Always have plenty of children lifting the apparatus and use the "buddie" system. With young children "1,2,3,lift" and with older children where only two or three may be lifting, one takes responsibility by saying "ready, lift!"
- Never walk backwards when carrying apparatus. The apparatus should be pointed in the direction of its destination and children should carry it facing the same direction. (Obviously as children get larger, and less of them are required, walking backwards may be unavoidable; in which case they must be told to look over their shoulder.
- Where possible get **large** pieces out **first** then smaller pieces e.g. mats.
- Reverse this upon clearing away – **smaller** pieces in **first**, then larger pieces
- When the apparatus has been positioned children should sit on the floor to await instructions
- No one should ever go on the apparatus until such time s the teacher has checked it all and instructs pupils to work.



INTRODUCTION AND PROGRESSIVE USE OF APPARATUS

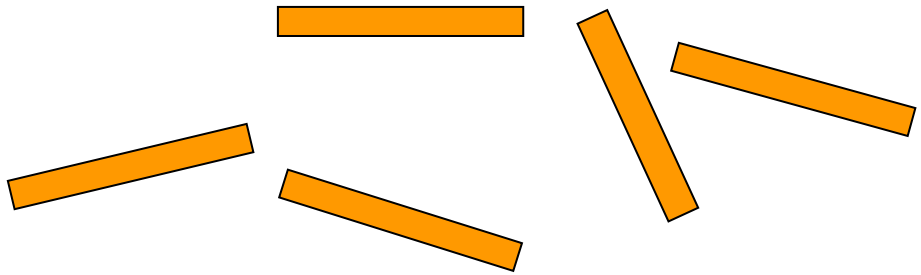
Stage 1

- It is suggested that mats should be the first piece of apparatus carried and used by reception classes.
- Initially the teacher should choose four children to pick up a mat (two on each long side – not one on each corner) carry it into a space, lower it, and sit at the side. This process should be repeated with each group carrying a mat. This operation should be carried out slowly and carefully.

- Next time the mats are taken out, the teacher could ask the children to hold hands with a partner, then ask two pairs to pick up a mat and carry it into space.
- As their number recognition and perception of space improves the children can be asked to sit in twos in front of the teacher, one pair behind the other in a nice straight line.
- From this position the first two pairs can carry a mat into a space and sit beside it, and so on. The children should be able to manage this stage of organisation quite quickly and, if the mats are in different piles, they can be taken out speedily and with no congestion. As in diagram (right)
- For the first two weeks or three weeks, the apparatus section of the lesson could consist of spaced mats around the room.

Stage 2

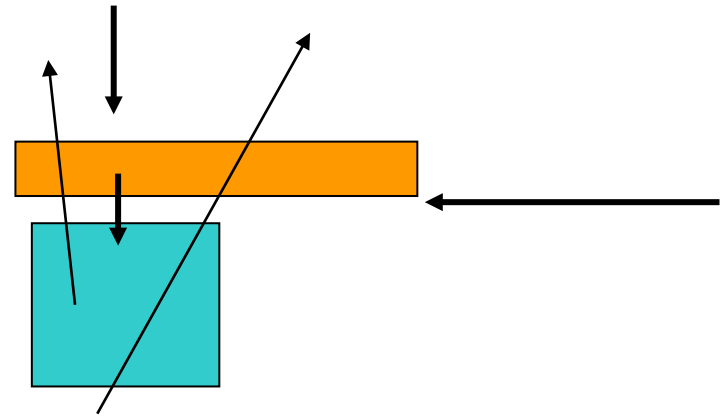
- Having moved and placed mats then children now need to become familiar with moving and placing benches.
- Some schools have wooden benches and /or padded vinyl metal-framed benches. Whichever type the school has purchased, the same procedures should be followed as described earlier.
- Initially, benches only should be used to allow for exploration – "under – over, through, along". Mats are not required for this exercise because the benches are very low.
- The benches should be set out at angles to fill the space and make more interesting shapes between the apparatus. (as in diagram – right)



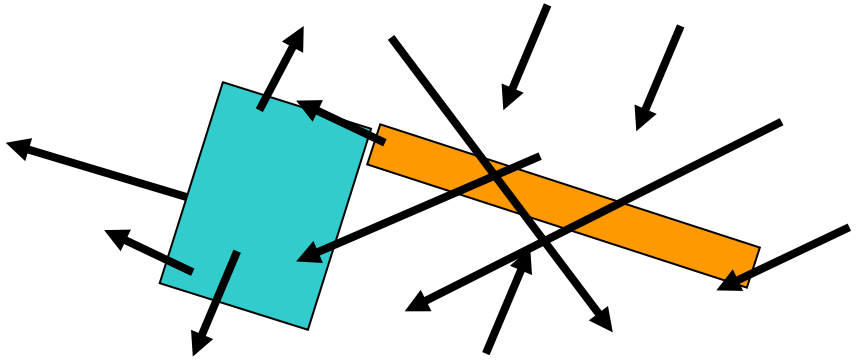
- After a period of exploration, the mats can then be added to the benches. They should not however, just be placed at the end of the bench because this can lead to queuing and restrictive movement. Placing mats at the side of the benches gives children at least two entrances and exits which results in less queuing.

Entry and Exits

Making sure that there are multiple entry points and exit points so that pupils do not 'perceive' a set start point. This helps reduce queuing.

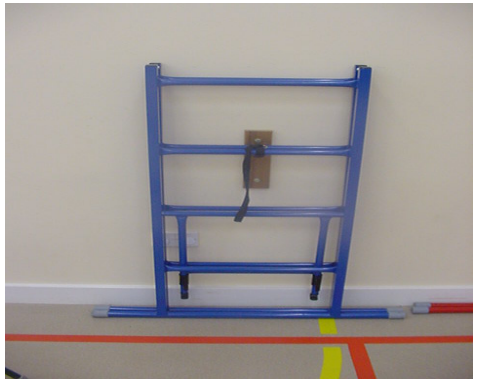


- However, by placing the mats at an angle to the benches, children will be presented with a variety of entrances and exits and encouraged to show more imagination in their use.



- Each small group then also retains a large amount of space in which to work because it has use of the bench, the mat, and the floor area between and around them. **N.B. ENTRANCES AND EXITS MUST BE UNOBSTRUCTED – WELL AWAY FROM OTHER APPARATUS AND WALLS.**

Stage 3



It is suggested that the third stage of apparatus handling should be the erection and use of the small "A" Frames. The following points should be considered essential:

- The frame should be released from its wall straps and constructed immediately
- Children should stand at the sides of the "A" frames to lift and carry it – already constructed – into position on the floor. This will ensure that toes are not damaged in the carrying. Also if "A" frames are released from the will straps and are dragged into position before erection, the stabilising rubbers will erode and the "A" frame will become unsafe.

With the inclusion and use of "A" frames (and small stools, tables and boxes) another dimension is added to the apparatus set-up, a sloping surface to travel along / over / under.

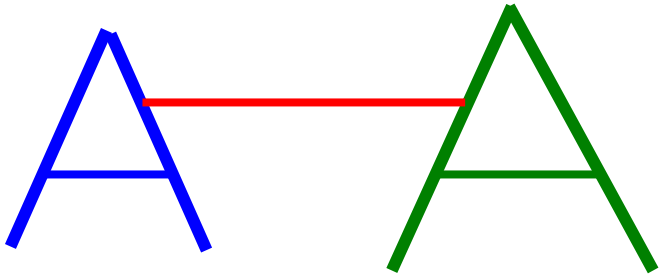
N.B. Remember to place mats at an angle to the inclined bench to create more entrances and exits.

Stage 4

From these simple beginnings it then becomes possible to add other small pieces of apparatus in different combinations to produce significantly different set ups. "A" frames, small boxes, a fixed ladder against the wall – all these can combine in different ways to produce a surface raised above the ground, either on the level or sloping. ***Examples***

Two "A" frames supporting any of the following:

Padded bench, balance beam, ladder, parallel bar, red bar, pole…



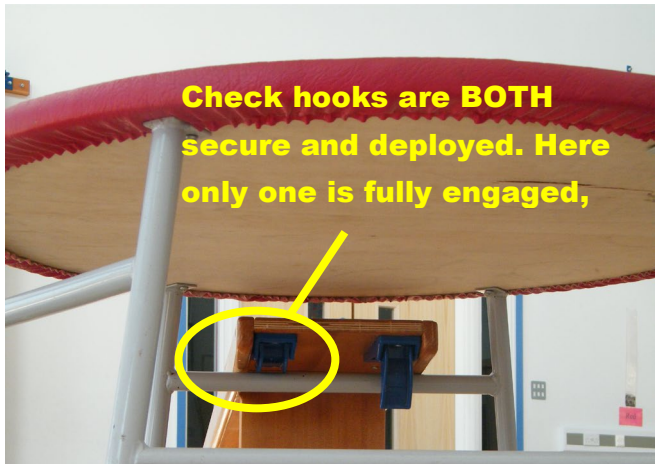
Using the same idea as above but the frames are of a different size (right)

Same idea again but place the hooked-on apparatus on a **slope (slant)**

The hooked-on apparatus can be secured on an angle or straight (level)

Here a bench has been linked to a movement table so that the bench is on a slope.

NB – Whenever benches are placed as such then only one pupil at a time should go on the bench.



Always check before pupils use apparatus that it is fitted properly and not like in the picture above, far right

Key question: "Do you really need to raise the bench as this will reduce capacity? Might it increase the likelihood of queues?"

Stage 5

As classes become very familiar with the handling and placing of apparatus then larger and more complex sets can be constructed. This will give groups of children the opportunity to work simultaneously and explore different entrances and exits.

The construction of an **"L", "T", "V", "Y", "W", "N"** shape with apparatus will have the effect of immediately creating more space, and many more exits and entrances – quite apart from making it all much more interesting to use!

Specific Safety Advice:

Before teaching Gymnastics, teachers should make themselves aware of the safety guidance issued through The Association for Physical Education (afPE) as written in "Safe Practice in Physical Education, School Sport and Physical Activity" (2016 Edition).

- Forward and Backward Rolls and other set skills which place weight on the head or neck should not formally be taught in Norfolk schools until the beginning of year 3 and then ***only once*** pupils have had conditioning activities leading towards the development of upper body and arm strength. These can include bunny-hops, crab-walks, monkey walks etc. Ideas for the progressive inclusion of these skills is included in all Norfolk INSET and in the yellow sections of the Val Sabin Schemes of Work (KS1 and KS2) for example
- No mats should be placed as safety surfaces to absorb falls in gymnastics. Mats are pieces of apparatus which are placed for planned activities such as landing and rolling.
- Pupils never jump from wall-bars or any non-flat surface.
- The use of springboards (picture right), trampettes and trampolines is prohibited in Norfolk Primary schools unless the adult in charge is fully qualified and competent.
- All gymnastics should be done bare footed
- Clothing should allow movement but not be too baggy
- All jewellery should be removed
- Do not allow jogging bottoms to be worn on apparatus work (ensure that they do not go over foot when wearing on floor work)

Demonstrations

The effective use of the visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning processes are paramount in the successful physical education lesson. Demonstration provides pupils with a visual image as well as being supported by auditory input from the teacher on salient teaching points to facilitate the movement. Demonstration is integral to the teaching process and a prominent strategy in gymnastics teaching. DVD material can also help here. Demonstration should be seen as a vehicle through which to facilitate greater pupil depth of understanding and knowledge. Children can be taught to observe, evaluate and comment – using contrast and comparison to evaluate their own and others' performance, suggesting ways to improve it.

Question and answer sessions can help children not only to observe what is right or wrong with a movement, but also to convert it logically into constructive criticism. Through demonstration a child can be guided to observe the crucial teaching points of a skill in order to help themselves and others achieve the correct performance.

Demonstration can also widen a child's understanding of how to create and adapt ideas from known and practised movements by developing methods of entry and exit, or by altering body shape and speed of execution.

Having asked a child to demonstrate, the teacher should always make positive teaching points and not criticise movements as being poor or bad. It is always better to give positive praise and then, if necessary, suggest ways of improving upon the performance. A teacher who is positive and sympathetic with children who demonstrate will always maintain their trust and their willingness to demonstrate again.

Different uses of demonstration:

- Showing good work
- Showing a completed sequence
- Showing improved work
- Showing variety of movement in answer to a basic question eg "How can you travel in a sideways direction along the floor?"
- Correcting a basic fault or misconception by the majority of, or the entire class when performing a particular type of movement.
- Showing a simple movement correctly, emphasising the important points.
- Showing the development of an idea or a child's own creativity.
- Emphasising a particular, fundamental teaching point.
- Improving the quality of the children's movement
- Showing a class something simply, quickly and visually instead of getting involved in time-consuming, verbose explanations.
- Teaching the class how to get out a new piece of equipment safely and accurately.