



Physical Education Skills Progression from Nursery to Year 2

Purpose Children develop confidence and competence in movement through active play, explicit teaching, practice and application. Nursery and Reception physical development lays the foundations of strength, balance, coordination and spatial awareness. In Years 1 and 2 pupils develop the fundamental movement skills, team games and dance required in the Key Stage 1 physical education programme of study.

Our physical education curriculum in practice

Teach then practise. Adults model a movement, explain one or two cues and give repeated chances to try, adapt and improve it. Skills are practised alone, with a partner and in simple games or sequences.

An active environment. Children move daily in indoor and outdoor provision. Climbing, cycling, balancing, obstacle play and school-field activity support practice; taught PE sessions remain the planned route for all Key Stage 1 content.

Progression and independence. Nursery and Reception emphasise exploration, safe space and confidence. Year 1 keeps active challenges in continuous provision alongside PE teaching. Year 2 applies skills more independently in team games, dance and personal challenges.

Values and access. Kindness means including a partner and respecting different abilities; resilience means trying, resting and improving; creativity means finding a movement or dance solution. Adults adapt space, equipment, pace and roles so pupils can participate meaningfully.

The progression at a glance

Skill	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Travel and run	Walk, run and stop in a safe open space.	Change direction, speed and pathway with growing control.	Run, stop, turn and travel in varied ways under control.	Choose speed and direction to move effectively in activities.
Jump and land	Jump from a low level with adult support.	Jump and land with bent knees and growing balance.	Jump for distance or height and land with control.	Link jumps, adjust take-off/landing and compare outcomes.
Balance and coordinate	Climb, step and hold simple shapes.	Balance on one foot and negotiate obstacles.	Hold balances and link movements with control.	Combine balance, agility and coordination in sequences.
Throw and catch	Roll, send and receive large objects.	Throw and catch a suitable ball with a partner.	Throw towards a target and catch a range of balls.	Select and refine sending/receiving in games.
Games and dance	Join movement games, copy actions and take turns.	Follow simple rules and make short movement patterns.	Play team games with simple roles; perform a dance pattern.	Use basic attacking/defending tactics and refine a dance sequence.

How to read the tables. These are progressive teaching and observation prompts, not an age-based checklist for every child. EYFS experiences build foundations; the full Key Stage 1 programme is taught across Years 1 and 2. Teachers use assessment to revisit or extend a skill.

Fundamental movement and physical control

Skill	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Run stop and turn	Move safely in an open space, stopping for a signal.	Run at different speeds, stop and change direction.	Run, stop, dodge and turn while maintaining balance.	Adjust speed and direction for a purpose within a game.
Jump and land	Step or jump from a low surface with support and safe landing.	Jump forward or over a low obstacle and land on two feet.	Jump for height or distance; absorb landing with control.	Link different jumps, choose a take-off and improve a landing.
Balance and posture	Stand on one foot briefly and climb with support.	Hold a balance and move across varied safe surfaces.	Make stable shapes and move between balances smoothly.	Link balances at varied levels and explain how to stay stable.
Agility and coordination	Move around objects and use hands/feet together in play.	Weave, step and respond to a changing pathway.	Combine run, side-step, turn and jump in a simple course.	Adapt movement rapidly while keeping awareness of others.
Throw and send	Roll or push a large ball towards a person or target.	Throw underarm and aim at a large target.	Use underarm and simple overarm actions for different targets.	Choose a suitable throw and adjust force or direction.
Catch and receive	Stop a rolling ball with hands or feet.	Track and catch a large ball with two hands.	Catch a suitable thrown ball and prepare to pass it.	Receive a variety of passes, move into space and keep control.
Move with equipment	Ride, push or steer age-appropriate equipment safely.	Control a ball or hoop while moving through space.	Control simple equipment while walking or jogging.	Combine travelling and object control in a game or challenge.

In practice. Teaching check Offer accessible balls, distances and movement choices while keeping the skill goal visible. Use a starting observation, specific feedback and a second attempt to see whether the movement improves.

Games dance cooperation and wellbeing

Skill	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Join team games	Take turns and follow a familiar movement game.	Follow a simple rule, share equipment and respond to a signal.	Play small team games and recognise a partner or opposing team.	Use a simple attacking or defending tactic such as finding or closing space.
Space and decision	Move without bumping others; stop when asked.	Find a safe space and change pathway around a partner.	Move into space to receive or pass in a game.	Choose where and when to move to support a team.
Dance patterns	Move to a beat and copy simple actions.	Repeat a short movement phrase to music.	Perform a simple sequence with changes of level, speed or direction.	Create, practise and refine a longer patterned sequence with a partner.
Cooperate and compete	Enjoy playing alongside others; begin to wait for a turn.	Work with a partner and take part in a personal challenge.	Follow rules, cooperate and try a score or time against self/others.	Play fairly, accept outcomes and try to improve a personal result.
Body awareness	Notice when movement feels fast or tiring.	Recognise the need for space, water and rest.	Describe how active movement affects breathing or warmth.	Explain a warm-up, safe participation and recovery in simple terms.
Reflect and improve	Try a movement again after encouragement.	Say what felt easy or tricky and try a change.	Use a movement cue to improve an action.	Compare two attempts, describe an improvement and choose a next step.

What counts as evidence. Movement evidence comes from observation across repeated attempts, not a single race or photograph. Notice whether a child uses a taught cue, moves safely, adjusts in a game, cooperates and can explain a change.

Provision and independent application

Skill	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Climbing and balancing	Explore safe low structures and varied pathways.	Combine stepping, crawling and balancing in a self-chosen route.	Use a taught balance or landing cue in an obstacle challenge.	Design, complete and adapt a safe movement route independently.
Outdoor games and bikes	Move, stop, steer or roll with age-appropriate equipment.	Follow simple space and safety rules outdoors.	Practise travel, stopping and ball control in provision.	Choose equipment and rules for a fair, purposeful challenge.
Throwing and catching	Roll or toss a large soft object with an adult.	Throw and catch with a peer at a suitable distance.	Use targets and varied balls to revisit taught skills.	Change distance/target and record what improved.
Music and movement	Imitate animals, stories and rhythms.	Repeat a short dance phrase with a partner.	Create movement patterns with contrasting level or speed.	Sequence and refine a group dance with feedback.
Continuous provision to Year 2	Adults join movement play, model safe challenge and language.	Offer repeated outdoor movement invitations and observe.	Revisit specific PE skills through planned active provision.	Offer bounded independent practice and review; retain taught PE lessons.

Curriculum links and coverage

EYFS. Physical Development includes gross motor experiences that build core strength, balance, coordination and spatial awareness. Reception Gross Motor Skills are assessed at the end of the EYFS, not used as a Nursery checklist.

KS1 PE. By the end of Year 2 plan and teach running, jumping, throwing, catching, balance, agility and coordination; team games with simple attacking/defending tactics; and dances using simple movement patterns.

Check in planning. Document explicit instruction and repeated practice in all three KS1 strands. Outdoor learning and provision add opportunities to apply skills but do not replace the taught PE curriculum.

Sources. EYFS 2026 statutory framework; DfE Development Matters; DfE Key Stage 1 physical education programme of study.

Official programmes. EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers, effective September 2026; national curriculum in England for Key Stage 1. Development Matters is non-statutory guidance.

EYFS <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

Key Stage 1 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-physical-education-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-physical-education-programmes-of-study>