

Consultation with children in Irish primary schools 2023

Children's experiences of Physical Education (PE) and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) in Primary School

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) working with Hub na nÓg and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) asked children about their views and experiences of PE and SPHE. The information is used to help make decisions about what children will learn in the redeveloped Wellbeing curriculum.

We spoke to children aged between 8–13 years in 4 different primary schools.

This is what they said

Q1. What do you do/learn about in PE/SPHE?

Games: badminton, football, basketball, dodgeball, tag rugby, volleyball, hockey, netball and rounders

Athletics
Swimming
Gymnastics
Dancing
Orienteering
Stretches

“Sprinting over cones”



About friends and family and everyone around you.

Showing kindness

Different forms of media and being safe on the internet

Being part of the community – people have different cultures

“We don't have to like the same things”

Bullying

Healthy lifestyle, food, outside exercise



Q2. What do you like about PE?

Playing with friends
 Working together
 Having fun
 Being happy and healthy
 Having choice
 Being outside

“PE is good for your health”

Q2. What would you like to learn about in SPHE?

Socialising and friendships
 Feelings, emotions and decision-making
 Different people and cultures
 How to treat others with respect and deal with bullying
 Being safe – online, road and farm safety
 Healthy living

“How to be more social and not be stuck in your room all day”



Q3. What do you not like about PE?

Rough play and injuries
 Unfairness, cheating and poor losers
 Tiredness and being too hot, cold or thirsty
 Not having enough time
 Doing the same things and having no choice

“Sometimes people get too competitive”

Q3. What would make you feel safe and comfortable when learning in SPHE?

Having the chance to ask questions and use question boxes
 Giving examples and breaking things down
 Listening to everyone
 Teamwork
 Being respectful

“Support everyone”



Q4. If you were principal for a day, what would you plan to do in PE/SPHE for that day?

Give more time to PE

Get more equipment

Invite famous sportspeople

Build a sensory room

Give options and choices

Use the green areas - play on the grass

Get resources and facilities for dancing, gymnastics, trampolining, basketball, swimming, kayaking

“ Don't leave anyone out! ”

Make sure everyone can give their opinion

Respect children's emotions when children try to express themselves

Give children choices

Allow short breaks if SPHE is stressful

“ Make flags for the students as there are lots of different students there ”



Here are some of the things NCCA is doing with the children's feedback:

The children said

'PE needs to be a longer time'

'It's only once a week'

'Want to be able to recommend games'

'More say in the activities we do in PE'

'We should have votes to do stuff in PE'

'How to control your emotions'

'I would like to learn more about feelings and emotions'

'I would like to be safe...'
'on the farm'
'online'
'roads'
'strangers'



We did

More time for children to learn in PE in school is suggested in the draft Wellbeing curriculum.

Children have more opportunities to choose how and what they learn in the draft Wellbeing curriculum.

The draft Wellbeing curriculum places more emphasis on learning about emotions and feelings

The draft Wellbeing curriculum gives opportunities for children to learn about safety skills, rules and guidelines.

NCCA were not able to include all of the children's feedback in the planning of the redeveloped Wellbeing curriculum. Some of the views shared involve making expensive changes to school buildings, but decisions like this are not part of curriculum planning.

- 'build a swimming pool for the school'
- 'a skiing area'
- 'paragliding'
- 'a crazy golf course'

We shared the report on everything the children said with all the people who make decisions about what children learn in primary school.

We are now asking more people, like other teachers and parents, for their thoughts on what we've written. We will think about everyone's thoughts before we finalise the redeveloped Wellbeing curriculum.

