

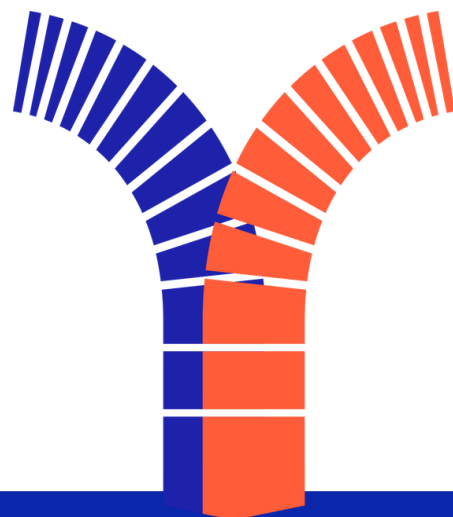


Embedding Physical Activity into the Curriculum: Practical ideas inspired by Holly Grove Primary School

Top Tips for School Leaders



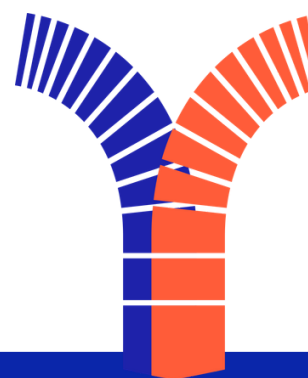
Move Well.





Holly Grove has developed an approach that reflects its pupils, staff and community. The aim of this guide is not to replicate individual activities, but to help leaders consider how curriculum delivery could better meet the needs of the pupils in their own setting.

Active learning does not mean that every lesson must involve constant movement. It means recognising when purposeful physical activity could improve access, engagement, regulation or understanding.





01 Begin with the pupils, not the activity

Before introducing active learning strategies, understand where pupils currently experience barriers. Long periods of sitting, repeated transitions or a narrow range of ways to demonstrate learning may affect pupils differently.

Questions to consider

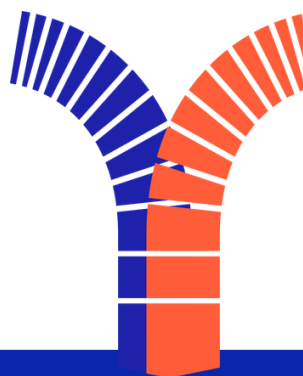
- During a typical day, when are pupils expected to remain seated for the longest periods?
- Which pupils appear least engaged or most dysregulated at these points?
- Is the difficulty rooted in the learning itself, or in the way it is being delivered?

Beacon insight

Holly Grove didn't adopt active delivery because it was the latest initiative. Leaders first identified the barriers preventing pupils from thriving and used movement as one of the solutions. This ensured the approach responded to genuine need rather than adding another programme.

Reflect

Where might current routines be asking pupils to adapt to the curriculum when the curriculum could adapt to them?





02 See movement as a way of teaching

Physical activity should not be limited to PE, breaktimes, brain breaks or reward activities. Used with clear intent, movement can help pupils rehearse knowledge, make abstract ideas more concrete and take part in learning through different strengths.

Questions to consider

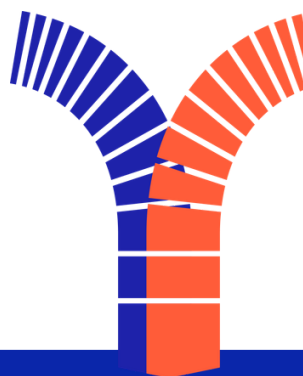
- Which curriculum content could pupils explore, practise or demonstrate physically?
- Would movement add meaning to the learning, or merely add activity?
- How could the approach remain accessible to pupils with different physical, sensory and communication needs?

Beacon insight

Rather than treating movement as an extra activity, Holly Grove integrates it into everyday teaching. Active approaches support curriculum learning while helping pupils remain engaged, regulate and participate more confidently.

Reflect

Where could movement help pupils understand or remember something that is difficult to access while seated?





03 Start small and learn from practice

Embedding physical activity across the curriculum is a change in teaching practice, not a collection of quick activities. A focused starting point allows staff to explore what works without creating pressure to change everything at once.

Questions to consider

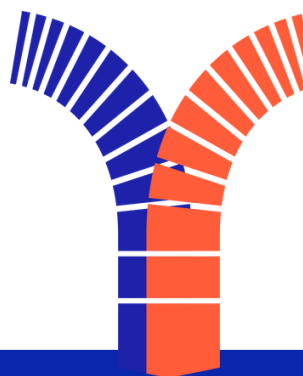
- What is one subject, class or recurring learning challenge where active delivery may be useful?
- What would you expect to notice if the change were helping?
- How will staff be able to adapt the approach as they learn?

Beacon insight

Leaders focused on steady, manageable improvements rather than wholesale change. By giving staff permission to experiment and adapt approaches to their own classes, active delivery became sustainable rather than overwhelming.

Reflect

What is the smallest useful change that could help you learn whether this approach has value in your setting?





04 Give staff permission and support to adapt

Teachers know their pupils and need space to make professional decisions. Clear purpose, protected collaboration and effective professional development are more likely to build sustainable practice than issuing a set of activities to follow.

Questions to consider

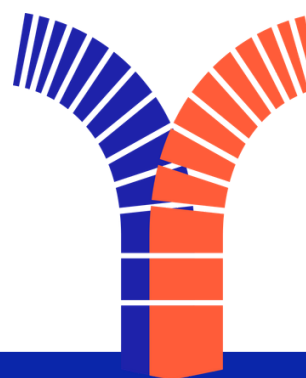
- Do staff understand why active delivery may matter for your pupils?
- Where can teachers plan, observe and learn from one another?
- What reassurance do staff need in order to experiment without feeling that every attempt must work first time?

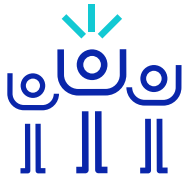
Beacon insight

Holly Grove recognised that lasting change depends on people, not just ideas. Staff were encouraged to collaborate, share successful practice and develop confidence over time, creating greater ownership across the school.

Reflect

Are staff being asked to deliver an approach, or being enabled to shape it responsibly?





05 Look beyond activity levels when judging impact

The value of active curriculum delivery is not captured only by counting minutes of movement. Leaders should consider whether pupils are more engaged, regulated, included and able to learn.

Questions to consider

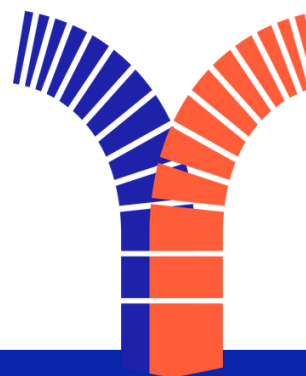
- What changes are visible in attendance, behaviour, engagement or participation?
- What are pupils and staff noticing?
- Are benefits being experienced by the pupils who previously found learning least accessible?

Beacon insight

Holly Grove measures success through multiple lenses. Alongside academic outcomes, leaders look for improvements in attendance, behaviour, inclusion, participation and pupils' readiness to learn, recognising that these wider changes often come first.

Reflect

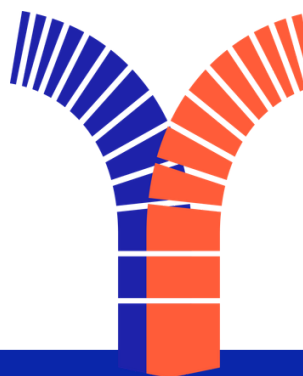
What evidence would convince you that a different way of delivering learning was improving pupils' experience of school?





Remember...

The aim is not to make every lesson more active. It is to consider whether the way learning is organised enables every pupil to participate, regulate and succeed - and to use movement purposefully where it can make a meaningful difference.





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