

Schools encouraged to open up sports facilities all year round

Thousands of children will benefit from more sports activities after school and in the school holidays through a £1.6 million funding boost to help schools make better use of their facilities.

As part of a national drive to encourage 60 minutes of physical activity per day across the week, the Education Secretary Gavin Williamson has announced total funding worth £2.4 million for better sports activities and teaching, including for schools in 19 areas across England to collaborate with sports organisations to increase the opportunities to use school sports facilities outside the school day.

The Active Partnership Network, supported by Sport England, will set up partnerships between schools and local sport providers, encouraging them to open up their sport facilities for fun and engaging sporting competitions, after school clubs and holiday activities.

Underlining the government's manifesto commitment to make sure children get an active start to life, the new investment in school sports facilities builds on plans set out in the [Sport and Activity Action Plan](#) to provide safe and familiar environments for children to take part in activities that encourage good physical health as well as important skills for the future, like teamwork and discipline.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Getting children active from a young age helps them build confidence and learn skills they will use in later life. Many schools already open up their facilities so their communities can benefit and I want to encourage even more to do so.

By backing schools with this extra money we can make more fun activities available all year round – everything from football to dodgeball – to help children find a sport that they will enjoy and which will keep them healthy.

As part of plans to extend their facilities to sports and activity clubs outside of teaching hours, schools will be able to generate additional sustainable income from leasing their premises to external organisations at affordable rates.

In partnership with sports charities Active Partnerships and Sport England, the fund will provide sporting opportunities across the country including in North Yorkshire and County Durham, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, Greater

Manchester, London and Gloucestershire.

Sports Minister Nigel Adams said:

It is absolutely right that every child, regardless of background, has the chance to learn how to run, jump, throw, and catch to develop a healthy lifestyle.

As we outlined last year, our School Sport and Activity Action Plan will mean that all children have access to at least 60 minutes of daily physical activity through quality PE, sport sessions, clubs and facilities inside and outside of school hours.

By opening up school sports halls and playing fields to sports clubs and the wider community, we will increase opportunities, particularly for those with the least access and from the most deprived areas and deliver on our manifesto commitment.

The 2022 Commonwealth Games will not just be about two weeks of sport: it will open up a wealth of opportunities for people across the West Midlands, leaving a lasting sporting legacy for the region. So I encourage young people to make the most of these opportunities, particularly by getting involved in community sport.

Health Minister Jo Churchill said:

We all know that exercise has huge benefits for both our physical and mental health – this is especially important for our children and young people as they grow and develop.

Sports and physical activity can inspire and empower young people to fulfil their potential and live longer, healthier lives, and it's fun. This fantastic investment will ensure thousands more children have access to the right facilities.

The new investment builds on the government's bold manifesto pledge to level up opportunities for young people across the country and create a £1 billion fund for more high quality wraparound and holiday childcare places. Through today's plans, parents and carers will benefit from an extended school day, helping to accommodate working patterns after school, at the weekend and during school holidays.

In addition to the funding to support extended hours for school sports facilities, nine teaching schools known for their expertise in sport in different parts of the country will share a £500,000 grant to trial new ways to engage the least active pupils and help to develop the skills and confidence of PE teachers. In further efforts to drive up the importance and quality of PE lessons, these nine teaching schools will test new ways to provide high-quality PE lessons that meet Ofsted's new inspection framework, which requires schools to create opportunities for children to be physically active across the day.

With volunteering rates among young people having increased in recent years, the Department for Education will also award a grant worth £20,000 for Birmingham to increase the number of youth volunteers in the community, ahead of the Commonwealth Games hosted by Birmingham in 2022. This is part of a £300,000 funding package to encourage volunteering opportunities in other parts of the country.

The investments, totalling £2.4 million, forms part of the government's push to make sport and exercise an integral part of pupils' daily routine, boosting their physical health, mental wellbeing, character and resilience.

Lee Mason, Chief Executive, Active Partnerships said:

This funding is a great opportunity to better understand how we can support all types of secondary schools to open up their facilities during evenings, weekends and holiday periods for the benefit of their school children and local communities. Schools are trusted sites within local communities and are the ideal place for people of all ages to be more active.

By the end of this project, we will know more about the barriers schools face when trying to open their facilities for community use and how to support schools to overcome these challenges. We will also identify and celebrate schools who are placing their facilities at the heart of their community and the impact that this is having on both school and community life.

Mike Diaper, Sport England's Director of Children and Young People said:

A significant amount of community sports facilities are found in schools. This new funding will help support schools to open up their facilities beyond the school day so they can be used for as long as possible by young people and the wider community and link schools up with great local activities.

The 19 Active Partnerships around the country will working with

local schools to make it easier, overcome some of the obstacles and share best practice – in what will be a win-win for pupils, community members and local sports clubs.