

## Sport Wales PESS and PLPS Case Study

### Owning the Physical Literacy Journey:

### *‘Developing Leadership Skills: Taking Responsibility and Enhancing Wellbeing’*

February 2015

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### *‘Developing Leadership Skills: Taking Responsibility and Enhancing Wellbeing’*

#### Key Points

- *Owning the Physical Literacy Journey describes how an innovative, self-directed learning approach enables children and young people to take responsibility for their own physical literacy journey.*
- *Empowering children and young people to take ownership for their learning and the learning of their peers impacted positively on both academic and health related outcomes.*
- *This case study highlights the progress of two schools in developing leadership skills through a learner centred curriculum and the positive impact this had upon the physical and emotional wellbeing of the children and young people involved.*

# Owning the Physical Literacy Journey

## Context

Physical literacy is a holistic concept which can be described as the 'motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life.' (Whitehead, 2014). A growing body of evidence strongly suggests that physical literacy not only allows children and young people to fulfil their physical potential, but also improves attention, concentration, engagement and on-task behaviour. This ensures children and young people are 'available to learn' and have the potential to achieve better outcomes through physical, cognitive and affective development. Physical literacy is unique to each individual and considered fundamental for a child and young person's health and wellbeing as well as playing a key role in facilitating academic achievement.

In 2000 a Welsh task force outlined a number of key actions required to improve standards of PE across Wales. As a result the PE and School Sport (PESS) Programme was set up and managed by Sport Wales (funded by the Welsh Government in 2001) and continued until 2014. The primary aim for the programme was to ensure that 'every young person is challenged and supported in PE and school sport'. PESS focused on up skilling the practitioners. High quality provision across curricular, extracurricular and community activity helps to engage children and young people, providing them with positive activity experiences and the skills, confidence and motivation to be 'hooked on sport' for life. The PESS project has developed a suite of professional development courses and resources to support practitioners working with 3 to 19-year-olds (Foundation Phase to Key Stage 4 and above).

Delivery was managed and supported by expert regional consortia teams with an understanding of physical literacy and the ways in which it can be achieved and improved through the curriculum and the wider community. PESS interventions investigated the potential value of using the physical to create and enhance meaningful learning and improve academic achievement through movement. This approach allowed for the creation and development of bespoke, holistic and child-centred interventions driven by need (as opposed to a 'one-size fits all' approach). Dragon Multi-Skills and Play to Learn developed wide reaching and extensive activities which were used as facilitative vehicles, accepting that the stage of development was more important than age.

The bespoke evolutionary nature of PESS has provided an excellent foundation for the new Physical Literacy Programme for Schools (PLPS). The primary focus of PLPS is to create engaging opportunities that meet the needs of every child, helping them to fulfil their full potential.

# Owning the Physical Literacy Journey

## Context (Cont.....)

In conjunction with the PLPS a newly developed Physical Literacy Framework (PLF) will provide practitioners with clear expectations that will help track the progress of every child along their physical literacy journey. The implementation of the PLF across Wales will raise the importance of developing a physically literate nation. However, the need to independently collate, review, analyse and evaluate the PESS evidence base and the introductory phase of the PLPS in raising standards across physical literacy, academic achievement and whole school outcomes is paramount.

## SPEAR

In October 2014, the Centre for Sport, Physical Education and Activity Research (SPEAR) at Canterbury Christ Church University was commissioned by Sport Wales to independently review the evidence base for the Physical Education and School Sport Programme (PESS), the Physical Literacy Programme for Schools (PLPS) and the Physical Literacy Framework (PLF). Part of this independent review involves the collation, review, selection, secondary analysis and innovative presentation of case studies evidencing and sharing a range of best practice across PESS and PLPS initiatives. As such, the narrative and analysis of this case study has been conducted by SPEAR with the resources provided by Sport Wales. Consent to identify children, adults and organisations within this case study has been granted.

SPEAR is a cross school and cross faculty research centre at Canterbury Christ Church University established to bring together expertise across and outside the university and to facilitate collaborative working. In particular, SPEAR brings together expertise in Sport and Exercise Science, Physical Education, Education, Health and Tourism and Leisure. SPEAR's research has helped guide and inform public policy to increase physical activity and sport participation among young people by identifying the processes most successful in increasing participation. It has provided a rationale for government investment, contributed to the wider evidence base used by policy makers, and steered programme improvements that enhance physical activity opportunities and experiences.

More details on SPEAR and its work can be found at:

[www.canterbury.ac.uk/SPEAR](http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/SPEAR)

# Owning the Physical Literacy Journey

## *‘Developing Leadership Skills: Taking Responsibility and Enhancing Wellbeing’*

### Profile

Youth development is a process that helps prepare a child or young person to meet life challenges, overcome difficulties and achieve their full potential. Taking ownership and responsibility for their learning journey and that of their peers is part of this process and supports the child or young person in developing a myriad of academic and life skills. Providing learners with the opportunity to take ownership and to develop leadership skills has been found to enhance their ability to analyse their own strengths and weaknesses, and to set personal and vocational goals. Learners who develop leadership skills are also better able to establish wider community and support networks in order to fully participate in community life and effect positive social change (O'Brien and Kohlmeier, 2003). These skills are increasingly important as young people progress from education into employment. Empowering children and young people to be accountable for their learning and the learning journey of their peers has been shown to increase self-esteem, self-worth and thereby improve behaviour. This in turn provides a solid foundation for the learner to better understand and empathise with others, creating a supportive and cooperative learning environment (Bonnell et al. 2011).

A key element of the PESS programme and the effective delivery of physical development initiatives is the promotion of heightened engagement in learning. In turn this enables the child or young person to achieve better outcomes linked to academic achievement and health through lifelong physical activity. Therefore, supporting children and young people in developing their leadership skills and taking ownership of their physical literacy journey through PE and school sport has the potential to maximise learning opportunities.

# Owning the Physical Literacy Journey

## Profile (Cont.....)

The PESS initiative has supported both primary and secondary schools to develop self-assured, confident and motivated learners who can lead, support, organise and communicate to a high standard. This case study follows the journey of children from Darren Park Primary School in becoming PlayMakers and a group of year 7 girls from Whitchurch High School in improving their wellbeing through the development of leadership skills and self-directed learning.

## The Challenge: What was the problem?

### Darren Park Primary School

Darren Park Primary School was interested in developing a more structured active playground using young leaders (PlayMakers) as positive role models to enhance opportunities and support physical activities during playtimes and lunchtimes. The school was particularly interested in identifying and working with learners who were less inclined to engage in sport and physical activity. It was felt that this would provide a solid platform for learners to develop leadership, organisational, communication and teamwork skills. It was also hoped that the opportunity would increase their confidence and self-esteem in a practical setting and help to promote lifelong physical activity.



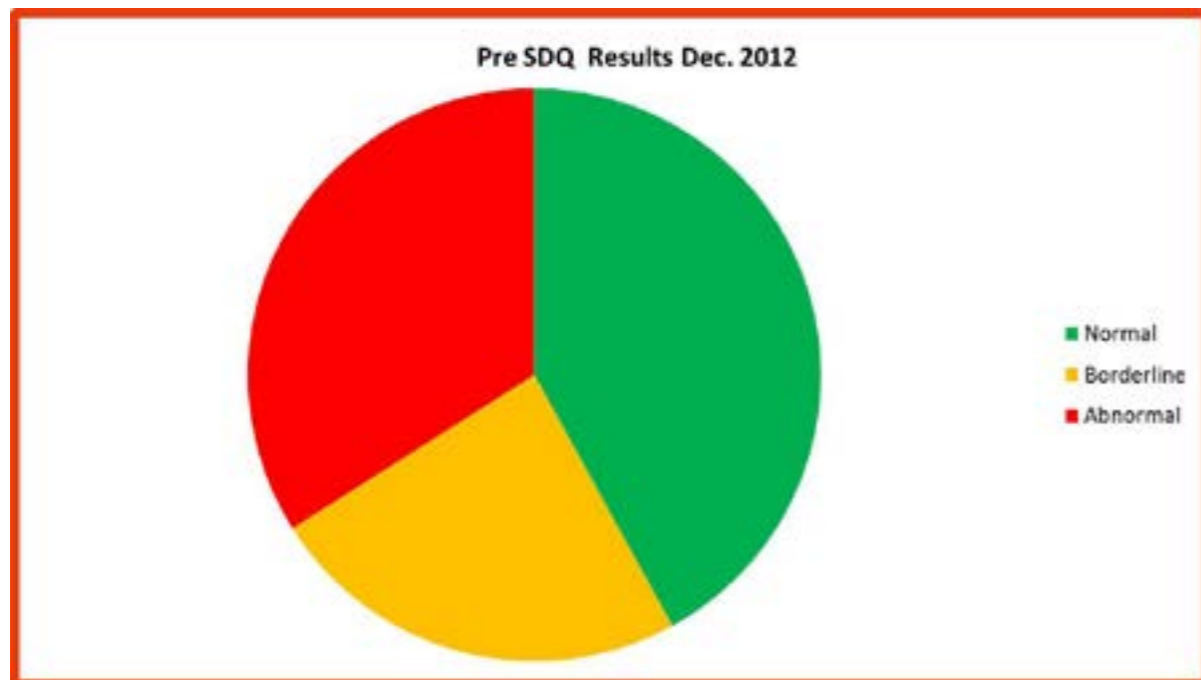
Meet some of the PlayMakers

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## The Challenge: What was the problem?

Whitchurch High School

Data collated from year 7 girls at Whitchurch High School highlighted a number of potential barriers to their participation in PE and school sport relating to self-esteem, confidence and enjoyment of the activities on offer. The School Sport Survey had indicated that only 52% of girls in comparison to 67% of boys felt comfortable in PE, with only 47% of girls in comparison to 57% of boys enjoying participating in PE. The school wanted to examine the impact of a child-centred curriculum, rich in fun games, activities and challenge-based learning on the wellbeing and leadership skills of girls moving from year 7 to year 8. The school also wanted to explore how personalised self-directed target setting would engage the girls in regular PE and school sport.



Baseline scores collated from the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires

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## The Intervention: What did they do?

Darren Park Primary School

15 learners from Key Stage 2 (7 to 11 years of age) were identified and selected to attend a one-day leadership course in which successful learners would attain a PlayMaker Award. The aim was to help learners develop leadership skills such as organisation, communication and teamwork, as well as helping to develop confidence and self-esteem. The training focused on communication skills and the organisation of people, equipment and space. The training allowed the PlayMakers to 'learn by doing'; by the end of the course they were able to set up simple games and activities with which they were familiar and had become confident in assisting a small group of peers. After the training the leaders were timetabled throughout the week to set up activities for their peers to take part in. The PlayMakers were split into four groups with two groups setting up activities on a Monday and Wednesday and the other two groups setting up activities on a Tuesday and Thursday. Friday was a 'free play' day. PlayMakers were only scheduled to set up activities twice a week as it was important that they also had the opportunity to engage in free play. Each of the yards (play areas) contained a storage unit that had a variety of equipment for the PlayMaker groups to make use of. Each PlayMaker was also provided with a pack of playground games. The PlayMakers supported in setting up activities and encouraging peers and younger children to try new activities. PlayMakers and their peers were interviewed during the intervention to ascertain impact.



Sample PlayMaker Activity Card

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## The Intervention: What did they do?

Whitchurch High School

In December 2012 girls from two year 7 classes were asked to complete the Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). This data coupled with the School Sport Survey completed in July 2013 provided the foundation to better understand the issues, challenges and barriers the girls faced in participating in PE and school sport. This data in line with the FSM Teacher Resource (Department of Education WA, 2013) allowed the school to develop a learner-centred, challenge-based, independent learning environment linked to the development of leadership skills. This approach involved self-directed target setting and 'fun' activities linked to Dragon Multi Skills sitting outside of traditional sport. Sessions were organised using 'chunking' strategies with this innovative curriculum being mapped across two classes of year 7 learners for the academic year. With support from the teacher the learners took responsibility for the delivery of skills and activities. This approach allowed the girls to take ownership of the activities within each of their PE sessions. In May 2014 the SDQ and the School Sports Survey were reissued to establish whether the intervention had impacted upon learner achievement. Videos and learner interviews were also recorded to further explore the extent of any impact upon the learners.



Example of the girls taking responsibility for a swimming session with the support of their teacher (click picture to play video)



Canadian Sport Centre LTAD Plan (2006, cited in Delaney 2012, p.8)

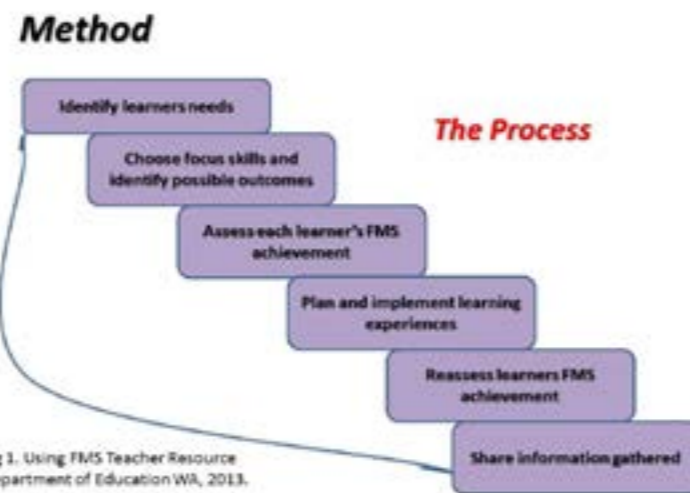


Fig 1. Using FMS Teacher Resource Department of Education WA, 2013.

Sample from the FSM Teacher Resource and the methodology and process for the intervention

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## Impact: What changed for the children and young people?

Darren Park Primary School

The PlayMakers were observed to have grown in confidence and could effectively organise and deliver a number of structured play activities as well as having the ability to create new games during playtimes and lunchtimes. The children learnt a variety of skills and enjoyed taking ownership of and engaging in active play during playtimes and lunchtimes. The 15 children involved in the PlayMaker programme learnt, enjoyed and achieved as a team, activating their peers and younger learners to move creatively during their playtimes and lunchtimes and encouraging them to 'get hooked on sport'.



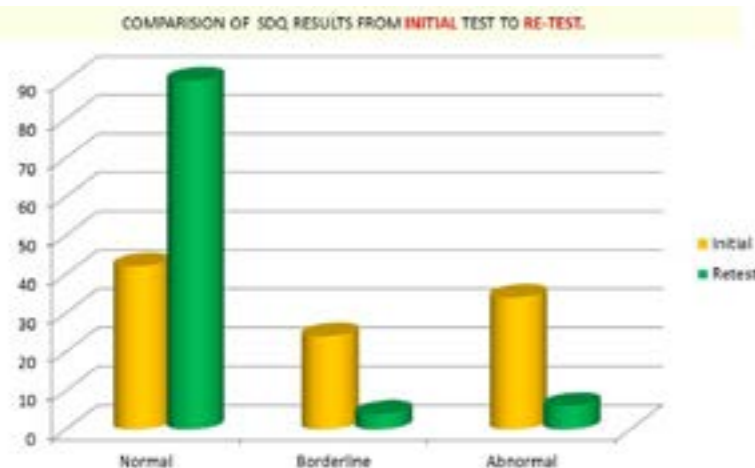
Observations from the PlayMakers and other children (click picture to play video)

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## Impact: What changed for the children and young people?

### Whitchurch High School

The test and retest results from the SDQ taken pre and post-intervention showed an increase in the percentage of girls reporting a 'normal' level of self-esteem and confidence from 40-88% respectively. This meant that 'borderline' or 'abnormal' perceptions of confidence and self-esteem in the girls had decreased substantially over the intervention period. Almost all girls had lower retest scores, indicating that self-esteem and confidence had increased over the intervention period. In particular two girls who had been stated due to emotional difficulties had shown marked increases in self-worth, self-esteem and confidence since their participation in the initiative. The evidence collated from this intervention supported the implementation of a self-directed learning environment to improve self-esteem and confidence in girls. The innovative curriculum had improved the girls' attitudes towards PE and how they felt about themselves. The intervention suggests that improvements in self-esteem and leadership skills could assist in removing barriers to long-term involvement in physical activity and to girls 'getting hooked on sport'.



Pre and post intervention SDQ scores



Self-directed dance sessions (click picture to play video)

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## Impact: What changed for the schools?

### Darren Park Primary School

The school created positive role models leading and promoting physical activity for all learners. Darren Park Primary School fostered an environment that encouraged children to try new games and activities. Other learners commented that playtimes and lunchtimes were much more fun because they were able to try more games and activities. Ultimately Darren Park Primary School created more opportunities for children to participate in structured and active play. Furthermore the PlayMaker intervention provided a mechanism for raising the confidence and self-esteem of those children who would not previously engage in sport. The school believes that through leadership opportunities they have started the children on a physical literacy journey to becoming 'hooked on sport' for life. PlayMakers will be developed, evolve and be a key focus of the school moving forward.



The positive impact the PlayMakers have had across the whole school (click picture to play the video)

# Owning the Physical Literacy Journey

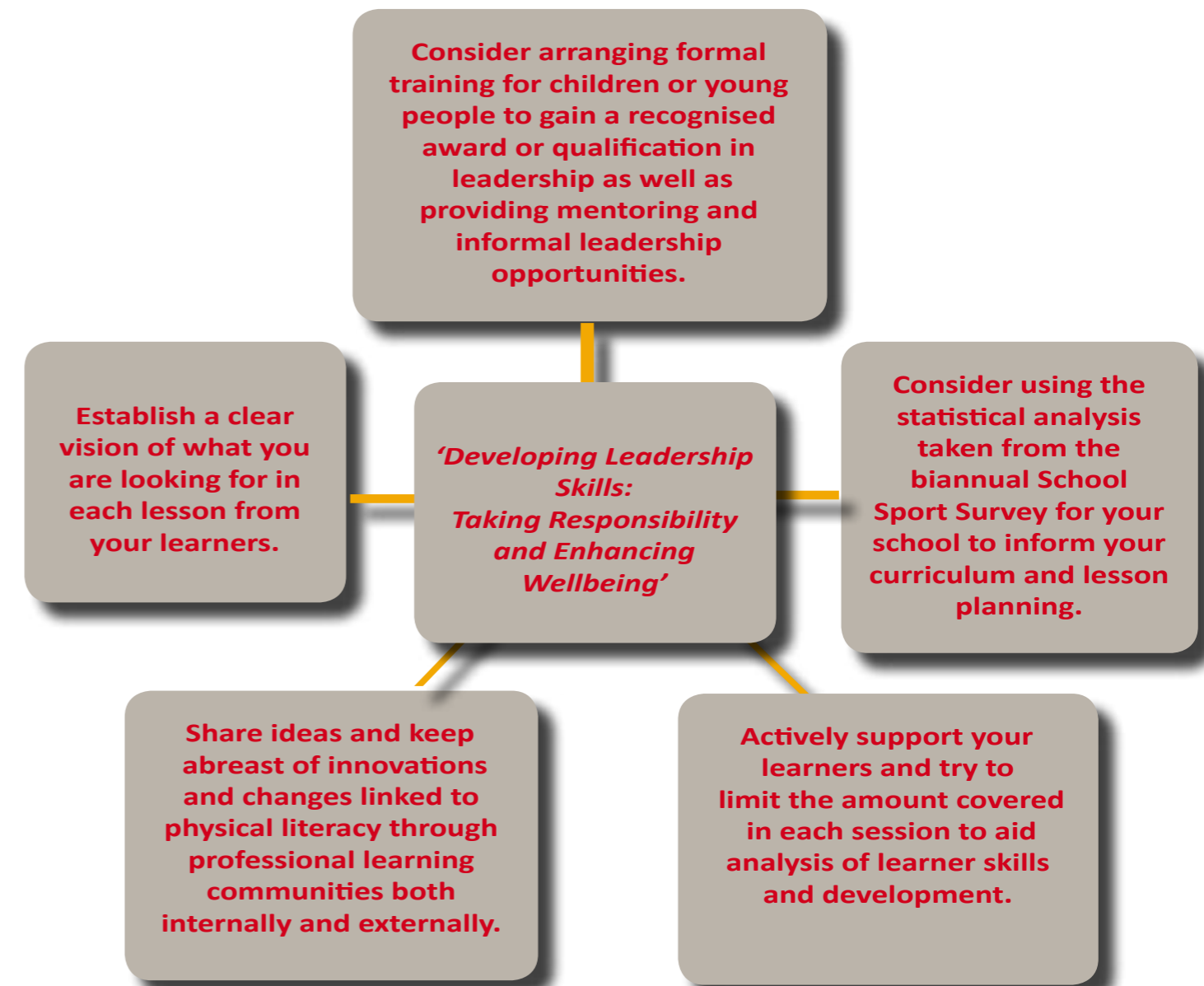
## Impact: What changed for the schools?

### Whitchurch High School

The intervention is now embedded in the curriculum as a half term programme of study, consolidated throughout the year in other activity areas. The findings were presented at the PE learning forum for Key Stage 3 with the Sports Council and have supported the future development and expansion of a Key Stage 3 girls' physical development programme at the school. The new year 7 intake will be allocated learning groups for PE based upon their physical development and competency assessment scores identified at the beginning of the academic year. In addition, school reports will now include the development of agility, balance and co-ordination relative to the learner's stage within their physical literacy journey. Finally data from the School Sport Survey to be undertaken in 2015 will be used to inform curriculum planning, development and assessment.

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## Recommendations: Advice for schools and practitioners



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