



Effective From	26 April 2023
Compliance From	AY 2024/25 (Fall term)

SCHOOL POLICY

on

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SCHOOL SPORTS



Introduction

Staying physically active and literate contributes to enhancing student health, wellbeing, and their confidence, competence, skills, attitudes, and behaviors to remain active for life. The role of schools in promoting physical activity and literacy through Physical Education (PE) and school sports is critical as they often provide students with their first exposure to organized sport. Schools' efforts to promote active learners with developed skill sets to make healthy lifestyle choices ensures alignment with Abu Dhabi's *Sports for All Policy* (DCD, 2024).

This policy lays out the basic requirements for the creation of a culture of engagement in physical activity in schools.

Purpose

- Establish minimum requirements for the provision of PE and school sports for all students.
- Promote the value of staying active for students throughout the day through structured and unstructured physical activity.
- Require schools to develop an internal policy and a physical literacy framework on which to base their PE and school sports program.
- Ensure that PE and school sports caters for the individual needs of all students, including students with additional learning needs and gifted and/or talented students.
- Identify eligibility requirements for teachers and coaches to deliver PE and school sports. Standardize minimum elements required in all schools' PE curriculum (including pedagogy and assessment).

Definitions

Additional Learning Needs	<p>Individual requirements for additional support, modifications, or accommodations within a school setting on a permanent or temporary basis in response to a specific context. This applies to any support required by students of determination and those who have special educational needs and/or additional barriers to learning, access, or interaction in that specific context (e.g., dyslexic, hearing or visually impaired, twice exceptional, or gifted and/or talented).</p> <p>For example, a student with restricted mobility may require lesson accommodations to participate in Physical Education and building accommodations to access facilities but may not require any accommodations in assessments. Equally, a student with hearing impairment may require adaptive and assistive technology to access content in class and may also require physical accommodations (e.g., sit in the front of the class to be able to lip read) to access learning.</p>
Coach	<p>A qualified professional, trained in professional coaching and sport-specific technical standards, who is responsible for organizing, planning, and implementing all or part of the school sports program.</p>
Competition	<p>A contest in which everyone who participates is aiming to win. Refers to sport and activities whereby students compete against others, or themselves, in ways that supports their health and fitness.</p>
Continuous Professional Development (CPD)	<p>All activities undertaken by staff to improve their knowledge, skills, competencies, and performance on a regular basis. CPD includes in-person training, online training (synchronous or asynchronous), coursework, short certificate and degree programs, mentorship programs, peer/ collaborative learning, academic conferences, research projects, observational visits, and community programs to share teaching best practices. CPD excludes planning hours and general staff meetings.</p>
Documented Learning Plan	<p>A plan which outlines any personalized learning targets, modifications to curriculum, additional support, or tools for learning which are agreed by school staff, parents, and students (where appropriate), including Individual Educational Plans (IEP), Individual Support Plans (ISP), Individual Learning Plans (ILP), Behavior Support Plans (BSP), Advanced Learning Plans (ALP), etc. This may be to address any specific identified academic, behavioral, language, or social and emotional need.</p>
Health and Safety	<p>Requirement for schools to ensure that students, staff, contractors, sub-contractors, relevant stakeholders, and visitors are kept safe and healthy in school and school-related activities.</p>
Physical Activity	<p>Any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure. Physical activity refers to all movement including during leisure time, for transport to get to and from places, or as part of a person's work. Both moderate- and vigorous-intensity physical activity (MVPA) improve health (WHO, 2020).</p>

Physical Literacy	The motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge, and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life (IPLA, 2016). A physically literate person can draw on their physical competence, knowledge, and understanding to stay physically active and lead a healthy life, relative to their situation and context.
Physical Education (PE)	The subject concerned with developing students’ physical literacy and their ability to use their literacy to perform in a range of activities for the progressive development of their physical health. PE is planned, progressive learning (theory and practice) that takes place in a timetabled class with a documented curriculum that is delivered to all students by a qualified PE teacher.
School Sports	All structured physical activities and learning that take place under the school’s supervision beyond PE. School sports includes all physical activity conducted during school breaks and extracurricular activities. These activities are often competitive in nature and should adequately prepare all students for competition (in and beyond the school environment) and lifelong participation in sports and physical activity.



Policy

1. School-Based PE and School Sports Policy

- 1.1 Policy Requirements: Schools shall develop, implement, monitor, evaluate, and review a PE and School Sports Policy that includes the following elements:
1. Sets out the school's vision, mission, strategy, and targets in promoting student physical health.
 2. Outlines how the policy will be implemented in schools through the PE curriculum and school sports programs.
 3. Sets out the school's strategy to meet the target of having each student engage in a daily average of at least 30 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity (MVPA) through PE and school sports.
 4. Promotes awareness of the importance of physical activity and health to all stakeholders in the school community (staff, students, parents, etc.) and outlines their roles in achieving the policy's targets.

2. Staying Active

- 2.1 Holistic Activity Goal: Schools shall provide opportunities for students to be active throughout the school day to reach the target of averaging at least 30 minutes per day of MVPA within the school setting (contributing to a daily goal of 60 minutes within the school and home settings). This should include:
1. Opportunities for students to be active during breaks and recesses, with safe spaces for activity, provision of equipment, and opportunities for students to engage in informal play as well as semi-formal and formal physical activity.
 2. Initiatives involving optimizing the physical environment of classrooms and the whole school to reduce sitting time and encourage standing, walking, and moving during curriculum time.
 3. Short, frequent activity breaks during classes to allow students to stretch and, where possible, raise their heart rates and engage their core muscles.
 4. Engagement with key stakeholders to increase awareness of broader sports programs within schools.
 5. Attention to individual students or particular groups of students identified as the least active, without risking the possibility of their stigmatization, by providing additional support to increase their physical activity levels and engage more widely in PE and sports.

3. Inclusion

3.1 Inclusive Participation: Schools shall provide opportunities for participation in high-quality PE and school sports for all students.

1. All students shall participate in the designated PE class for their grade level.
2. Where a specific activity or task limits a student's active participation, schools shall ensure that students are offered subject-specific alternative roles (e.g., team leader, referee, or score/record keeper).
3. Schools shall ensure that PE teachers make reasonable adjustments to PE lesson content and resources to enable all students to make progress toward the objectives in their documented learning plans (DLP), which should include specific recommendations to support learning in PE.
4. Girls/young women, students with additional learning needs, student who are the least active, and gifted and/or talented students shall have the same opportunities as their peers to take part in PE and school sports, including participating and competing in intra- and inter-school sports, where appropriate.

4. Gender Considerations

4.1 Gender Considerations: Schools shall follow the gender requirements outlined in the [ADEK School Coeducation Policy](#).

5. Physical Literacy

5.1 Physical Literacy Framework: Schools shall develop a physical literacy framework that describes physical, social, cognitive, and psychological outcomes as relates to movement for students (of all ages and stages of development) as outlined below:

1. Enjoyment: "I like playing sports or being active"
2. Confidence: "I feel confident when exercising or playing sports"
3. Competence: "I find sports and exercise easy"
4. Knowledge: "I know why exercise and sports are good for me, how to get involved, and improve my skills"
5. Understanding: "I understand how to apply my skills and knowledge of sports to learn new types of exercise and sports and continue to be active throughout my life"

5.2 Schools shall use their physical literacy framework to support PE teachers and coaches in planning their PE curriculum and school sports programs, respectively, to address physical literacy outcomes.

- 5.3 PE teachers and coaches shall give attention to individual or groups of students as necessary, ensuring that planning within the framework is stage- and age-appropriate to support development.
- 5.4 Schools shall communicate with teachers, coaches, and parents to create awareness of their role in supporting the development of student physical literacy through PE and school sports.

6. Competition

6.1 Sports Integrity, Healthy Competition, and Values: A school's internal policy shall articulate its approach to fostering the development of the spirit of sports integrity and healthy competition, based on the values of determination, resilience, diligence, honesty, passion, sportsmanship, respect, self-belief, independence, and teamwork, amongst others.

6.2 Competitive Opportunities

1. Schools shall provide opportunities for all students to participate in competition through PE or school sports via:
 - a. Intra-school competitions, which should introduce all students to the benefits and enjoyment of participating and competing in sports.
 - b. Inter-school competitions, which should provide opportunities for all students to take part in well-matched competitions against other schools.
2. These competitions shall be for everyone, not just the most talented, and should be designed to be as inclusive as possible for all students by:
 - a. Adapting competitions to make them easier or more challenging.
 - b. Including competitions that provide additional formats to increase access to participation in a sport.
3. Schools shall offer students the opportunity to participate in all competitions organized by ADEK or other government entities.

6.3 Identification, Development, and Support of Gifted and/or Talented Students

1. Schools shall make reasonable adaptations to the PE experience of gifted and/or talented students to provide them with sufficient challenges.
2. Schools shall engage with available competition structures to give all students, including gifted and/or talented students, the opportunity to compete with their peers and develop their talents further.
3. Schools shall engage with local sports clubs or national sports federations to provide, where possible, talent identification, coaching masterclasses, officials, and venues for competitions.
4. Schools shall recognize that talent pathways exist for students with additional learning needs and provide support, where possible, to ensure that they are able to access these pathways.

7. Teachers and Coaches

7.1 PE Teacher

1. Eligibility: Schools shall hire qualified PE teachers that meet the eligibility requirements for Subject Teacher as per the [ADEK School Staff Eligibility Policy](#).
2. Continuous Professional Development (CPD): Schools shall ensure that PE teachers receive 75 hours of CPD per year in subject-specific training, improving pedagogy and skills, and cover any other requirements as applicable to teachers as per the [ADEK School Employment Policy](#).

7.2 Coach

1. Eligibility: Schools are authorized to hire coaches as per their discretion, including appointing any currently employed staff (e.g., existing administrators, teachers from other subject areas, and/or others who may be talented or interested in a specific sport or group of sports).
 - a. Coaches shall complete ADEK-endorsed coach training or have an internationally recognized coaching award or license as announced by ADEK.
 - b. Coaches provided by independent vendors shall have an internationally recognized coaching award.
 - c. Coaches who do not meet the requirements of a Subject Teacher may assist the PE teacher in delivering PE, but they are not authorized to teach the subject on their own unless teaching a highly specialized module within PE or a highly specialized subject (e.g., dance, yoga) as an “Instructor” as per the [ADEK School Staff Eligibility Policy](#).
2. CPD: Schools shall ensure that coaches employed directly by the school receive 25 hours of CPD in subject-specific training, improving pedagogy and skills, and cover any other requirements as applicable to staff as per the [ADEK School Employment Policy](#).

- 7.3 Employment: Schools shall employ PE teachers and coaches as per the requirements of both the [ADEK School Employment Policy](#) and the [ADEK School Student Protection Policy](#).

8. Health and Safety

- 8.1 Health and Safety in PE and School Sports: Schools shall adopt guidelines on minimum standards in student health and safety, including specific practice in PE and school sports, and ensure all staff have regular mandatory training.
1. PE teachers, coaches, and volunteers shall have signed the school’s Student Protection Policy and have received relevant training as per the [ADEK School Student Protection Policy](#).
 2. PE teachers and coaches shall maintain accurate health and safety records of all incidents and actions that take place during PE and school sports.

3. Schools shall ensure PE teachers and coaches obtain mandatory first aid training certificates accredited and approved by UAE authorities. Schools shall have a clear process for dealing with incidents, including when and how to involve specialist personnel beyond that of a first aider.
4. Schools shall conduct risk assessments on any new activities sought, and all equipment (both fixed and portable) should be regularly checked, maintained, and be suited to the size and ability of the student (e.g., schools should follow equipment manufacturer restrictions on height, weight, age, etc.).
5. Schools shall regularly check their facilities to ensure they are free from hazards and safe for use with a clear process for reporting and rectifying unsafe areas as per the [ADEK School Health and Safety Policy](#).
6. Schools shall ensure PE teachers and coaches have access to students' medical records and are aware of students' medical conditions that could be potentially impacted by engaging in PE and school sports, particularly if students are participating in events that are offsite or outside of regular school hours, where access to the school nurse is limited, in line with the [ADEK School Records Policy](#).
7. Medical conditions should not permanently prevent a student's involvement in PE and school sports. Schools should adjust the content of activities or modify equipment used, where possible, to minimize the risk of injury.
8. Schools shall assess weather conditions (heat, humidity, wind, air quality) before each activity to determine whether the activity should go ahead and what adjustments need to be made.
9. Schools shall ensure that students are regularly hydrating and have access to fluids before, during, and after activities.
10. Schools shall adopt measures for sun protection such as ensuring adequate opportunities for shade and adopting relevant school-based policies (e.g., requirements/suggestions for hats, sunscreen, etc.).
11. Schools shall show flexibility in hot/humid weather by allowing students the choice of wearing PE uniforms instead of regular uniforms (that may be thicker, longer, and/or more layered).

9. PE: Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Assessment

- 9.1 PE Curriculum: Schools shall develop, implement, and review a written curriculum that identifies a progressive set of desired outcomes across all domains of PE at key points in student development.
 1. Schools shall explicitly teach, develop, and assess progress and attainment across the full range of outcomes identified in their curriculum (physical, social, cognitive, and psychological), including promoting the development of:
 - a. Skills: Fundamental movement skills, activity-specific skills, and transferable/life skills.

- b. Knowledge and Understanding: Activity-specific knowledge and understanding, as well as of the benefits and components of a healthy and active lifestyle (e.g., wellbeing, nutrition, sleep, mental health).
 - c. Values and Behaviors: Determination, resilience, diligence, honesty, passion, sportsmanship, respect, self-belief, independence, teamwork, etc.
 - 2. Schools shall ensure progressive lesson planning for students to build physical literacy in a systematic way, in alignment with the school’s PE curriculum.
 - 3. Schools shall develop appropriate assessments to measure student performance in PE. Schools shall utilize the results to show students the steps they need to make progress and help teachers plan for these steps.
 - 4. Schools shall use inclusive pedagogical approaches and language (e.g., using terms such as “moving,” “traveling,” “sending,” and “receiving” rather than “running,” “jumping,” “catching” and “throwing” respectively).
- 9.2 Minimum PE Time Per Week: Schools shall provide an average of at least 60 minutes of taught, timetabled PE per week across the school year to all students (with an aim to provide 120 minutes of PE per week, whenever possible).
- 1. The majority of PE shall be dedicated to engaging in actual physical activity (practice), balanced by less physically active learning (engaging in “downtime”, learning about rules, theory, etc.).
 - 2. Schools are authorized to occasionally reduce the minimum PE time per week for certain occasions (e.g., examination periods, prevailing weather conditions).
 - 3. PE classes for students in KG and Cycle 1 shall be shorter and more frequent to maximize their progress and achievement (less critical for older students).
 - 4. Schools are authorized to make PE optional for students in Cycle 3 for specific grade levels involved in preparing for high-stakes exams or meeting coursework requirements.

10. School Sports Facilities

- 10.1 Schools are authorized to work with partners in their local communities to offer the safe and appropriate use of school facilities for free use or rent (to maximize their usage and impact in actively promoting physical activity in the larger community).
- 10.2 When opening school facilities and all auxiliary spaces (e.g., changing rooms) to external users, schools shall ensure that access to the rest of the school is restricted.
- 10.3 Schools shall ensure that partners are aware of relevant ADEK policies and that they have all signed the school’s Student Protection Policy.

11. Monitoring and Evaluation

11.1 Schools shall develop and monitor internal indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of their PE and School Sports Policy. Schools shall also report the below indicators to ADEK as well as any other data as required:

1. Schools shall develop a method for monitoring students' average MVPA/day as an indicator and report the actual indicator calculated, the method used, and its effectiveness in measuring MVPA.
2. Schools shall monitor their provision of PE and report the average number of minutes taught per week across the school year to all students in each year group.
3. Schools shall track student participation in all sports events, extracurricular activities, competitions, etc., by keeping a roster of students for each and adding this information to student performance reports as per the [ADEK School Student Performance Reports Policy](#).
4. Schools shall additionally track participation by students with additional learning needs and compare their participation levels with those of the whole school population.

12. Compliance

12.1 This policy shall be effective as of 26 April 2023. Schools are expected to be fully compliant with this policy by AY 2024/25 (Fall term).

12.2 Failure to comply with this policy shall be subject to legal accountability and the penalties stipulated in accordance with the ADEK's regulations, policies, and requirements, notwithstanding any other penalties imposed by Federal Decree Law No. (31) of 2021 Promulgating the Crimes and Penalties and its amendments or any other relevant law. ADEK reserves the right to intervene if the school is found to be in violation of its obligations.



References

- Department of Community Development (DCD). (2024). *Sports for All Policy Abu Dhabi*.
- Federal Decree Law No. (31) of 2021 Promulgating the Crimes and Penalties and its amendments.
- International Physical Literacy Association (IPLA). (2017).
- World Health Organization (WHO), (2020). Physical Activity Fact Sheet.

Publication

2024 (September) ADEK_School_PE and School Sports Policy_v1.2

Department of Education and Knowledge, Abu Dhabi (ADEK)

This policy applies to Private and Charter Schools in Abu Dhabi. However, any circular issued prior to this policy or issued specifically for Charter Schools thereafter supersedes the requirements of this policy.

Past versions:

2024 (January) ADEK_School_PE and School Sports Policy_v.1.1

2023 (April) ADEK_School_PE and School Sports Policy_v.1.0

