

**An Investigation into
Boys' Attitudes to and Participation in
Physical Education and Sport
in the
London Borough of Barking and Dagenham**

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Section 1 Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

This is a report of an investigation into boys' attitudes to participation in physical education and sport in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. It appears one year after the publication of *The invisible Child* (Lee, Buckland and Shaw, 1998) which provides evidence about the responses and attitudes to the learning of modern foreign languages by Year 9 pupils of average ability in the Borough. It is also one whole school year since we reported to the Borough on girls' attitudes to participation in physical education and sport (Lyons and Lyons, 1998).

The report is presented at a time of on-going debate about: the role of physical education in the primary school curriculum; the time allocated to physical education in the school day; 'active schools' and the health and fitness of young people; enhancing the performance of national teams in 'traditional' sports. It is a report about boys who currently attend the Borough's primary and secondary schools but who will spend their adult life in twenty-first century Britain.

The fieldwork reported here was undertaken between January and June 1999. Overall the project spanned much of the 1998-1999 school year. Once again, the stimulus for the project came from Fiona Bevan, the General Inspector with specific responsibility for Physical Education in the Borough. Roger Luxton, the Chief Education Officer for the Borough, supported the project and provided the funding to undertake it.

1.2 Background

The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham has a population of approximately 155,000 inhabitants. Demographic evidence indicates that the Borough has more children and young people than the London average with a high proportion of

children under five years of age. There are high concentrations of children and young families in some parts of the Borough. Census data indicate that there are 13,442 children in the 5 to 10 years age range and 9,771 in the 11 to 15 years age group. Unemployment levels are above the outer London average and are highest among young people. Income levels are estimated to be the third lowest in London. Although the proportion of residents of ethnic minorities is one of the lowest in London (approximately three percent) some wards in the Borough have a relatively high proportion (up to twenty-four percent) that has implications for specific schools. The proportion of households with access to a car is relatively low. The Sports Council has designated the Borough as an area of sporting and social deprivation.

In 1997, the Borough Council published *Making the Most of Leisure* a consultative document that presented a leisure strategy. The Council identified one of its aims as “to work in a way which promotes fairness, equal opportunities and choice in service provision and access to services” and one of its objectives “to develop wider opportunities for leisure and recreation in the Borough”. Research commissioned by the Borough Council into participation patterns has indicated that “involvement in sport is, generally, below the London average” but that “there is likely to be considerable interest in football, swimming and bowls” (*Making the Most of Leisure*).

The Borough’s Youth Sport Advisory Group was established to work across all departmental barriers “in an attempt to co-ordinate and rationalise activity in the area of youth sport”. The Youth Sport Development Plan focuses on young people between the ages of eight and eighteen years of age. The Borough’s Leisure Services’ Sport Development Unit targets groups with whom to work. In 1998 there were four target groups: youth; women; those over 50 years of age; and those with disabilities. The Unit organises after-school activities for primary schools and holiday sports schemes.

Any attempt to account for boys’ attitudes to and participation in physical education and sport in the Borough must be located within what Kay (1995), amongst others, has termed a “general set of underlying structural societal influences”.

1.3 Literature Review

There is a growing community of practitioners and researchers keen to explore the relationship between school physical education and the ambient culture. We drew attention to some of the literature about this in our discussion of girls' involvement in physical education, sport and leisure (Lyons and Lyons, 1998). Boys, like the girls, participate in physical activities that have a social meaning and significance.

John Evans and his colleagues (1987), for example, argues that:

Children do come to Physical Education deeply socialised into particular ways of seeing and doing physical activities, with images already worked out about what is appropriate for their respective 'gender'. Years of socialisation and practice have also differently pre-disposed them with skills and abilities necessary for competent performance in particular activities.

An increasing number of commentators on physical education emphasise that physical activity is not a 'neutral' activity. Access to play and the forms play takes have long term structural implications for opportunity and equity. The Sports Council (1993), for example, has observed that:

Without doubt patterns of gender equity are set early in life. Boys are provided with more opportunities than girls to develop confidence, basic movement skills and a positive attitude towards an active lifestyle.

Leaman (1984), in an early example of research into equal opportunities and physical education, notes that socialisation experiences create "fairly clearly defined patterns of behaviour which are regarded as appropriate for each sex, and these are recognised and acted upon by children even before they go to school". These patterns are evident in behaviour in pre-school and junior school contexts. Boys are "far more likely to be involved in aggressive, competitive and physically adventurous activities than girls". He suggests that the ways in which children occupy their time in the infant and primary school when at play is one of the most potent areas of sex differentiation.

Ann Williams (1993) asserts that boys and girls arrive at school with very different pre-school experiences, both in terms of general behaviour expectations and in terms

of access to physical activities. She adds that “the tendency of fathers to encourage boys to play ball games while girls are socialised into more appropriate feminine, and by implication, less active pursuits is well documented”.

Emma Renold (1997) has provided a detailed account of how these gendered experiences meet in the dynamic world of the primary school playground. She suggests that:

1. The playground and playtimes are designated spaces and times in the day when pupils are ostensibly given the freedom to choose how they spend their time.
2. The playground is a highly visible arena where identities are formed and contested
3. The playground is often heavily sex segregated.
4. Football is the principal activity that dominates playground space and relations for both boys and girls.

She uses her research evidence to discuss the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ which she regards as “a masculinity that is culturally exalted and that its exaltation stabilises a structure of dominance and oppression in the gender order as a whole.

As we indicated in our study of girls’ attitudes (Lyons and Lyons, 1998), thinking globally about physical activity raises important local issues. A number of researchers have sought to demonstrate why awareness of and response to hegemony is important for local action.

Alan Skelton (1998), for example, argues that attempts to transform physical education as sport prioritises a masculine hegemony. He asserts that from the mid 1980s to the publication of *Sport- Raising the Game* in 1995, there was a concerted effort “to reduce PE to sport even though the majority of those involved in the PE profession see competitive games as only one small part of the subject”. Dawn Penney and Jo Harris (1997) make a similar point in their discussion of extra-curricular physical education.

More recently, Sheila Wigmore (1999) has identified how this hegemony expresses itself in undergraduate behaviour. In her discussion of male students' responses to Rounders on a games' course, she observes that:

Some of the male students treated the Rounders element of the course as 'a waste of time', as a 'bit of fun', as a 'time to mess about'. Their attitude changed when they entered the Softball element of the course – a game that has similarities to Rounders regarding set up, basic rules, number of players, and equipment, except for the larger size of the bat and ball.

When she probed 'what was going on here?' she was told that "Rounders is a girls' game ... and boys don't play it". She interpreted this kind of response as an expression of masculine hegemony. "Sport has a particular and gendered role for them. Sport for them is masculine and anything not fitting that picture is dismissed."

There is a danger, however, in using the concept of hegemony. It is debatable that 'masculinity' is a homogenous concept and that boys and men differ in their commitment to the values espoused. Emma Renold (1997) provides examples of some boys who challenge dominant playground behaviour. Oliver Leaman (1984) also explored how differences between pupils could be a source of dialogue about equal opportunities. Thus teachers "should encourage children to notice the different ways in which boys and girls perform physically and use this to stimulate discussion of sex stereotyping in schools and society".

Despite the determination of authors such as Oliver Leaman and Sheila Wigmore to confront inequality, the patriarchal definition of physical education has been relatively impervious to macro-cultural change. This is where local initiatives have a significant role to play. The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham has now sponsored two investigations into attitudes to physical education and sport. As an authority it has one of the most detailed audits of behaviour in its schools available anywhere in the United Kingdom.

Oliver Leaman's (1984) ground breaking study was entitled 'Sit on the sidelines and watch the boys play'. We raised issues of participation in physical education and

sport in our discussion of girls' attitudes. There are a range of accounts that attest to differences in boys' and girls' behaviour.

Val Mason (1995), for example, has provided data from a large sample of young people about their participation patterns. She notes that "within the PE curriculum, the numbers of sports done in lessons were similar for boys and girls". However in out-of-lesson contexts "boys in each age group tended to spend more time on sport, to do slightly more sports and to compete at higher levels of competition than the girls". She adds that:

Parents tend to regard the sport of boys in a different light from that of girls. Teachers felt that there is more encouragement for boys than girls. Also a higher proportion of fathers than mothers take an interest in school sports ... and this tends to be for the boys' sports, particularly for football.

In her interviews with pupils, she noted that "the sex of children seemed to have played a major part in determining which type of opportunities they were offered and their ultimate choice of sports".

Anne Williams (1993) summarises some of the evidence about activity differences:

It is now well established that, pre-puberty, there are no physiological differences to explain sex-related differences in physical performance. Indeed many girls will be bigger and stronger than boys at this stage. However the social mores and pressures which lead to different lifestyles, and which affect experience and attainment from a very early age.

She notes that there is evidence to demonstrate, for example: differences in fitness levels among eleven and twelve year old boys and girls; a higher incidence of chasing and vigorous activities among four-year-old boys than among girls; significant differences in heart rate levels for boys and girls.

Historically, there have been substantial cultural forces that value physical activity as a vehicle for physical and emotional toughness. The mythologising of male and female differences has normalised competitive sport as a male domain. Margaret Talbot (1993) sums this process up thus:

While teachers of physical education may claim that they espouse equality of opportunity for all children, their teaching behaviours and practices reveal entrenched sex stereotyping, based on 'common-sense' notions about what is suitable for girls and boys, both in single-sex and mixed-sex groups and schools.

It is interesting to note that the research about gendered physical education and sport has been criticised by some politicians and sports administrators as a threat to excellence. This 'New PE' approach has been characterised as an attempt to do away with competition. It is a debate that challenges the essence of teaching in physical education. Recently, Mick Donovan (1998) has helped focus this debate. It is with his contribution that this literature review is concluded.

Mick Donovan (1998) is guided by the dictum that creative competition encourages the human being to be better than he or she might otherwise have been. He reports on the value of competitive games in an urban co-educational secondary school. His case study establishes that:

At Redtown School, winning is an important priority in school competitions ... but every attempt is made to offer all youngsters the opportunity to compete at their own level, helping them to deal with both success and defeat in a positive way.

Donovan (1998) provides a rich picture of life in the boys' physical education department. In a school with a falling roll, sixty-five percent of boys in each year were involved with after school clubs. He argues that the ethos that pervaded the department's games' lessons met very important educational criteria. The lessons:

1. Accelerate and consolidate learning.
2. Generate excitement and a sense of purpose.
3. Involve everyone to a similar level of intensity.
4. Satisfy each participant.
5. Make everyone in the match that they have a chance of winning.
6. Trigger a desire to practise in order to do better next time.

This is an important contribution to the debate about what constitutes physical education.

Within the Borough excellent local practice meets cultural forces. Our discussion of girls' attitudes identified gendered issues. Boys and male teachers are not independent of these social relations. The pursuit of excellence necessitates reflective practitioners who recognise the possibilities and limits of their professional role.

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Section **2** Profile of Schools, Teachers and Pupils

There are thirty-five primary and eight secondary schools in the Borough. In 1998, we contacted all forty-three schools at the outset of our research into girls' attitudes. At that time a letter of introduction was sent to the head teacher of each primary (Appendix A) and secondary school (Appendix B) to provide details of the research project.

We sent questionnaires to each physical education co-ordinator in the primary schools and each female physical education teachers in the secondary schools (Appendix C). Sixteen responses were received from primary schools and eleven from secondary schools. From these responses we concluded that:

- there were eight female and eight male physical education co-ordinators in the primary schools
- seventy-one teachers were involved in teaching physical education, games and dance in the primary schools
- there was no female head of a physical education department in a secondary school
- there were seventy-one physical education teachers in the secondary schools (forty-eight male teachers and twenty-three female teachers).

Our investigation into boys' attitudes to participation in physical education and sport builds upon this earlier work. We discuss the research methods we used in Section 3. It is important to emphasise here that we limited our focus to eight schools.

In our report on girls' attitudes we identified four primary and four secondary schools in which we explored issues in depth. In order to pursue these issues across departments we wanted to re-visit these schools. Accordingly letters were sent to all head teachers of these schools to ask permission to further work started in 1998. All schools gave their permission. The General Inspector for Physical Education (Fiona

Bevan) then liaised with staff in these schools to organise visits by one of the researchers (Sue Lyons).

Although we returned to the same schools, we added another year group to our investigation. In 1998 we interviewed Year 6, Year 8 and Year 10 pupils. In 1999 we were able to meet with Year 4 pupils at two of the primary schools. Our rationale was:

- Research suggests that Year 4 boys have already acquired patterns of behaviour that will guide their long-term involvement in physical activity
- Year 6 pupils were at the end of their primary school experience and were able to reflect on their involvement in Key Stages 1 and 2
- Year 8 pupils had been inducted into secondary school life and were able to offer a perspective on the transition to physical education as a subject with specialist teachers
- Year 10 pupils were at a stage in their school careers when participation patterns in physical education and sport are changing

We replicated our 1998 interview procedures in the boys' investigation. In primary schools the physical education co-ordinator was asked to identify four pupils in Year 4 and Year 6 whom could be regarded as demonstrating an active interest in physical education and to identify four pupils who appeared to be less active in their interest in each of these years. No operational definition of 'active' or 'less active' was offered to the co-ordinators and the choice of pupils was left entirely to them. In the secondary schools the male members of the physical education department were asked to identify 'active' and 'less active' pupils in Years 8 and 10. No operational definition of 'active' or 'less active' was offered to the teachers and the choice of pupils was left entirely to them.

In total, the researcher met with Year 4 pupils in two schools, Year 6 pupils in four primary schools (47 pupils) and Year 8 and 10 pupils in four secondary schools (49 pupils). Some schools did manage to provide 'active' and 'less active' pupils but there was a tendency for them to include more 'active' than 'less active' boys. Interestingly, as in the 1998 girls' study, the appearance and behaviour all the 'active' groups had more in common with each other than they did with peers from their own school but whom were defined as 'less active'.

Section **3** Research Methods

3.1 Research Questions

In 1998, our investigation into girls' attitudes to participation in physical education and sport was framed by a number of research questions. These questions related to: levels of participation; expectations; involvement; extra-curricular activity; community links; and Borough-wide strategies.

The boys' project was designed to report on similar themes and to provide comparative data. Like William Anderson (1978) "we were determined to extend our knowledge beyond our own subjective impressions, beyond the limited number of settings we normally encountered" in order to provide answers to that most basic of research questions 'What is going on here?'

3.2 Methods

This is a case study of boys' attitudes to participation in physical education and sport. According to Robert Stake (1995), a case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case. He suggests that:

This case will be as important to its readers as any other case – they care about it; their interest in generalising from this case to others is small ... but people can learn much that is general from single cases.

Harry Wolcott (1995) points out that "each case is unique, yet not so unique that we cannot learn from it and apply its lessons more generally".

In order to generate valid and reliable data for comparative purposes, we replicated the procedures we used in the girls' study whenever possible. The methods used in the investigation were: desk study; self-administered questionnaire for male physical teachers; and an in-depth study based on semi-structured interviews with

headteachers, co-ordinators, teachers and pupils in a sample of four primary and four secondary schools.

3.2.1 Desk Study

A desk study of pertinent literature relating to educational and sporting provision in Barking and Dagenham was undertaken to provide a context for the investigation. A detailed literature review was conducted (see Section 1.3) to ensure that the case study was located in a cumulative research tradition. Important conceptual, methodological and empirical issues were noted. School inspection reports, Council documentation in the public domain and Borough specific demographic data were also examined.

3.2.2 Questionnaire

In 1998, we administered questionnaires to all those in the Borough with the responsibility for co-ordinating primary school physical education. We received sixteen replies. We did not repeat this procedure in 1999. In limiting ourselves to four primary schools we were able to talk with each co-ordinator directly. We did administer a questionnaire (see Appendix C) to all the male secondary physical education teachers in the Borough ($n = 48$) to elicit information comparable to that requested from female teachers in 1998. The questionnaire was designed to be as concise and undemanding as possible. Prior to the questionnaire being administered a brief pilot investigation was undertaken with teachers outside the Borough to confirm that no difficulties arose with the wording or amount of time needed to complete the questionnaire. The focus group used in the pilot study reported no difficulties with the proposed questionnaire.

In order to maximise the response rate to the questionnaire, the General Inspector was asked to send the questionnaires out with a covering letter. The questionnaire was self-administered and a request was made to return the completed questionnaire at

the earliest possible opportunity. Responses were received from twelve male secondary physical education teachers (25% response). No follow up requests for responses were sent to those teachers that had not replied..

3.2.3 In Depth Study

Our 1999 study of boys' attitudes is the product of what some researchers call 'theoretical sampling'. We used our experience of the girls' investigation to choose eight schools for detailed study. As we indicated in our report of that investigation, these schools were not selected as a random sample of the forty-three schools in the Borough. They were chosen specifically because their questionnaire responses as a group opened up our investigation. As in 1998, we have linked each primary school with the secondary school in which most of its pupils enrol.

There has not been a significant shift in the demographic profile of the schools being investigated. They continue to face their own particular circumstances. Some wards, for example, still have a high percentage of young single mothers and others have relatively high concentrations of minority ethnic communities.

We wanted to undertake an in-depth study of the eight schools. Whereas in 1998, one of the primary schools was not able to meet with the researcher, on this occasion it proved possible.

In the primary schools, the researcher met the headteacher, the physical education co-ordinator and two groups of pupils from each of Years 4 and 6 (active and less active). In the secondary schools, the researcher met the headteacher whenever possible (to feed back), the head of boys' physical education teachers and two groups of pupils in each of Years 8 and 10 (active and less active).

In order to make the most of the time available in each school the researcher arranged a schedule of meetings. It was decided to have semi-structured discussions with physical education co-ordinators and male physical education teachers. The questions

that formed the focus of these discussions were shared with the teachers in advance. More general indications were given to the headteachers and the pupils.

In the primary schools, discussions with the headteacher focused on the school's strategic thinking and daily practice in relation to boys' involvement in physical education and sport. Any specific issues that arose from the demographic profile of pupils that attend the school were also considered.

Discussions with co-ordinators followed up issues from the girls' study. The semi-structured approach to discussions made it possible for the co-ordinator to raise other issues if they were seen as important. The questions that provided the focus for these discussions were:

1. Are there any gender issues that arise from the delivery of National Curriculum physical education at your school?
2. Does the school have any specific teaching strategies for boys in physical education?
3. Is there any evidence of boys positively engaging with physical education, games and sport?
4. Is there any evidence of boys being reluctant to engage with physical education, games and sport?
5. Are there any networks of contacts with secondary/primary schools and/or sports clubs that facilitate boys' involvement?

The researcher requested to meet two groups of Year 4 and 6 boys at each primary school. The addition of the Year 4 group extended the pupil profile of the research. There is a number of research reports that indicate that boys at this age have already formed strong activity interests. The Year 6 group was chosen as it was defined as the culmination of the school's investment in the children. The boys are at a particular stage in their development and there is considerable evidence, as with girls, to suggest that positive (and negative) attitudes to physical education and sport are formed at this time (or by this time). The school was asked to identify two groups of four pupils in each year who were willing to discuss their experiences with the researcher. One group was to comprise those boys regarded as 'active' and the other group to be regarded as 'less active'. The researcher met with forty-two pupils in this phase of the research. We asked all the pupils the same questions:

1. What do you do in physical education at the school?
2. What do you like or dislike in physical education?
3. What would you like to do?
4. How could schools make physical education better?
5. What do you do at lunch times and after school?
6. What do you do in your holidays?

In the secondary schools, discussions with the headteacher were feed back sessions. The questions used in the semi-structured discussions with the head of boys' physical education teachers followed the framework established with physical education co-ordinators and women physical education teachers in 1998. Whereas the researcher met with all women physical education teachers, she met the head of the boys' physical education department and those other male teachers that were able to attend the meeting.

The researcher requested meetings with two year groups. Like the girls in the previous study, boys have transitions to make at Years 8 and 10 in their commitment to physical activity. For each year group, the researcher asked to meet with two groups of four pupils: a group defined by the teachers as 'active' and a second group that was defined by comparison as 'less active'. In this way the researcher met with and discussed attitudes to physical education and sport with forty-three pupils. We asked all the pupils the same questions:

1. What do you do in physical education at the school?
2. What do you like or dislike in physical education?
3. What would you like to do?
4. How could schools make physical education better?
5. What do you do at lunch times and after school?
6. What do you do in your holidays?

Detailed field notes were made during visits to the eight schools chosen for in-depth study about discussions with headteachers, physical education co-ordinators, heads of boys' physical education departments and male pupils. Once again, the ethos that informed the research process was similar to that reported by Lee, Buckland and

Shaw (1998) in their study of pupils' attitudes to the learning of modern foreign languages:

In order to gain as full an understanding as possible of the pupils' perceptions of and responses to their modern language learning, the study was detailed and in-depth; data produced were largely qualitative rather than quantitative. The most reliable format was judged to be a small-scale study involving open-ended questions, administered in face-to-face interviews with the pupils.

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Section **4** Results of the Investigation

4.1 Questionnaire

4.1.1 Primary Schools

In our 1998 investigation we sent questionnaires to the Borough's thirty-five primary schools. Sixteen primary physical education co-ordinators replied (a response rate of 46%). We did not administer another questionnaire in 1999. Changes over the two school years were discussed with the co-ordinators in the four primary schools in our 1999 study.

4.1.2 Secondary Schools

Questionnaires were sent to the head of boys' physical education in each of the Borough's secondary schools. Twelve male physical education teachers replied (a response rate of 25%). We received responses from teachers in seven of the Borough's eight secondary schools.

4.1.2.1 Male Teachers' Present Participation Profile

The teachers' current participation profile indicates a range of interests. Eleven of the twelve teachers listed activities. These were: cricket (4), football (4), golf (3), tennis (3), rugby (3), running (3), gym work (2), athletics, circuit training, squash and table tennis. One teacher is currently not participating in any sport.

4.1.2.2 Male Teachers' Previous Involvement in Sport

As a group, the teachers had previously participated in fourteen sports. These were: football (8), rugby (8), cricket (6), athletics (2), table tennis (2), swimming (2), alpine sports, basketball, golf, outdoor and adventurous activities, squash, tennis,

trampolining and volleyball. Three of the teachers had achieved international selection. Six of them had played professional or semi-professional sport. In terms of Sport England's sport development continuum, all the teachers had met the performance level criteria and three had met the excellence criteria. The former is defined as "structured competition at a senior club or at a county or regional level". Excellence is defined as "competition at the highest national or international levels involving significant time commitments in terms of training and competition".

4.1.2.3 Borough Organising, Officiating Responsibilities

Ten of the teachers had made a commitment to the organisation and or coaching of the Borough's sports teams. Their activities included: rugby coaching (4), rugby development programmes (4), cricket coaching (2) and organisation (2), football coaching (2) and organisation (2), tennis and the London Youth Games. One teacher had been involved in Borough-wide activities for over a decade. Four teachers had positions of responsibility with county teams.

4.1.2.4 Boys' Involvement in Extra-Curricular Activities

Extra-Curricular Activities Available

The Borough's secondary schools offer a range of extra-curricular activities. These include: athletics (7), basketball (7), cricket (7), football (7), rugby (7), badminton (3), dance (3), gymnastics (3), rounders (3), table tennis (3), tennis (3), weights and fitness (3), trampolining (2), volleyball (2), cross country, hockey, outdoor education, pentathlon challenge and swimming.

Participation

Teachers in two schools provided a detailed breakdown of boys' involvement in extra-curricular activities. One teacher gave an overall number for involvement at his school.

The figures for these three schools are:

Activity	School A	School B	School C
Football	140	60	✓
Cricket	60	60	✓
Rugby	70	60	✓
Athletics	100	20	0
Pentathlon	40	0	0
Basketball	100	10	✓
Volleyball	0	8	0
Tennis	0	0	✓
Badminton	20	0	0
Fitness	0	0	✓
Total Pupil Involvement	530	228	130

One teacher estimated that in his school approximately seventy-five boys in each year took part in extra-curricular activities. This suggested that half of each year takes part. A teacher at another school estimated that forty percent of boys participated in the extra-curricular programme. One head of department noted that “over eighty percent of our boys have attended an extra-curricular club or participated in inter-form competition”. Another head of department reported that “not as many participate as we would like. Often the most able do not attend. We are currently actively encouraging participation”.

School Teams

Responses to the questionnaire provided information about teams in six of the eight secondary schools. The following teams were available: cricket (6), football (6), rugby (6), athletics (5), basketball (5), hockey, swimming, table tennis, trampolining, and volleyball.

Percentage of Boys Representing the School

Teachers were asked to estimate the percentage of boys who represent their school. In the six schools for which data were available, the estimates ranged from ‘roughly’ fifteen percent to an exact 66.25%. In rank order, the estimates were: 66.25%, 45%,

30%, 25%, 20%, 15%. Where responses were received from more than one teacher in a school, the estimates were averaged.

Involvement in Activities Outside School

Teachers were asked to identify any pupils who were involved at a high level of performance in activities outside the school's provision. One school had made an effort to keep a track of those who excel in sports such as boxing, canoeing, ice hockey and judo. The school also monitored pupils' success in football and rugby. A second school reported pupils' success in football, rugby, basketball, athletics, canoeing and motor cross. A third school identified fifteen pupils who had achieved excellence in football, rugby, swimming, athletics and judo. A fourth school had a professional footballer and a British boxing champion amongst its alumni. A fifth school had reported the success of its pupils at county level in athletics (six pupils), football (seven) and table tennis (two). A sixth school provided a detailed account of pupil achievement in football (thirteen pupils), rugby (sixteen), athletics (five), squash (four) and badminton (two). One of the school's pupils had achieved success as an international canoeist.

4.1.2.5 Opportunities for Boys to be Involved in Creative and Aesthetic Activities

Ten of the twelve teachers who responded to the questionnaire provided information about their school's provision of creative and aesthetic activities. Trampolining attracted a small number of boys in one school. Four pupils at the same school had become actively involved in dance and had joined a school of dance. A second school offered gymnastics and dance but "very few boys in the past have attended. Three boys in gymnastic display as compared to thirty or so girls". At a third school approximately twenty lower school boys were actively involved in gymnastics and dance. A fourth school estimated that up to ten boys were involved in gym and dance. A fourth school offered gymnastics, dance and trampolining within the curriculum. Teachers from two schools responded that there were no opportunities for creative or aesthetic activities.

4.2 In Depth Study

In our investigation into girls' attitudes, we identified eight schools for in-depth study. In 1999 we returned to these schools to enquire about boys' participation. The one primary school that was unable to participate in the in-depth study in 1998 was able to take part in the 1999 study. We have outlined the rationale for this approach in Section 2 and have provided details about our research methods in Section 3.

The outcomes of the in-depth study are reported here as an integrated account of each school. The account includes material about headteachers, physical education co-ordinators or secondary male physical education teachers, and pupils. In order to preserve the confidentiality of those concerned we have not identified these schools. We have retained the school descriptions from the girls' study so that, for example, Primary School One is the same school and can be directly compared. The same is true of Secondary School One. The only exception is the addition of a Primary School Four in the account of boys' attitudes. This is the school that was unable to be involved in the girls' study.

4.2.1 Primary Schools

Primary School One

There had been a number of changes at this school since our last visit. The implementation of the government's National Literacy Strategy in September 1998 had impacted on the time available to the school for physical education. Pupils now have one hour per week for all physical education and games. New arrangements for break and lunch times and the allocation of space in the playground were regarded by the PE co-ordinator as a significant improvement. There are designated quiet places and other areas for games. Equipment is available for the children to use at break and lunch times. Boys are choosing to use skipping ropes and in the quiet playground

mixed groups are appearing. Close links have been established with a local secondary school.

The researcher only had access to Year 6 pupils at this school. She met two groups of pupils separately without a teacher present. Their responses to questions about what they liked and disliked about physical education were:

Active Pupils	Less Active Pupils
<p>Positive Views about PE</p> <p><i>We enjoy cartwheels and rolling in gym.</i></p> <p><i>We like football</i></p> <p><i>We like playing with others and learning stuff.</i></p>	<p>Positive Views about PE</p> <p><i>We like apparatus, climbing and football.</i></p>
<p>Negative Views about PE</p> <p><i>We don't like it when the lesson is stopped because someone is being silly.</i></p> <p><i>Hockey is dangerous because you get hit on the legs.</i></p> <p><i>We don't like games that finish in five minutes.</i></p>	<p>Negative Views about PE</p> <p><i>We don't like netball "because it is a girl's game".</i></p> <p><i>We do not like gymnastic sequences because "it is boring and too much repetition".</i></p>

The active pupils discussed in an animated way their involvement in physical activities within and outside the curriculum. The four boys all took part in dance and enjoyed the disco and jazz routines they developed. In gymnastics they particularly liked the use of springboards. They also liked the warm up routines in athletics. During break and lunch times they were involved in games like bulldog and football but they also made use of the quiet part of the playground. They had a wide range of sporting interests outside school. Within this group they participated in the school's sports and gym clubs. They also swam, played for football and cricket and went ice-skating. Two of the boys had developed a keen interest in golf. As a group they

thought that being good at physical education sport allowed you to be popular, skilful and successful.

The less active group was less forthcoming with their interests in physical activity. As a group, these boys enjoyed football. They were less keen about dance and although there was a grudging acceptance of the experience some of the group admitted to being embarrassed about their participation particularly when they had a female partner. They discussed at length the opportunities created by being good at physical activity and agreed as a group that being good gave you a reputation and enabled you to have lots of friends. They also recognised that sport “gives you good exercise”. The group had less involvement with organised clubs outside the curriculum. One of the group was a member of a football club and swam. The other three expressed an interest in bike riding in their leisure time. One pupil had really enjoyed the opportunity of being involved in outdoor and adventurous activities and would like to do more of these activities.

The active group was asked what the school could do to make physical education even better. They thought that there could be a homework club for physical education in which they could improve their skills. They wanted more equipment, more space on the grass, more activities to choose from and more after school clubs. They also wanted longer sessions. When the less active group were asked the same question there was much less enthusiasm. As a group they would like an opportunity to play tennis, rugby, basketball and golf. They would also like to be able to swim and run. Despite this reluctance to talk the boys did confide that physical education came near to the top of their favourite subjects. They wanted to play games rather than be given practices.

After the meeting with the boys, the researcher met with the school’s physical education co-ordinator. She had been working on in-service training to develop her teaching strategies for physical education and had worked with a local secondary school in the teaching of gymnastics. She noted the reduction in time available for physical education and expressed concerns that the less physically able pupils were

limited in their opportunities to develop their movement patterns and engage in games. Despite this she felt the pupils had a genuine interest in physical education in general and that many boys placed considerable emphasis on involvement in and being good at football. She organised a sports club for Year 5 and Year 6 and had fifty pupils attending on a regular basis.

The co-ordinator felt that there were significant skill differences that manifested themselves in physical education lessons. These differences occurred within the sex groups but were also marked between boys and girls. Whenever possible, physical education was taught as a mixed activity. Boys tended to be more boisterous and less attentive than girls in these lessons. Teaching strategies had more to do with behaviour monitoring than an explicit gender focus. Football was a very important activity for most boys and some girls. The co-ordinator thought that there was very little evidence of boys not engaging with physical education. The school had established strong links with a local secondary school. Approximately ninety-five percent of the school's pupils go onto this secondary school and so the links had strategic as well as practical outcomes. A fundamental dilemma arose for the co-ordinator in the promotion of physical education. Pressures on curriculum time and the reluctance of some teachers to support clubs and activities was impacting on what was possible in physical education. She hoped to facilitate a debate about the school's role in the promotion of healthy lifestyles as a result of her experiences in the 1998-1999 school year.

The researcher met with the headteacher at the end of the visit to feed back about issues that had arisen during the day. Two main themes were identified: time allocation and priorities; the links between pupils' activity, involvement, commitment and success. The headteacher identified with considerable clarity the diverse pressures on the school. These pressures placed enormous burdens on staff.

Primary School 2

This school is located in an economically deprived area and exhibits a number of socio-economic problems. In the year since our last visit these problems have intensified. Over half the school's pupils are entitled to free school meals and over a third of pupils require support to help them learn English. Changes to the curriculum have placed pressures on physical education's core subject status and the teaching of dance has directly suffered as a result of time constraints. The school has had access to the BT Top Sports programme and the equipment was a boost to the resources. Staff had enjoyed the related in-service provision.

In this school the researcher had access to Year 4 and Year 6 pupils. Both year groups provided 'active' and 'less active' pupils. Their responses to questions about what they liked and disliked about physical education were:

Year 4

Active Pupils	Less Active Pupils
Positive Views about PE <i>We like running, tag, warm ups, cartwheels and being fish.</i>	Positive Views about PE <i>We like climbing up the ropes, football and traffic lights.</i>
Negative Views about PE <i>Sometimes we don't like traffic lights. We get bumped over when people go out of control on green.</i> <i>You can cut your foot on the unclean floor.</i>	Negative Views about PE <i>We don't like teachers shouting when we haven't done anything wrong.</i> <i>We don't like running or dancing.</i>

The Year 4 pupils gave a fascinating insight into the world of young people who are being inducted formally into physical education. These pupils get two lessons of physical education per week and as one enthusiastic pupil put it "if you are good you get extra PE, if you are bad it is taken off".

The active group liked that part of physical education where they could act like fish and different sea animals. They enjoyed roly-poly over mats and liked doing cartwheels. In their account of games' lessons they talked excitedly about jogging, traffic lights, running games with numbers, tag, hopping, jumping and using bean bags. They were very clear about what they disliked. In addition to the problems caused on green in the traffic lights game they also did not like those occasions in the indoor warm up when "if you do something wrong you're out". They also found the floors a problem after school dinners. The less active group talked in general terms about what they did in physical education. Two of these pupils sometimes missed school so they had limited experience to discuss. As a group they disliked teachers shouting when they had done nothing wrong. Their sense of injustice was added to by being blamed when "we didn't do nothing" and by being knocked over by pupils who do not look where they are going.

Active pupils tended to play football or Yo-Yo during their break times. One pupil thought that "climbing frames would be wicked". Although the less active pupils also played some football and Yo-Yo their routine also included chasing girls.

When the active group was asked what they would like to do in physical education the whole discussion was animated by one boy who described the "bestest day of my life". This would entail playing a full side game of football with goals and nets. "It would be with red cards, yellow cards and offside". This led to a long discussion of full games of football with teams. The less active group was keen to play gladiators and have access to a climbing frame.

Active pupils wanted longer physical education lessons and longer break times to play. They did not want their lessons to be disrupted and they would like to have a rule that "if anyone mucks around they have to sit on a bench and then go to see the headteacher". The less active group did not propose any suggestions for making physical education better. The active group thought the benefits of physical education included "teaches you to think", "teaches you some of the skills you don't know and refreshes some of the skills you do know" and "makes you healthy". The less active

group agreed with their active colleagues that physical education keeps you fit and healthy. They also thought it “keeps your legs moving”. Both groups perceived themselves to be more active during the school holidays with a variety of activities attracting their interest. Swimming and biking are two important holiday activities. They also play in the park and some of both groups go ice-skating.

Year 6

Year 6 pupils had approximately one hour per week for physical education. Pupils were asked to identify what they liked and disliked about physical education.

Active Pupils	Less Active Pupils
Positive Views about PE <i>We like races and running.</i> <i>We like gymnastics and dance</i>	Positive Views about PE <i>We like playing with balls and running.</i>
Negative Views about PE <i>We don't like doing cartwheels and backward rolls.</i>	Negative Views about PE <i>We don't like football because we are not good at it.</i> <i>We don't like dancing “it's for girls”.</i> <i>We don't like moving about too much.</i>

Some of the active pupils wondered why the researcher asked them what they disliked about physical education. They all looked forward to their lessons. In these lessons they did a mixture of activities that included athletics, gymnastics, games and dance. The less active pupils thought their physical education lessons entailed playing ball games, running, skipping and jumping. The active pupils took part in school clubs and other organised activities. All the pupils had very positive feelings and memories about an outdoor and adventurous activities trip they had taken with the school. Pupils in both groups found dance potentially and actually embarrassing. Some active pupils were untroubled by dance.

The active group of pupils would like to do more games such as football, rugby, hockey, netball, cricket and baseball. They wanted opportunities to do games inside

as well as outside and to do some climbing on apparatus. They would all like more physical education lessons. One active pupil confessed that "I only like school when I do PE". The less active group did not have any activities they would like to add to what was already on offer.

The majority of active pupils played football at break and lunch times. Less active pupils played other games like hide and seek and chasing. The less active group thought that their lack of ability at football meant that their friendship opportunities were limited. They pointed out that "if you are good at it and like it you get more friends". Almost all the pupils became active during their holidays. Surprisingly, one of the most active pupils was not allowed out of his home at holiday times so he spent his days playing computer games or using his play station.

Throughout the interviews with Year 4 and Year 6 pupils the researcher noted a distinction between active and less active pupils. Those who enjoyed physical education were livelier and more articulate than those who were less active. It was evident that as early as Year 4 some boys were marginalised in their peer group if they were not active. Football in particular at this school provided access to friends and status. Pupils saw football as an opportunity for them to be famous.

The headteacher met with the researcher at the end of the visit and discussed issues that had arisen during the visit. Strong links had been established with a local secondary school and this contact was transforming the games opportunities available to pupils. The headteacher perceived that extra-curricular activity will assume greater importance as curriculum time pressures limit opportunities for physical education. The importance of football to the boys was discussed. The headteacher noted the problems associated with playground space and boys' behaviour when playing football. Some time was spent discussing the impact of demographic factors on the school's vision for physical education.

Primary School 3

Since our last visit this school has changed its physical education co-ordinator. Over the year the school has undergone a considerable transformation in its ethos. This has affected the provision of clubs and extra-curricular activities. One of the challenges for the newly appointed co-ordinator would be to develop the physical education curriculum. The National Literacy Scheme has eroded some of the time previously available for physical education. New playground arrangements were in place for break and lunch times. Pupils now have a choice of three playgrounds. One of these is for ball games, a second is a quiet space and a third is shared with the adjoining infants' school. Due to a number of circumstances the researcher's visit to this school was truncated. As a consequence there was opportunity to talk with Year 6 pupils and the headteacher.

Year 6

Pupils were asked what they liked and disliked about physical education. Their replies were:

Active Pupils	Less Active Pupils
Positive Views about PE <i>Dancing is good "when you get to the fast bits".</i> <i>We like all the stuff we do.</i> <i>"It makes your brain sharper".</i>	Positive Views about PE <i>We like football, rugby and badminton.</i> <i>We would like more activities "like races to get up our fitness".</i> <i>We like gym when we have it.</i>
Negative Views about PE <i>We want more clubs and more time for PE.</i>	Negative Views about PE <i>It goes on too long and is boring.</i>

The active group of pupils described in detail their experience of physical education. They had been taught athletics, gymnastics, football, cricket, baseball, and rounders. They had also done some form of circuit training and dance. They crammed all these activities into two lessons per week. They felt they had access to lots of equipment

some of it very new. Whenever possible the active group joined in the school's three sports clubs in football, netball and rounders.

The less active group was less forthcoming about their physical education experience. They did not mind playing football. Some of them found rugby a bit rough. They had a variety of interests. Some of the group wanted more basketball whilst others wanted to do more gymnastics. These latter pupils particularly enjoyed those occasions when they were allowed to do back flips and somersaults. Apart from these moments of excitement they tended to find physical education boring and even two lessons a week were deemed too many.

Outside physical education lessons, the active pupils developed a range of interests. These included football training, cycling, swimming, ice hockey, karate and golf. The pupils thought that physical activity was good for you and "helps you with quick reflexes and stuff". They also thought there were positive friendship benefits to be had from playing sport. As well as meeting people, you also had something to talk about. As a group they would like more lessons and more time for physical education. They also mentioned a desire to be involved in outdoor and adventurous activities. They had really enjoyed the occasions when these had taken place.

The less active group had a limited set of interests outside the physical education. As a group they would have liked more access to teams in games such as football, rugby, hockey, basketball and badminton. Some of the group thought that they were more active in holiday times. The key to their interest would be a variety of activities that changed regularly. Some of the group enjoyed social dance but "only if you know people and there is a reason for it". Three of this group saw themselves as lonely within school. Their relative inactivity denied them access to friends. One pupil's loneliness was compounded by special educational needs.

The marginalisation of some boys provided the first topic of conversation with the headteacher. It was an issue of which the headteacher was aware and had given some thought. Football was a key currency for acceptance and esteem for many of the boys.

The headteacher felt that this was not a new problem. It did seem, however, that the arrangements for playgrounds at the school provided space for boys outside the football group to find social contacts. At any one time, twenty-five percent of the boys in the school were either in the quiet playground or with the infants. Those in the infants' playground usually helped the younger children.

The school had no specific gender issues that arose from National Curriculum physical education. The changes to playground allocation arose directly from girls' complaints about the dangers of ball games. Girls and boys on the periphery had benefited directly as a result of the changes. Boys seemed to positively engage with physical education and the headteacher thought that approximately sixty percent of boys at the school were involved in sports clubs. There were no formal links with secondary schools in the Borough but some local sports groups had approached the school directly. These included football, cricket, boxing and ice hockey.

The headteacher was clear that the appointment of the physical education co-ordinator was a vital step in the regeneration of physical activities at the school. Staff were reluctant to get involved in sports clubs for pupils. They gave their time to curriculum planning and other activities. The headteacher hoped that the co-ordinator could redress the balance for physical education but recognised that it was a considerable challenge.

Primary School 4

We were not able to visit this school in our investigation of girls' attitudes in 1998 so we were delighted to have the opportunity to do so in 1999. The school was about to appoint a co-ordinator for physical education. A small proportion of pupils is entitled to free school meals (approximately 15%). Minority ethnic pupils make up approximately one quarter of the school's roll. There is a strong link with a local infants school that provides almost all the intake for the school. Links have been established with a local secondary school to develop activities and clubs. This secondary school recruits approximately ninety-five percent of the eleven year olds that leave the primary school.

The researcher was able to meet with Year 4 and Year 6 pupils.

Year 4

Pupils were asked what they liked and disliked about physical education. Their replies were:

Active Pupils	Less Active Pupils
Positive Views about PE <i>We like all PE.</i> <i>Our favourite is passing the ball and defending.</i> <i>We like the javelin.</i>	Positive Views about PE <i>We like running, passing and throwing.</i>
Negative Views about PE <i>We don't like getting changed after swimming.</i>	Negative Views about PE <i>You get bumped into</i> <i>If you are no good you don't have friends.</i>

The active boys in Year 4 were enamoured with physical education. They liked everything they did and wanted to do more of it. The only things they disliked were mundane. One boy thought that it was difficult in games when you got stuck behind a tall boy that was marking you. As a group they found changing back into school

uniform a chore after swimming lessons. One pupil confided that “I always get myself in a muddle”. The less active boys were not noticeably different from the active boys they just seemed to remember less about what went on.

Year 4 had two lessons of physical education per week with a total time of approximately seventy minutes. Their lessons consisted of small-sided games, ball skills and rugby. In indoor lessons they ran, jumped, made shapes and used benches. They had access to swimming in Years 2 and 3. They also did some country dancing. All of them regretted that they were too old to use the climbing frames.

The active pupils think that physical education could be even better if they had football, rugby and cricket matches. They would also like to have an athletics event. They would like clubs after school. The boys also talked about their interest in golf. They would like to have golf in their lessons. They would also welcome the opportunity to play basketball. One of them wanted “a few more trees to weave in and out of”. The less active group would be content with more football and some golf. One of these pupils became quite morose as he described his ‘failure’. He knew, he said, that “I have always been no good”. This affected his chance to make friends “I’ve only got two friends”. He tends to forget his physical education kit and when he remembers it he usually has the wrong things!

Active pupils engage in a variety of activities during break and lunch times. The researcher was informed that there was “tons of football”. Some boys skipped but this seemed to be declining in popularity after Year 3. Some of the active group chat with dinner ladies and also “get on OK with the girls”. Less active boys tend to withdraw from football and become involved in chasing games. Some of them stopped playing football because they were getting hurt. Both groups have a range of activities in the holidays. These include swimming, golf, cricket, volleyball, water polo, tennis and table tennis.

Year 6

Pupils were asked what they liked and disliked about physical education. Their replies were:

Active Pupils	Less Active Pupils
Positive Views about PE <i>We like football and running best.</i>	Positive Views about PE <i>We like playing games</i>
Negative Views about PE <i>We don't like our lessons disrupted by boys that muck around.</i>	Negative Views about PE <i>Dance is more of a girl's thing.</i>

The active and less active groups were not significantly different in their likes and dislikes. The active group did identify the length of lessons as a problem for them. They wanted much more time. Their preferences are for games then gymnastics and then dance. One of the active boys grudgingly admitted that he thought “dance is sort of better than writing”. Active boys disliked boys who disrupted lessons and spoilt it for other people. The boys accepted the reasons for mixed physical education but pointed out that “all the boys go together anyway”.

Year 6 pupils had three lessons of physical education per week. A teacher from a local secondary school took the gymnastics lesson. Dance lessons included movement and music. The games lessons offered a variety of activities including football, rugby, hockey, cricket, rounders and athletics.

The pupils thought that physical education could be even better if the school included swimming and water polo. The active pupils wanted more after school clubs and more than one team per sport. The less active pupils thought fishing and judo would be good things to include.

During break and lunch times the main activity was football. Both the active and less active groups estimated that approximately ninety percent of the boys played football. Those that did not play either chatted with friends or played Yo-Yo. The boys had a clear sense of each other's ability and friendship choices reflected sporting prowess. They seem to define at a very early age who is a capable games player. They thought that although there were a few boys who really didn't like physical education there were far more girls who did not like games.

The boys participated in a range of clubs inside and outside of school. Some attended holiday sport schemes in the Borough and both groups reported that they had a busy time during holidays. Swimming, ice-skating, bowling and running were some of the activities that the boys mentioned as holiday options. The active boys thought that being good at physical education was helpful because it made you fit, "gives you clubs to go to and means you're not bored all day".

At the end of the visit the researcher met with the headteacher. The discussion was extended beyond feedback in order to touch upon some of the co-ordination issues.

There did not appear to be any gender issues that arose in the delivery of National Curriculum physical education. The headteacher observed that the school did not have any specific strategies for teaching physical education to boys and girls other than focusing on skill acquisition in traditional games. There was perceived pressure from outside the school to include girls in the school teams. The school celebrated individual and team success in the school assemblies. There was no evidence of boys having negative attitudes to physical education. The promotion of physical activity had been advanced by the support of a local secondary school. Teachers from that school took some lessons and clubs. This contact had given an informal in-service training boost to teachers. Staff also discussed gender issues in the context of the local sporting culture.

4.2.2 Secondary Schools

Secondary School 1

This school had further developed its commitment to physical education and sport since our last visit. Conscientious efforts had been made to liaise with feeder primary schools and members of the boys' physical education department had been into those schools to teach a range of activities. Primary schools had particularly welcomed support with the teaching of gymnastics. Facilities at the school were being upgraded and there was a whole school commitment to active lifestyles.

The researcher met two groups of pupils, one from each of Year 8 and Year 10. Although these were large groups there were no obviously less active pupils. Time did not permit to identify these less active pupils for inclusion in the study. The school does set pupils according to ability in physical education. All the pupils interviewed by the researcher were from sets one and two. It would have been helpful to meet some set three pupils. Throughout the research, schools had been responsible for the selection of pupils. No effort was made to change this relationship with Secondary School 1. It is acknowledged here as a limitation of the data collected.

Year 8

Active Pupils
<p>Positive Views about Physical Education</p> <p><i>We like all the physical education activities.</i></p> <p><i>We particularly like athletics, football, cricket and table tennis.</i></p>
<p>Negative Views about Physical Education</p> <p><i>We don't like drills very much and prefer matches.</i></p> <p><i>We don't like school dance.</i></p>

This group of Year 8 boys had a real interest in physical education and sport. Each week they had two lessons of physical education that amounted to approximately two hours of curriculum time. In those lessons they had gymnastics, football, rugby, hockey, basketball, cricket, athletics, table tennis and outdoor and adventurous activities. They liked all these activities but as a group expressed a strong preference for games rather than drills. They were supportive of the ability sets in the year group and thought that the sets gave pupils a chance to progress if they wanted to do so. They all enjoyed social dance but were uncomfortable with school dance.

If they had the opportunity to suggest changes to curriculum content, the group would like to include more basketball, tennis and trampolining. All the boys took part in the school's extra-curricular clubs. Some went to the clubs even if they were not in the team. All had attended or were attending clubs for football, rugby, cricket, athletics, basketball and cross country. At break and lunch times these pupils preferred to "hang out". They saw playground football as a Year 7 pre-occupation. Away from school, these boys continued their involvement in sport and took advantage of high profile local opportunities. Some attended professional soccer clubs for training whilst others became involved with Havering Athletics Club. Some of the pupils had also attended Bourough holiday sports schemes. Swimming and biking were popular with all the boys in this group.

The group considered that success in physical activity had important implications for friendship and status. Most of them had known at an early age that they liked sport and that they were good at it. The group wanted to uphold the school's reputation for sporting success and all of them hoped to become famous through their sporting achievements. They identified physical activity with opportunities to become fit and have an interesting lifestyle.

Year 10

The Year 10 pupils who met the researcher had a similar profile to the Year 8 pupils. They had a similar time allocation for physical education, that is, two hours.

Active Pupils
<p>Positive Views about Physical Education</p> <p><i>We like football, rugby and table tennis.</i></p> <p><i>We like being in the school teams and the prestige that goes with it.</i></p>
<p>Negative Views about Physical Education</p> <p><i>We don't like theory lessons.</i></p> <p><i>We don't like basketball and cricket because we are not good at them.</i></p>

Year 10 pupils were less wholehearted in their acceptance of all physical education activities. They particularly disliked theory lessons. They often found these boring and repetitious. This is a significant issue since theory is a compulsory part of the Year 10 programme. The pupils were also less prepared to be involved in those games in which they did not demonstrate expertise or competence. The group that met with the researcher had a very strong commitment to football. During the year in curriculum time they took part in football, rugby, cricket, tennis, table tennis, athletics, cross country and basketball. They were also able to choose to do GCSE physical education that had additional time allocated to it.

The group would like to include swimming and hockey in their physical education programme. They would like more time and longer lessons. They also would prefer smaller working groups. They were clear that they did not want to include school dance because "it is just for girls". They perceived the benefits of physical education to include physical fitness and social friendships. Some of them hoped for a career in sport.

All the group participated in the school's sports clubs. Some of the pupils tried to get to all of them. They also were actively involved in clubs outside the school. Most of the group attended football clubs and some had become interested in cricket through their external links. The pupils also participated in informal activities and swimming was a particular favourite. Some of the pupils had also attended the Borough's holiday sports' programmes.

There was an opportunity at the end of the day to discuss the boys' responses with the head of physical education. Two themes stimulated a lengthy discussion. Firstly, what kind of balance is needed between drills and game play? Secondly, what do pupils acquire in theory sessions? The head of physical education reported that these were issues that were addressed by staff and were the subject of on-going discussion. He felt that a dynamic staff and enthusiastic pupils had really enhanced the profile of physical education in the school and, he hoped, in the Borough. Links with primary schools were also discussed and it was noted that these were of significance for the long-term aims of the secondary school physical education programme. Some primary school pupils had attended the school's extra-curricular clubs and were finding opportunities to participate that might not otherwise be available.

Secondary School 2

The researcher met with Year 8 and Year 10 pupils at this school. As with Secondary School 1, the groups tended to be 'active' rather than 'less active'. As we indicate in Section 5, it is difficult for boys to admit publicly that they do not like physical education.

Year 8

Year 8 pupils had approximately two hours of physical education per week. Their lessons included football, rugby, cricket, athletics, gymnastics, dance, fitness and softball. The group enjoyed most of these activities but one pupil had difficulties with dance "because other people tell me what to do". This opened up a discussion about dance and the rest of the group gave their views. Some thought dance was 'OK' but was spoilt by boys who messed around. For others "the thought of dance is worse than the activity".

All the boys thought physical education could be made better by having longer lessons, more lessons and more teachers. The group thought that the programme could also be improved by including basketball earlier and by adding hockey and cycling.

The boys took an active role in school clubs and the group as a whole attended football, rugby, athletics and swimming. Outside these extra-curricular clubs, the boys took part in a range of activities that included football, rugby, cricket, tennis, swimming, ice hockey and golf. Biking was a popular out-of-school activity.

Year 8 pupils perceived a variety of benefits of physical education and sport for personal lifestyles. As a group they thought physical activity was fun and involved working with other people. It provided opportunities to become fit, to get out into the fresh air and to learn skills. They also thought that it was a chance to learn how to be a good sport.

Year 10

The researcher met with eight Year 10 pupils. Some of these were 'less active' and they provided a useful counterbalance to the enthusiasm of other pupils. Year 10 pupils had the same time allocation for physical education as Year 8 pupils. In addition to the activities covered in Year 8, these pupils had also had access to badminton, volleyball and table tennis. Through option schemes some of the group had also tried archery and tennis.

All the boys in the group thought physical education at the school could be improved by better facilities. Whilst the active pupils agreed with one boy who volunteered that "the teachers are brilliant, everybody likes PE", some of the more confident less active pupils thought they would like "good teaching". The Year 10 boys appeared to prefer being taught in single sex groups.

The boys were involved in a variety of extra-curricular clubs and also sought out clubs in the community. Swimming, judo and fitness training added to the diet of football and rugby club involvement. The less active boys were also able to describe their interests. One liked to play computer games, ride his bike and go shopping. Another preferred to watch football than play it and was a keen supporter of a local professional team. A third really enjoyed watching television.

These differences of views about lifestyles stimulated an animated discussion about the importance of sport and activity. The less active boys pointed out how difficult it was to admit that they did not enjoy some physical education. One of them observed that "there are boys who do it but do not enjoy it but still don't make excuses". As a group they agreed that you knew you had ability in sport at an early age.

The issues raised in the conversations with Year 8 and Year 10 boys were discussed with the head of boys' physical education at the end of the visit. Much of this discussion focused on the school's role in the local community. A large proportion of

parents attended the school as pupils. There had emerged a strong tradition of activity that valued success in football. Over the years, staff had extended this tradition to include rugby and cricket. Links with a range of clubs had been developed. The meeting ended with a discussion of active lifestyles in a local community that had an above average number of households “with no residents in employment”. For some pupils sport offered the prospect of social mobility.

Secondary School 3

Since our last visit this school had continued to develop its provision for physical education through careful evaluation of strengths and weaknesses. It had extended its links with primary schools and was keen to offer a range of extra-curricular activities to its own and other pupils. The headteacher was supportive of the physical education department’s work and had encouraged whole school approaches to deal with sexism and racism. This impacted on the debates the physical education teachers had about their work. The head of boys’ physical education thought that he and his colleagues had an important role to play in modelling good practice. As a department they wanted to challenge the children physically and provide curriculum choice to do so.

Year 8

Year 8 pupils liked football, basketball, badminton and cricket. “The trouble is”, as one pupil pointed out, “we like most things, Miss”. They liked being put into ability groups for physical education lessons. They had few dislikes. Some of the group found gymnastics a problem and others thought that athletics sometimes had repetition. Any dislike they had was mitigated by their admiration for the physical education staff. All of the group agreed with one pupil’s observation that “the teachers are good. They are kind to you and talk with you and treat you with respect”. Those pupils who did a lot of sport thought they became friends with the teachers. One pupil emphasised how much he enjoyed talking with them about sport.

During physical education lessons the pupils covered a number of activities. These included football, basketball, cross-country, athletics, cricket, trampolining, badminton and gymnastics. Each week the pupils had one hundred minutes of physical education. They all wanted more time.

When asked what would make physical education better, some of the Year 8 pupils looked perplexed. One of them said “but they’ve got it just right”. Most of them gave the impression that they were disappointed when the lesson had to end. One pupil thought it would be great if there were extra teachers.

The department offered Year 8 pupils a variety of extra-curricular clubs that took place at lunch times and after school. The main clubs were football, cricket, badminton and trampolining. Outside these clubs the boys were involved in a variety of activities that included formal and informal games of football and basketball. Some also enjoyed swimming and biking. A number of boys really enjoyed basketball. Two of them had basketball hoops in their back garden. One of the pupils thought the perfect end to a day was to have done all his jobs and then into the garden with the light on for basketball.

This group seemed very comfortable in each other’s presence and the conversation moved on to the importance of physical education in their lives. Most of the group thought that physical activity kept you fit, gave you a chance to make friends and kept you out of trouble. They all expected to acquire and use skills. One of the group thought that “it helps you to get friends and if you are good at it people look up to you. Then we can train them to be as good as us”.

This friendship issue led to a final discussion topic of boys and physical education. One pupil thought that “there is more pressure on boys who are no good at PE if they can’t do it or if they feel they can’t do it they stop”.

Year 10

The Year 10 group that met with the researcher was predominantly active. As a group they liked football, basketball, and cricket. The group had few dislikes. Those pupils that ventured an opinion tended to dislike trampolining and badminton. A number of the group insisted that they liked everything in physical education.

Like Year 8, the Year 10 pupils had one hundred minutes of physical education a week. Most of the group had additional time for their GCSE PE course. The only less active pupil in the group was on report and he was missing the activity more than he thought. As part of his rehabilitation he was being allowed to swim.

The Year 10 group thought hard about what could make PE even better. One pupil thought that “nothing would make it more enjoyable”. Another suggested that shorter warm ups and longer lessons would be great. Some requests were very basic. One wanted football nets for the goals. Another wanted to work in smaller groups. Suggestions for activities included karate and boxing with head guards, tennis, golf, skiing, volleyball and rugby.

All the group were actively involved in the school’s extra-curricular clubs and were also linked to clubs in the community. Even the less active boy was a member of a boxing club. A significant number of the group was involved in basketball. These pupils did have a substantial homework load and discussed how they balanced their school work with their sporting involvement. One of the group exemplified this time management issue. During the last year he had been a member of the school basketball and cricket teams. He attended lunchtime clubs for both sports. He played district basketball. He did his homework. Played on his computer. He watched TV. He went out with friends. He played football in the park. In the summer he attended a sports camp at a leisure centre and had six weeks of activity.

Like their peers in this and other schools, the Year 10 group thought that physical education promoted fitness and skill acquisition. One pupil “loved it”. He commented

that “I have always done sport and don’t know anything else to do. I’ve got to know a lot more people and met different people teaching me different things”.

Throughout the discussion the pupils in both year groups exuded a genuine affection for physical education at the school. A recent inspection report illustrated the extent to which this was evident to external scrutiny:

Since the last inspection pupils’ interests and levels of motivation have improved. Most pupils have a positive attitude to learning in physical education and show high levels of motivation. Most work is undertaken enthusiastically and participation rates are high. Teaching is the department’s greatest strength.

Secondary School 4

The researcher’s visit to this school was arranged in a different order. Due to other commitments, the head of boys’ physical education had to meet with the researcher in advance of meeting with the pupils. This was an important conversation because it was the first opportunity at a secondary school to explore issues about non-participation.

The head of boys’ physical education had noticed a growth in the numbers of boys opting out of physical education at the school. In recent years “there have been more pupils who do not bring kit, who go through the motions and those who are a hardened element who do not want to do it”. The teacher was concerned about the growing number of boys who appeared to be overweight and those who manifested behaviour problems. He estimated that approximately five percent of boys in Key Stage 3 classes and ten percent in Key Stage 4 classes were opting out of physical education for one reason or another. The school was working hard to encourage parents to support the physical education teachers. One problem encountered was that pupils and parents sometimes were limited in what was important in physical education. There were few problems with participation in football but other activities were not so fortunate.

The school offered a variety of clubs but here again the problem of decline in participation could be noted. Year 7 pupils were always very keen on entry into the school but thereafter there was considerable drop out. Significantly, teachers found it difficult to sustain their interest as pupils drifted away from the clubs.

The problems at the school were exacerbated by the time available for physical education. By Key Stage 4 pupils only had access to one lesson of fifty minutes duration. The physical education department is making a determined effort to address the problems arising. The head of department was very concerned that physical education could be squeezed at both ends. He had been visiting feeder primary schools to teach cricket and had discovered that the National Literacy Scheme was affecting the time available for games in those schools.

With this background information, the researcher went on to meet Year 8 and Year 10 pupils. For the first time in a secondary school there were a significant number of less active pupils in both years.

Year 8

The researcher met two Year 8 groups. As on other occasions it was possible to identify the active group without any questions being asked. The active group at this school was extremely bubbly and enthusiastic. By comparison the less active group appeared world-weary. The active group liked football and rugby. They dislike very little in the physical education programme but did find gymnastics unappealing. The less active group liked football but found other activities problematic. What they particularly disliked about PE was “you’re money gets stolen in the changing rooms”.

Active pupils were involved in a variety of clubs and outside activities. Less active pupils tended to choose individual activities such as biking and swimming. Whilst the active group rarely mentioned TV or computers, the less active group cited these as important out-of-school activities.

Year 10

There was a similar distinction between the active and less active groups in Year 10. The active group liked most aspects of physical education but particularly enjoyed football, basketball, rugby, trampoline and the bleep test. All of the active group had chosen to do GCSE PE and were enjoying the course. They were desperate for more time for physical education. They participated in extra-curricular clubs and looked for sporting opportunities outside school. All were keen participants in the school's swimming gala.

The less active Year 10 group liked football and some of them had tried rugby. They disliked too much activity and gave the impression that the moment inclement weather set in they were able to forget their kit. They would like the opportunity to wear warm clothing in winter lessons and would prefer to do physical education indoors.

Despite these problems, the department had developed a considerable reputation for sporting achievement. A school inspection report noted that "representative achievement in extra-curricular activities is high for boys". The head of department monitored this achievement and hoped to use these pupils as role models for younger pupils.

4.3 Conclusion

Data for boys' attitudes to and participation in physical education and sport have been presented here as whole school accounts. Section 5 discusses these data.

Section **5** Discussion of Findings

This section summarises the content of Section 4.

5.1 Levels of Participation in Boys' Physical Education

We had the opportunity to speak with ninety-six boys in eight schools during our investigation into boys' attitudes to and participation in physical education and sport. Only a small proportion of these boys would characterise themselves as 'less active'.

Many of the boys we met take-for-granted the socialisation process that has produced their attitudes to physical activity. Few challenge stereotypical behaviours or expectations. Most of them really enjoy active play and dream of being famous sportsmen. This is particularly the case with those who play football.

As these pupils get older they become more aware of the distance between aspiration and achievement, between fantasy and reality. Most of the boys with whom we spoke would really love to be outstanding footballers. This success would have its own intrinsic rewards but would also bring with it fame and glamour. The desire to be known and admired drives the boys' participation in sport. They are prepared to seek alternative sports if their aspirations are blocked.

We found very few boys who did not dream of sporting success. Even though who define themselves as less able keep hoping that their luck may change. In each secondary school we met a small number of boys who had achieved representative honours either within the Borough or nationally. Some of them were linked to professional football clubs and embodied the ambitions of their peers.

In primary and secondary schools we found consistent evidence of hierarchies of ability and talent. In a formal sense, these occurred through the processes of setting

and team selection. Each school also has its own pupil-defined hierarchies. Many of the boys to whom we spoke knew from an early age what their place was. For able pupils this opened up opportunities for friendship and admiration. For less able boys it tended to restrict access to friendship groups and the few 'less active' boys to whom we spoke did appear genuinely lonely. These boys appeared to be marginalised and provided empirical support for those who argue for heterogeneous conceptualisation of masculine hegemony (see Section 1.3).

Obviously with a small case study we do not want to overstate our findings. We were fortunate to have access to the pupils and the schools. In retrospect we wonder whether some of the more honest responses to participation we collected were due to the presence of a female researcher. This possibility was made explicit when one primary school pupil confided that "you are just like my mum, Miss".

5.2 Educating the Imagination

We found consistent similarities between 'active' pupils when we visited the eight schools. We also found similarities between 'less active' pupils. This outcome replicated our experience in 1998 in the girls' investigation. Active boys were voluble, gregarious and talked animatedly about their passion for physical activity. By contrast, the less active pupils appeared shy and withdrawn.

We do not want to overstate these differences in the light of a small number of pupils. We would like to explore how schools can support and help these groups. It was clear, for example, that active pupils had a variety of stimuli to develop their activity. They appeared to have numerous opportunities to stimulate their imagination. The less active group seemed to seek solace in computer games and television. They seemed to gain no enrichment from open learning contexts. Some of these pupils did go bike riding and swimming. In an extreme case of a less active pupil we met in one primary school, he had great difficulty in remembering anything he had done in physical education at any time.

We discovered very few examples of boys being involved pro-actively in creative and aesthetic activities. One school reported that four boys had taken places at a dance school. Many of the boys to whom we spoke were embarrassed by dance and defined it quite clearly and unequivocally as “girls’ stuff”. This rejection of a different kind of kinaesthetic experience has important consequences for imaginative responses. It also has important implications for the role model male physical teachers offer. A supportive teacher could use dramatic and figurative dance to good effect with boys.

In some schools boys also excluded themselves from enjoyment of and participation in gymnastics and trampolining. Ironically, some of the less active boys sought to rediscover these in the computer games they played. They were investing in virtual reality!

5.3 Developing Physical Education

Our fieldwork for the boys’ study indicated a number of pressures building on the core status of physical education. In primary schools, the National Literacy Scheme was impacting directly on the time available for physical education. Teachers perceived themselves under considerable pressure to plan and prepare lesson content. This kind of work had generated an atmosphere in which extra-curricular clubs were suffering. In some schools it was proving very difficult to find any teachers to support the clubs.

In the secondary school, there were also pressures on time and teachers’ disposable time. One school had reduced the physical education time for Year 10 pupils to one lesson of fifty minutes.

What is remarkable under these circumstances is the hunger pupils have for physical education. Most of the pupils with whom we met wanted more time and more lessons. This was the case for primary and secondary school pupils. Most of them expressed a real desire to play games. Football and basketball were important activities for them

and they had an insatiable appetite for these games. Active lifestyles extended into evenings and holidays.

The Borough has a remarkable reservoir of enthusiasm to tap. Careful consideration ought to be given how to mobilise this. Homework clubs for physical education were suggested by a number of pupils. Others wanted more clubs. Some secondary schools are helping primary schools in this respect and are inviting pupils to share clubs. However primary and secondary schools are struggling to staff these clubs. Recent developments in government approaches to support for extra-curricular activities need to be evaluated.

The popularity of swimming and biking needs careful attention. These are excellent examples of 'voluntary homework'. Girls' also identified swimming as an important leisure activity. Interest in these two activities raises some important questions about curriculum content.

Our evidence suggests that those boys and girls who are active want to do more activity. In our girls' study we discussed a 'light switch' going out at Years 8 and 9 when attitudes and participation changed. For boys we think Years 9 and 10 are an important watershed. The existence of these transition points raises important Borough-wide and school-specific issues.

5.4 Genuine, Rewarding, Worthwhile Physical Activity

In our discussion of girls' attitudes, we noted that:

The Borough can make a real difference to the attitudes of girls' to physical education and sport. The challenge is to transform the lives of real people and become a model for others to follow.

We believe this same point holds for the boys in the Borough. However, a close watch must be maintained on the impact of the erosion of time available to physical education. Primary and secondary schools could work together to benchmark

children's achievements. This could take the form of some basic physical tasks as well as opportunities to demonstrate them in games' contexts.

We hope that schools will not be so hard pressed as not to engage in the on-going evaluation of curriculum content. Teachers and learners can work together to generate genuine, rewarding and worthwhile activity. This will be particularly important for those less active boys who might require a broader range of activities to trigger lifelong involvement. We have found evidence that some boys opt out of games-centred programmes whilst still retaining an interest in individual activities.

In Section 6 we present a conclusion to our investigation.

Section **6** Conclusions

6.1 The Bestest Day of My Life

As we wrote up this report we reflected on the enthusiasm of one of the Borough's Year 4 pupils. When asked what he would like to do in physical education at school, he became very excited and spoke animatedly about "the bestest day in my life". This would entail playing a full side game of football with goals and nets. "It would be with red cards, yellow cards and offside". In one utterance he had encapsulated the magic of football for many of his peers.

In our Conclusion to the girls' report we discussed the relationships between thinking globally and acting locally. In the light of our recent investigation it is hard to overstate the role football plays in many boys' lives in the Borough. Some opponents of small- scale or case studies criticise them for their lack of generalisability and representativeness. Proponents of small-scale study suggest that they can resonate with other people's experience to give a sense of shared understanding.

It is interesting to compare the Barking and Dagenham boy envisioning his bestest day with the Year 6 girls interviewed by Emma Renold (1997). One of these girls at an school in a semi-rural town in the East of England observed of the boys at her school that "all they've got in their brains is football". These two pupils encapsulate a fundamental tension that we have observed and noted in our conversations with pupils. In order for one group to meet its single-minded commitment to a physical activity another has to defer. Like Anne Williams (1993) and Emma Renold (1997) we recognise that the playground becomes a site of contest for space and opportunity.

The playground and the physical education curriculum as taught raise fundamental issues about gendered behaviour. Teachers in Barking and Dagenham do reflect on

gender issues. Best practice will require the Borough's teachers to localise global issues. Our study recognises that transformative practice has to reconcile assertions by authors such as Margaret Talbot (1993) that:

The power of the gendering of physical education, in the ways in which content, methods and social value are differentiated for girls and boys on the basis of gender expectations and assumptions which in turn result in the perpetuation of various forms of sexism which in effect prevent physical education being delivered equitably to girls and boys in British schools.

With the sheer exuberance of the work at Redtown High School reported by Mick Donovan (1998). On his first day there:

I watched as a procession of young boys, bouncing basketballs, made their way towards Redtown gates at 7.30am on a cold, wet Manchester morning. Within minutes of entering the sports hall, over fifty youngsters were rehearsing their skills. The practice concluded at 8.45am with an intense knock out shooting competition; the boys hurriedly changed and ran to registration.

The challenge for the Borough is to reconcile both situations. The cultural power of the socialisation process privileges boys' involvement in physical activity. Access, equity and opportunity are enshrined in the Borough's commitment to its inhabitants. This report provides further information for debate.

6.2 Final Comments

We have been immensely privileged and fortunate to be given access to the Borough's schools to investigate attitudes to participation in physical education and sport. Although we have now researched girls' and boys' attitudes we have reported the results of our investigations as separate accounts.

The Borough intends to host a one-day conference to discuss the findings of both reports. The opportunities to discuss with teachers the issues that have arisen will help

us with our final task. We propose to write a comparative account of pupils' attitudes to physical education and sport in the Borough.

Our aspiration is to provide stimulus for debate about gendered physical education and the opportunities to transcend cultural barriers to participation and lifelong involvement. We subscribe wholeheartedly to a vision of physical education identified by Len Almond (1996):

PE in schools contributes to the overall education of young people by helping them to learn how to lead full and valuable lives by engaging in purposeful physical activities such as sport, dance or adventure. It is these activities that can lead to an improvement in the quality of people's lives. They learn to value these activities in a rich and fundamental way of coming to care about them. Schools provide the opportunity for young people to make sense of their situation, to illuminate their understanding of what to do with their lives and help them to make informed choices in terms of how they choose to spend their lives.

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