

# Curriculum Sports Programme



Department of  
**Education**

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AN ROINN  
**Oideachais**

MÄNNYSTRIE O  
**Lear**



July 2015 Report





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## INTRODUCTION

The Curriculum Sports Programme is aimed at Primary 1 to Primary 4 pupils and seeks to improve their health and wellbeing and encourage them to embrace a healthy lifestyle from a young age. The main aims of the programme are:

1. To develop Fundamental Movement Skills through participation in enjoyable games.
2. Help raise confidence, self-esteem and motivation to learn in other curricular areas.
3. Raise the confidence of, and provide support to, primary teachers in delivering Physical Education.

The Irish FA has 30 Primary School Coaches working closely with the class teacher in delivering a physical literacy programme to primary classes. The class teacher is expected to engage in the planning and review with the Primary School Coach, must be present and participate during all lessons to support their own development, and should follow up as appropriate in their teaching.

The schools involved in the programme are expected to work closely with the Primary School Coach to clarify expectations, roles and support between all parties. Teachers and Principals are also expected to contribute to the overall programme evaluation process. The Irish FA Primary School Coaches worked with their selected schools and subsequent classes for the full academic year delivering a series of lessons that lasted 40 minutes on average and often consisted of cross-curricular themes.

The programme focuses on Foundation Stage (Primary 1 and 2) and Key Stage 1 (Primary 3 and Primary 4). These are the vital years for learning the basic Fundamental Movement Skills of agility, balance, coordination, speed, running, jumping, catching, kicking and striking. Lessons take place during curriculum time in support of the Physical Education Curriculum and sessions can take place in both the classroom and sports hall.

Studies have shown that children who fail to develop Fundamental Movement Skills are three times less active than skilful children of the same age. Children who develop sound Fundamental Movement Skills are more likely to develop the confidence and self-esteem they need to take part in physical activity and sport. These children are also more likely to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle, thereby improving health and reducing the risk of obesity.

The following report will provide an in depth analysis of the Irish FA Curriculum Sports Programme in the 2014/2015 academic year and attempt to provide thorough evaluations of the impact across pupils, teachers and schools.

## SECTION 1: CURRICULUM SPORTS PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

### 1.1 Irish FA Primary School Coaches

During the 2014/2015 academic year the Irish FA employed 30 full time Curriculum Sports Programme coaches. All coaches employed held a University Degree in a relevant sports related discipline and/or a Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) with Physical Education. All coaches were also required to possess up to date relevant coaching qualifications, child protection and first aid qualifications, experience in coaching Foundation and Key Stage 1 aged children and also an in depth knowledge of the Northern Ireland Revised Curriculum.

The coaches are geographically spread around the country as shown below in Figure 1. The coaches therefore cover all of Northern Ireland with at least one coach in each Local Council area and with a minimum of 4 coaches in each of the five Education and Library Boards.

Figure 1: Irish FA Curriculum Sports Programme (Primary School Coach Location)



In November 2013 the Irish FA began the process to recruit a new Irish FA Primary School Coaches Manager and in December 2013, Jonathan Michael was employed in this role. Prior to taking up this post Jonathan had worked as a Grassroots Development Officer for the Irish FA for seven and a half years.

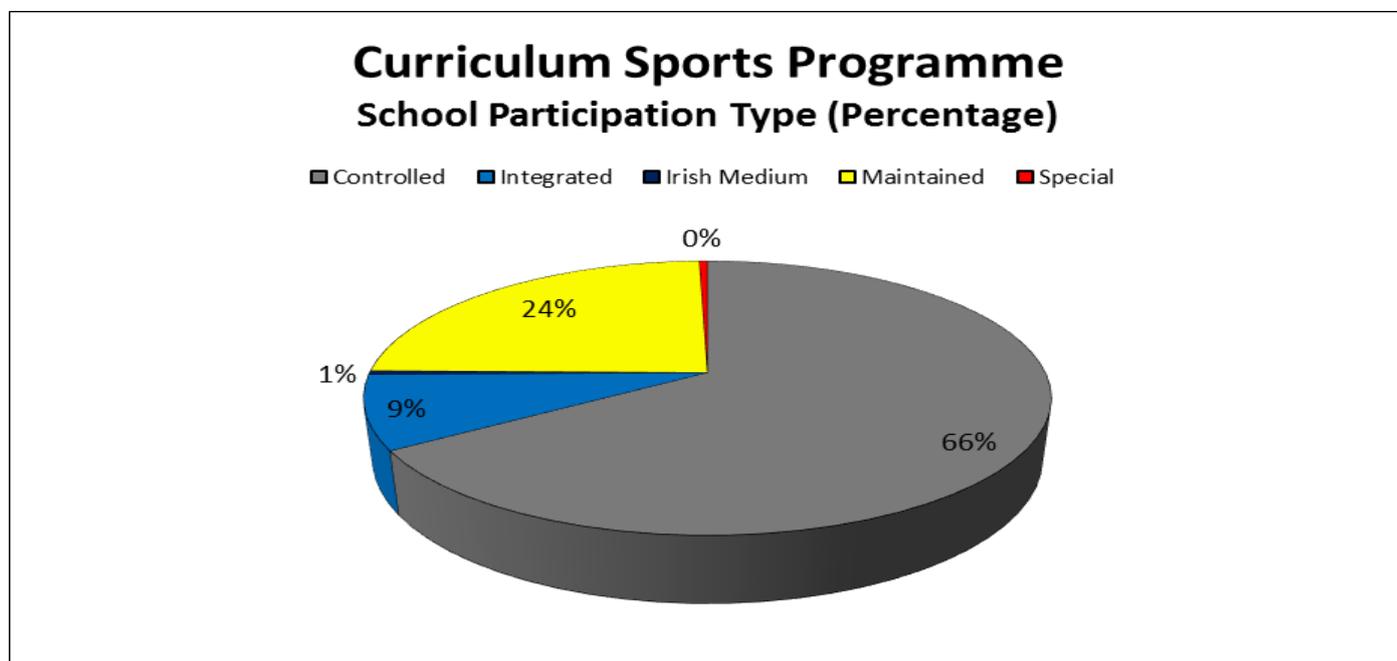


## 1.2 Number of Schools

The Curriculum Sports Programme delivered 877 sessions a week in 218 Primary Schools to 21,416 pupils. The breakdown of the number of and school type is shown below in Figure 2 and reflected in percentage terms in Graph 1.

Figure 2: Total Number of Schools

Controlled	Maintained	Integrated	Irish Medium	Special
144	53	19	1	1
Total Number of School - 218				



Graph 1: School Participation Type (Percentage)



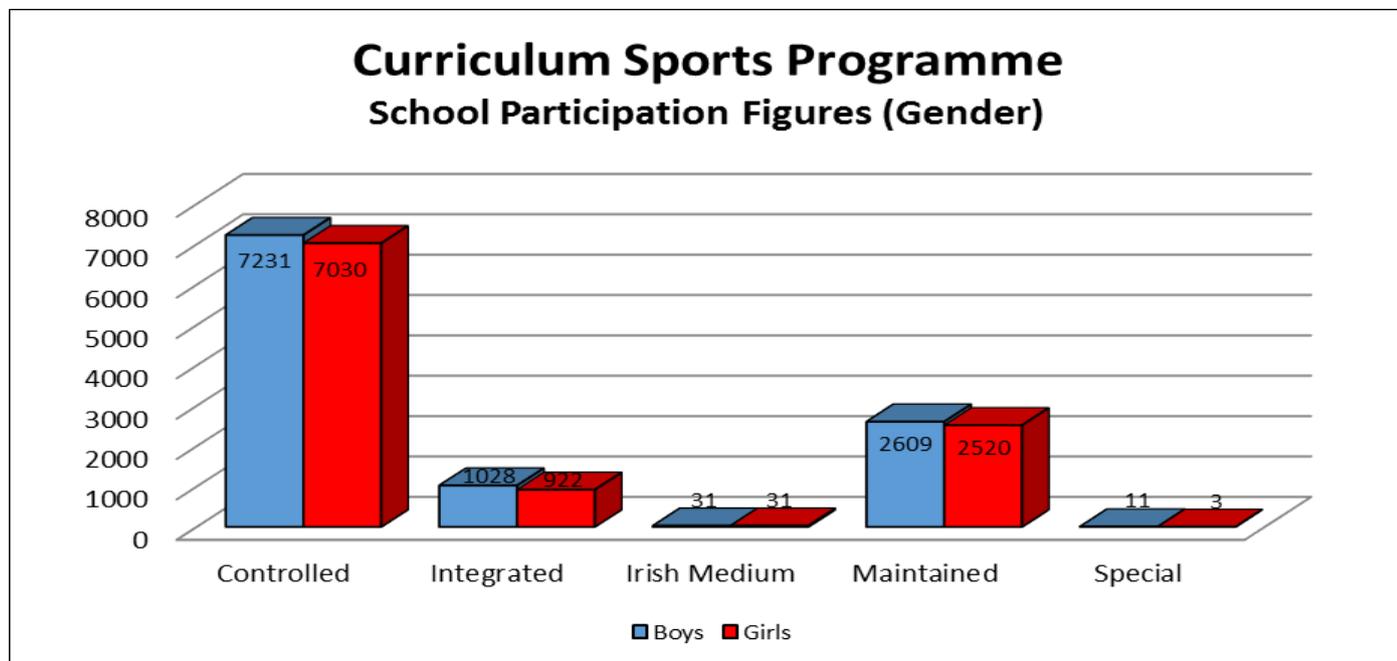
### 1.3 Number of Children

The Curriculum Sports Programme was delivered to a total number of 10,910 boys and 10,506 girls each week. The total figures are shown below in Figure 3 and the breakdown per school type is reflected in Graph 2.

Figure 3: Total Number of Children

Total Number of Boys	Total Number of Girls
10,910	10,506
Total Number of Children - 21,416	

Graph 2: School Participation Figures (Gender)





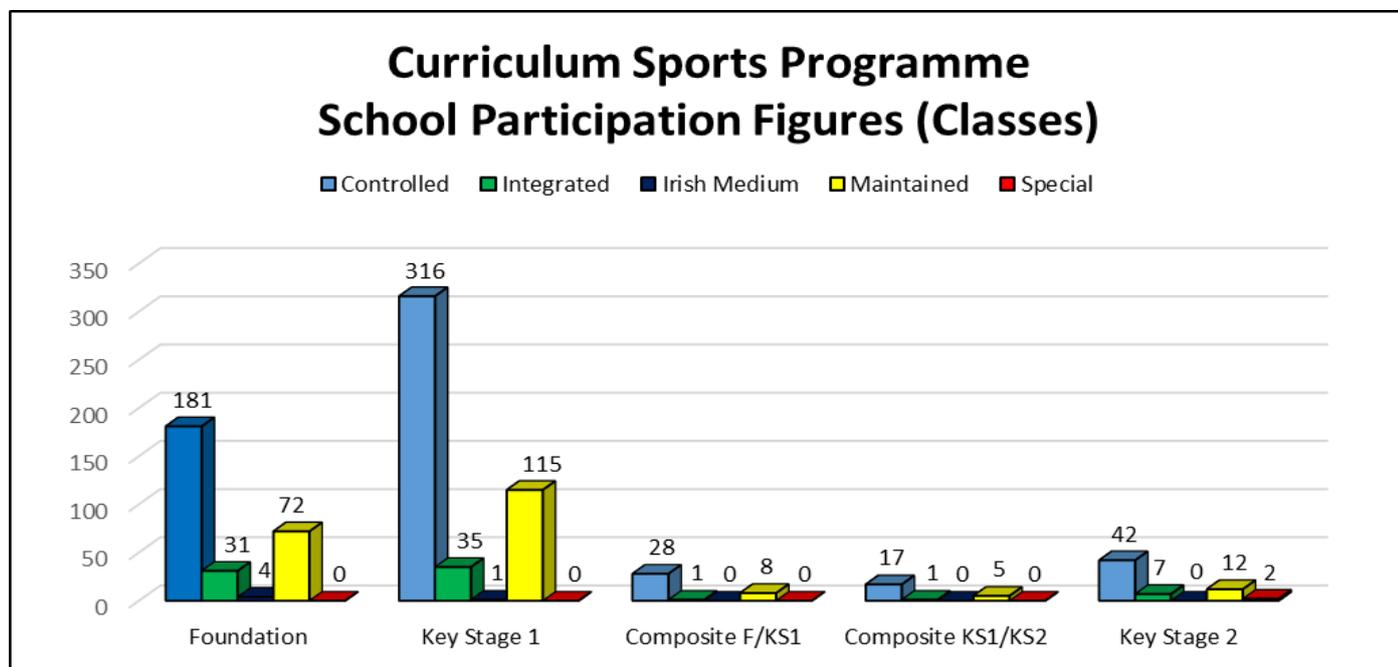
## 1.4 Breakdown of Class Type

The breakdown of the delivered Curriculum Sports Programme classes per week is depicted in Figure 4. The information highlights the total number of classes delivered per week by class type. Graph 3 provides a greater visual representation of school participation figures by type of class.

Figure 4: Breakdown of Class Type

School Type	Foundation	Key Stage 1	Composite Foundation / Key Stage 1	Composite Key Stage 1 / Key Stage 2	Total (School Type)
Controlled	181	316	28	17	542
Maintained	72	115	8	5	200
Integrated	31	35	2		68
Special					
Total (Class Type)	284	466	38	22	
Total Number of Classes - 810					

Graph 3: School Participation Figures (Classes)





## SECTION 2: CURRICULUM SPORTS PROGRAMME EVALUATION

### 2.1 Pupil Baseline Measurements

In an attempt to monitor and evaluate the impact of the Curriculum Sports Programme a number of bespoke baseline measurement tests were carried out by all 30 Irish FA Primary School Coaches. The tests were designed to measure if any improvement had occurred in a variety of physical skills which included agility, balance and coordination and fundamental sporting skills of dribbling and passing. (Please see the appendix for a diagram of each test).

Each Irish FA Primary School Coach conducted the testing protocol in 3 of their schools and tests were conducted with children from both Foundation and Key Stage 1 levels. A total of 90 schools and 360 pupils took part in the baseline measurement tests (Foundation – 180 & Key Stage 1 – 180) which equates to 2.6% of the participants involved in the programme for the 2014/2015 academic year.

Tests were first carried out in September 2014 and again in June 2015. The time between tests was a maximum of 42 weeks and a minimum of 40 weeks. Previously it had been proposed that a third party would carry out the baseline measurements on behalf of the programme and as a consequence no tests had been initiated by the programme staff at the beginning of the academic year. When the new manager came into post it was discovered that involvement from a third party would not be possible and the bespoke tests were then designed and implemented. This explains why the time period between tests was relatively short, however, the results below show that significant improvement across all the tests was still possible.

Each test will be explained in more detail below and the results will be analysed.

#### Test 1. Agility Test

The first measurement carried out was a 'Modified Zig Zag Test' which was designed to assess agility. Agility is described as the ability to change the direction of the body in an efficient and effective manner and to achieve this requires a combination of:

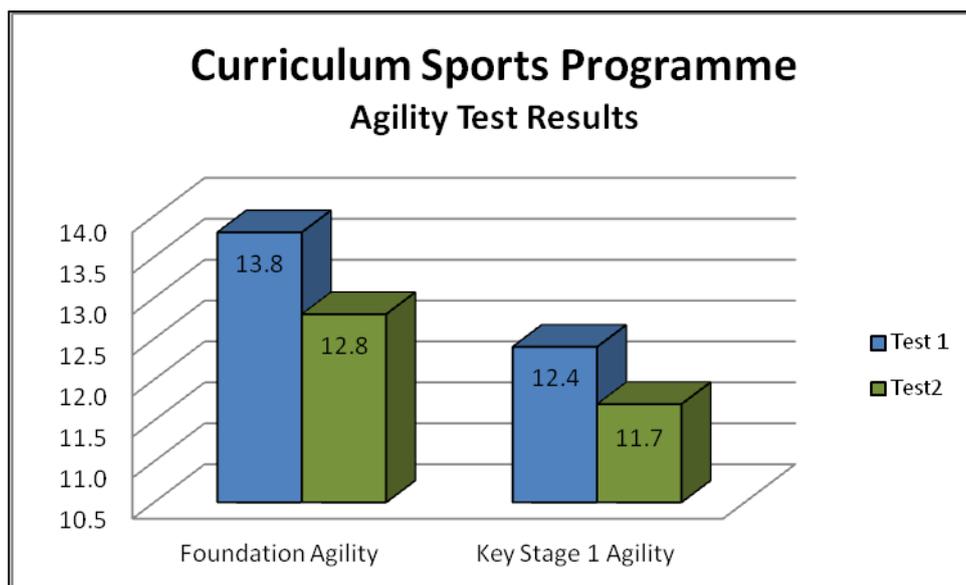
- Balance – the ability to maintain equilibrium when stationary or moving (i.e. not falling over) through the coordinated actions of sensory functions (eyes, ears and the proprioceptive organs in the joints)
- Static Balance – the ability to retain the centre of mass above the base of support in a stationary position
- Dynamic Balance – the ability to maintain balance with body movement
- Speed - the ability to move all or part of the body quickly
- Strength - the ability of a muscle or muscle group to overcome a resistance
- Co-ordination – the ability to control the movement of the body in co-operation with the body's sensory functions



The pupils were instructed to sprint in a straight line for a distance of 12 metres to the furthest away cone. At this point they were to move around the left side of the cone and then on the way back to the starting point they had to zig zag around the remaining cones and therefore move between the right and left side of the test area. The test finished with a sprint through the two start cones. The pupils time was recorded in seconds and to one decimal place.

Graph 4 shows the average agility test score for Test 1 and Test 2 for both the pupils in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

Graph 4: Agility Test Results



Graph 4 clearly highlights that both age groups improved their average score. The Foundation age group improved from 13.8 to 12.8, which is an increase of 1.0 seconds and an improvement of 7.2%. The Key Stage 1 age group improved from 12.4 to 11.7, which is an increase in 0.7 seconds and an improvement of 5.6%. This increase in score demonstrates that, over a matter of 4 months or less, pupils initiated the responses at a faster rate through quicker reaction time, improved efficiency of movement and increased speed, strength and co-ordination.



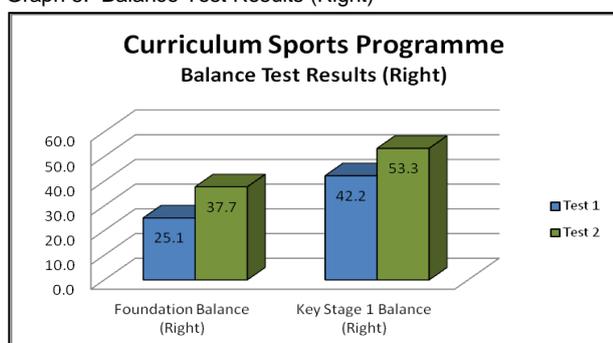
## Test 2. Standing Balance Test

The second measurement carried out was a 'Standing Balance Test' which was designed to assess static balance. Static balance is described as the ability to maintain control of a position whilst remaining stationary.

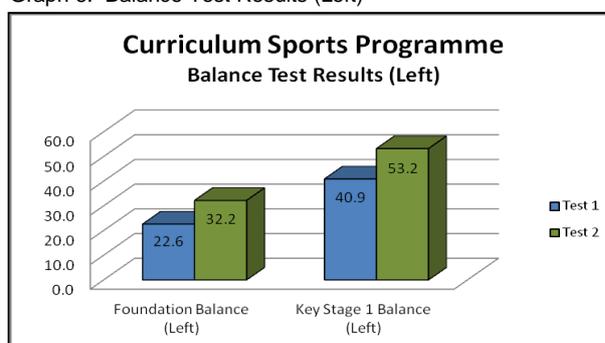
The pupils were instructed to stand on one leg in a designated area for as long as possible. The timing stopped when the elevated foot touched the ground or the pupil hopped (effectively losing their balance position). Pupils were given two attempts on each leg and the better of these attempts was recorded. The pupils time was recorded in seconds and to one decimal place.

Graph 5 and Graph 6 show the average balance test score for Test 1 and Test 2 for both the pupils in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and on both the right and left foot.

Graph 5: Balance Test Results (Right)



Graph 6: Balance Test Results (Left)



Graph 5 and Graph 6 underline that both age groups significantly improved their average score for both the right and left foot. The Foundation age group improved from 25.1 to 37.7 with the right foot, which is an increase of 12.6 seconds and an improvement of 33.4%. The left foot score improved from 22.6 to 32.2, which is an increase of 9.6 seconds and an improvement of 29.8%. The Key Stage 1 age group improved from 42.2 to 53.3 with the right foot, which is an increase of 11.1 seconds and an improvement of 20.8%. The left foot score improved from 40.9 to 53.2, which is an increase of 12.4 seconds and an improvement of 23.1%. These increases in scores clearly demonstrate that the pupils improved their ability to maintain control of a position whilst remaining stationary.

Interestingly, the improvement in the Foundation stage group was greater than the Key Stage 1 group. The Key Stage 1 group's Test 1 score was still greater than the Foundation stage group's Test 2 scores which represents the improvements that can be made in balance with age and experience.



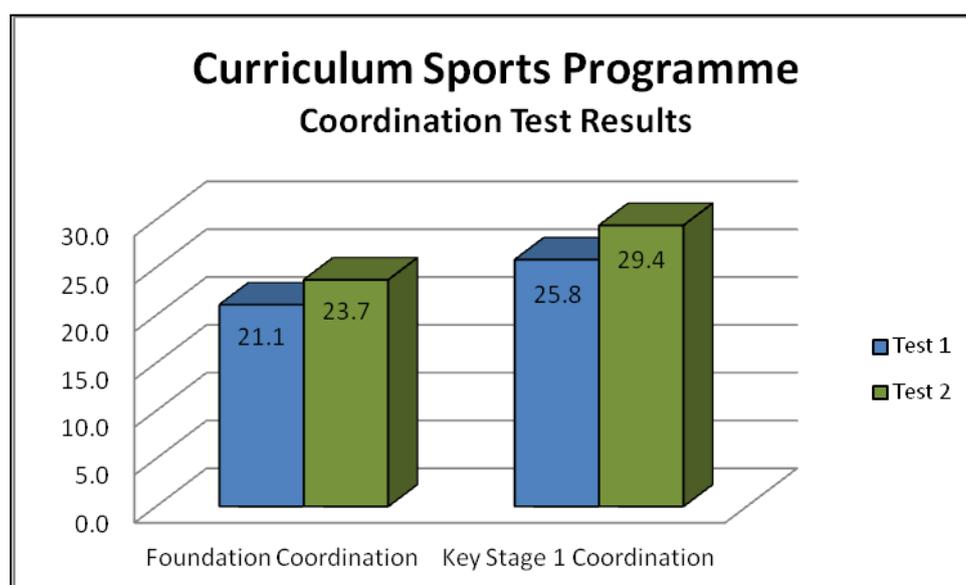
### Test 3. Coordination Test

The third measurement carried out was a 'Co-ordination Toe Tap Test' which was designed to assess basic co-ordination on both sides of the body. Co-ordination is the ability to repeatedly execute a sequence of movements smoothly and accurately. This may involve the senses, muscular contractions and joint movements.

The pupils were instructed to stand over a ball, in the centre of a 4x4 yard area. The pupils were tasked with performing as many toe taps (touching the ball with the sole of the foot) as possible within 20 seconds using alternating feet. Any attempted toe taps that did not touch the ball were not counted. If the pupil or the ball moved outside the 4x4 area they were allowed bring the ball back to the centre of the area and continue the measurement. The pupils were given two attempts and the best of these attempts was recorded.

Graph 7 shows the average co-ordination test score for Test 1 and Test 2 for both the pupils in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

Graph 7: Coordination Test Results



Graph 7 shows that both age groups improved their average score. The Foundation age group improved from 21.1 to 23.7, which is an increase in 2.6 touches for 20 seconds and an improvement of 11.0%. The Key Stage 1 age group improved from 25.8 to 29.4, which is an increase in 3.5 touches for 20 seconds and an improvement of 12.2%. This increase in score demonstrates that the pupils initiated the responses at a faster rate and improved efficiency of movement.

The Key Stage 1 group showed greater improvement than the Foundation group between both tests which would be expected with the difficulty of this task.



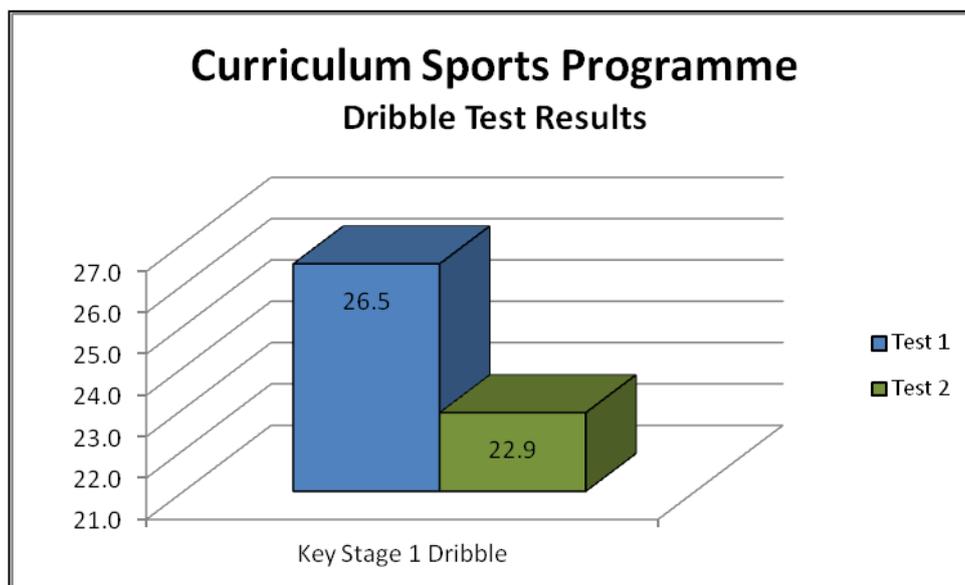
#### Test 4. Dribbling Test (Shalom)

The fourth measurement was a 'Shalom Dribbling Test' which was only carried out with the Key Stage 1 pupils due to the slightly complex nature of the measurement and the difficulty level of the task. This test was designed to assess basic close control of a football and foot to eye coordination. The distance covered in the task was also a good measurement of task related agility.

In this measurement cones were positioned in a straight line, 2 yards apart, and covered a total distance of 8 yards. On the command of the coach, the pupil had to dribble the ball, using only their feet, through each of the 2 yard gates and in the correct order. When the pupil reached the top, they had to dribble around the top cones and turn to dribble back through each of the gates to the start/finish line. If a gate was missed the pupil had to dribble back to the gate missed and continue. The time was stopped when the pupil dribbled the ball through the starting cones. The time was recorded in seconds and to one decimal place.

Graph 8 shows the average dribbling test score for Test 1 and Test 2 for pupils in Key Stage 1.

Graph 8: Dribble Test Results



Graph 8 clearly highlights an average improvement for the Key Stage 1 age group. Scores improved from 26.5 to 22.9, which is an increase in 3.6 seconds and an improvement of 13.6%. This increase in score demonstrates that the pupils developed an improved ability to control the ball whilst dribbling and improved their speed whilst running with the ball. This improvement is significant when the time period between tests is considered.



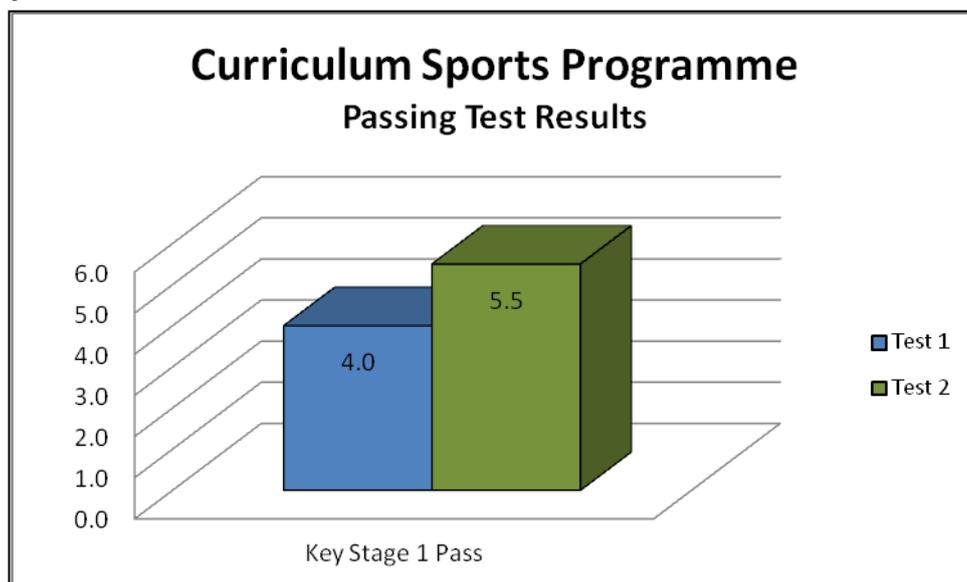
### Test 5. Passing Test

The fifth and final measurement was a 'Passing Test' which was only carried out with the Key Stage 1 pupils due to the difficulty level of the task. This test was designed to assess skill acquisition, concentration and accuracy in passing a football using coordinated movement.

The pupils were instructed to begin between two starting cones and had 10 attempts to pass the ball through the target gate. The pupils had 5 attempts with their left foot and 5 attempts with their right foot. Pupils were instructed to complete the passing remembering to use correct technique. A point was scored for each pass that moved through the gate without touching the cones and was executed using the inside of the foot.

Graph 9 below shows the average passing test score for Test 1 and Test 2 for the Key Stage 1 pupils.

Graph 9: Passing Test Results



Graph 9 illustrates a significant average improvement for the Key Stage 1 age group. Scores improved from 4.0 to 5.5, which is an increase in 1.5 passes from 10 attempts and an improvement of 37.5%. This increase in score demonstrates that the pupils developed an improved passing technique, increased concentration and subsequent passing accuracy. This improvement is very pleasing when the time period between tests is considered.



## 2.2 Teacher Evaluation

At the end of the 2014/2015 academic year all teachers involved in the Curriculum Sports Programme were provided with an end of year Teacher Evaluation Form to monitor the relevance and effectiveness of the programme for them and also to provide comments in order to improve the programme moving forward. Teachers were given the option of either completing a paper evaluation form or an online version. A total of 232 teachers responded and below is the analysis of these responses. (Please see the appendix for a sample of the Teacher Evaluation Form).

### Q1. Would you describe yourself as a Physical Education specialist?

Figure 5: Teacher Evaluation Question 1

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	28	12.1%
No	204	87.9%
Total	232	100%

A significant 87.9% of teachers involved in the Curriculum Sports Programme described themselves as not Physical Education specialists, which underlines the necessity of the programme to ensure that the Physical Literacy Curriculum is delivered correctly and that these important and fundamental elements of every child's development are not neglected.

### Q2. At the beginning of the 2014/2015 school year describe your understanding of Physical Literacy/Fundamental Movement Skills.

Figure 6: Teacher Evaluation Question 2

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Poor	5	2.1%
Below Average	31	13.7%
Average	132	56.2%
Good	54	23.2%
Excellent	11	4.7%
Total	233	100%

A large proportion of the respondents (69.9%) described their understanding of Physical Literacy and Fundamental Movement Skills as average to poor. This figure would suggest that there is a continued need to invest and inform teachers in the importance of these elements of the National Curriculum and assist the ability to implement this within their own Physical Education lessons.



**Q3. At the end of the 2014/2015 school year describe your understanding of Physical Literacy/Fundamental Movement Skills.**

Figure 7: Teacher Evaluation Question 3

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Poor	0	0.0%
Below Average	0	0.0%
Average	15	6.5%
Good	169	72.8%
Excellent	48	20.7%
Total	232	100%

A large proportion of the respondents (93.5%) described their understanding of Physical Literacy and Fundamental Movement Skills as good or excellent after receiving the Curriculum Sports Programme for the 2014/2015 academic year. This rose considerably from the 28.2% of respondents who selected the same options at the beginning of the programme.

Interestingly the 56.2% which stated that they had average to poor understanding pre-programme significantly diminished to 6.5% and no teachers stated that their understanding was below average or poor. This impressive drop would suggest that the Primary School Coaches had a significant impact on teacher understanding.

**Q4. How would you rate the level of support the Irish FA Primary School Coach provided to you during the school year?**

Figure 8: Teacher Evaluation Question 4

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Poor	0	0.0%
Below Average	0	0.0%
Average	6	2.6%
Good	45	19.3%
Excellent	182	78.1%
Total	233	100%

Out of the 233 teachers surveyed only 2.6% suggested the support they received from the Irish FA Primary School Coach was average or below average. The majority (97.4%) suggested that the support they received was good to excellent. This statistic would link to the previous question and would point to the support of the Irish FA Primary School Coach as significant in the teachers understanding of Physical Literacy and Fundamental Movement Skills.



**Q5. How would you rate the Curriculum Sports Programme in relation to supporting you as a teacher in the delivery of Physical Education?**

Figure 9: Teacher Evaluation Question 5

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Poor	0	0.0%
Below Average	0	0.0%
Average	7	3.1%
Good	59	25.8%
Excellent	163	71.2%
Total	229	100%

From the 229 teachers surveyed with this question 97% (good to excellent) of them stated that they thought the Curriculum Sports Programme was effective in supporting their delivery of Physical Education. This would suggest that one of the key objectives of the Curriculum Sports Programme 'to support teachers in the delivery of Physical Education' is being met by the current programme.

**Q6. Do you feel there should be more emphasis put on teacher support within the Curriculum Sports Programme?**

Figure 10: Teacher Evaluation Question 6

Response	Frequency	Percentage
More emphasis on children	5	2.1%
Programme balance is correct	188	80.7%
More emphasis on teacher development	40	17.2%
Total	233	100%

The response to this question would suggest that the majority of teachers involved in the Curriculum Sports Programme (80.7%) thought that the balance of the programme was correct. This further highlights that the current programme is delivering to target and that provision is balanced between being pupil and teacher focused. The 17.2% of teachers that suggested the programme should provide more emphasis on teacher development is a strong reminder that improvements can still be made and that there is still scope to improve on how the programme can further benefit teachers in their delivery of the Physical Education Curriculum.

**Q7. What further assistance would you require in order to improve your Physical Education delivery?**

Figure 11: Teacher Evaluation Question 7

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Resources (lesson plans, video content etc)	176	50.6%
Education (coaching awards)	71	20.4%
More experience with corrective feedback (mentoring support)	40	11.5%
Information sharing with other teachers	41	11.8%
None	20	5.7%
Total	348	100%

This question was asked this year in an attempt to understand what improvements can be made to the programme for the 2015/2016 academic year and onwards to ensure that teachers are best equipped to deliver Physical Education. Nearly half of the respondents (50.6%) suggested that resources such as lesson plans and video content would improve their delivery. This response highlights the need from teachers to have easy access to user friendly resources in order to effectively deliver suitable Physical Education lessons. The Irish FA and the Ulster GAA are currently in the process of creating a resource programme through C2KNI that will provide all teachers in Northern Ireland with online access to Physical Literacy and Fundamental Movement Skill resources. Both Governing Bodies believe that this will be a major step in creating a legacy for Primary School Physical Education delivery in Northern Ireland.

**Q8. Please provide a short comment on your experience of the Curriculum Sports Programme this year.**

A super programme ... Kids just love content. We had a super coach. Enthusiastic, motivated and had such a great rapport with the kids. (Bridge Integrated Primary School)

The pupils thoroughly enjoyed Irish FA coaching sessions this year and the coach interacted well with the pupils. All activities were fun and I have now built up a bank of activities that I can use with kids to develop FMS during PE lessons.

(Greystone Primary School)



I cannot speak highly enough of our Irish FA Primary School Coach. She demonstrated excellent behaviour management in every session and had a clear knowledge and understanding of curricular requirements. She clearly enjoys working with the children and they look forward to seeing her every week. As a non-specialist I feel I have learnt strategies and ideas that I can implement in my future planning. There was clear progression across the lessons observed and I have noted the development of football skills in most of the year 3, other than children presenting motor or co-ordination difficulties. A great programme in school!  
(Eden Primary School)



This programme has given all teaching staff new ideas, activities and knowledge that will enhance the learning of physical education in our school.  
(Cranmore Integrated Primary School)

The children really enjoyed the fundamental skill programme (Curriculum Sports Programme) and I saw a huge improvement in many of the children. I feel more confident myself and look forward to implementing these things into my PE next year. Thank you.  
(Newcastle Primary School)

The Irish FA Primary School Coach was an excellent asset for our Physical Education curriculum. I was delighted how he adapted the activities for a pupil in a wheelchair. Lessons were progressive and consistently engaged all children. (Kesh Primary School)



## 2.3 School Principal Evaluations

### Q1. Do you feel that the Curriculum Sports Programme has benefited the pupils in the area of Physical Literacy/Fundamental Movement Skills?

Figure 12: Principal Evaluation Question 1

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	121	100%
No	0	0.0%
Undecided	0	0.0%
Total	121	100%

The response above is comprehensive evidence that School Principals (100%) believe that the Curriculum Sports Programme has benefited their pupils in the area of Physical Literacy/Fundamental Movement Skills.

### Q2. Do you feel that the Curriculum Sports Programme has benefited the pupils in the area of self confidence/esteem?

Figure 13: Principal Evaluation Question 2

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	121	100%
No	0	0.0%
Undecided	0	0.0%
Total	121	100%

The response above is strong evidence that School Principals (100%) believe that the Curriculum Sports Programme has benefited their pupils in the area of self confidence/esteem. This view is also supported in the comments provided by School Principals in the evaluation forms. Some of these comments are documented within this report.



**Q3. Do you feel that the Curriculum Sports Programme has benefited the pupils in the area of cross curricular development?**

Figure 14: Principal Evaluation Question 3

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	114	94.2%
No	3	2.5%
Undecided	4	3.3%
Total	121	100%

The response above is comprehensive evidence that School Principals (94.2%) believe that the Curriculum Sports Programme has benefited their pupils in the area of cross curricular development. Only three School Principal answered no to this question and 3.3% responded undecided. Although these responses are a small percentage they are still a reminder that improvements can still be made and that there is still scope to improve on how the programme can be used to develop cross circular themes.

**Q4. Do you feel that the Curriculum Sports Programme has improved/enhanced your school Physical Education programme?**

Figure 15: Principal Evaluation Question 4

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	121	100%
No	0	0.0%
Undecided	0	0.0 %
Total	121	100%

The answers provided to this question provide excellent support of the Curriculum Sports Programme as having a positive influence and impact on Physical Education programmes within Primary Schools. The example and support of the Irish FA Primary School Coach during an academic year can therefore have an impact of the Physical Education legacy of a Primary School.



**Q5. Do you feel that the Curriculum Sports Programme and the Primary School Coach has improved/enhanced your teachers understanding and future delivery of Physical Education?**

Figure 16: Principal Evaluation Question 5

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	117	99.2%
No	0	0.0%
Undecided	1	0.8%
Total	118	100%

The answers provided to this question highlight the large support of the Curriculum Sports Programme as having a positive improvement on Primary School Teachers understanding of Physical Education and their ability to deliver appropriate lessons. Only 1 respondents were undecided on this question and importantly 0 respondents felt that the programme had not improved/enhanced their teachers understanding and future delivery of Physical Education.

**Q6. Do you feel that further investment should be made by the Department of Education in developing children's physical literacy/physical activity opportunities?**

Figure 17: Principal Evaluation Question 6

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	121	100%
No	0	0%
Undecided	0	0%
Total	121	100%

A staggering 100% of School Principals place an importance on developing children's physical literacy/physical activity opportunities and support the investment made by the Department of Education in the Curriculum Sports Programme. These responses represent irrefutable evidence that School Principals believe that Physical Literacy programmes are best delivery by Physical Education specialists and through initiatives such as the Curriculum Sports Programme.



**Q7. On average, how many hours of Physical Education would a pupil in your school receive a week during curriculum time? (without the involvement of the Curriculum Sports Programme)**

Figure 18: Principal Evaluation Question 7

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Less than an hour	32	27.4%
1 – 2 hours	78	66.7%
2 – 3 hours	7	6.0%
3 – 4 hours	0	0.0%
4 – 5 hours	0	0.0%
More than 5 hours	0	0.0%
Total	117	100%

According to the National Health Service children and young people aged 5 to 18 should participate in at least 60 minutes of aerobic activity every day. This should include a mix of moderate-intensity activities (raising heart rate and breaking sweat) and vigorous-intensity activities (breathing hard and fast). Within these 60 minutes it is also advised that some activity should focus on strengthening muscles and bones.

Children within Foundation and Key Stage 1 level will on average spend 27.5 hours a week at school during curriculum time. According to the figures above, 100% of Primary Schools are spending up to a maximum of 10.9% of this curriculum time on delivering Physical Education. It should be noted that a large number of schools offer after schools activities to increase the number of hours of physical activity delivered within the school environment each week. However, the evidence above would suggest that time spent on Physical Education within Northern Irish Primary Schools is still significantly low in comparison to other elements of the National Curriculum. The inclusion of the Curriculum Sports Programme is therefore a vital tool in being able to reach the target of 2 hours of physical activity each week for all Primary School children within Northern Ireland by 2019 as set out in the Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Recreation 2009 – 2019 (Sport Matters).

**Q8. Please provide a short comment on your experience of the Curriculum Sports Programme this year.**

This is the first year I have been involved in the programme as both principal and a teacher. I have found it to be very structured, building an existing skills and stretching the more able children. I feel the programme also helps to improve the children's listening skills and confidence (especially those who do not excel in PE).

(Maguiresbridge Primary School)

I feel that the children have benefited greatly from the input of the Irish FA as lessons are well structure and differentiated. The coach is excellent and gets the most out of the children regardless of the ability. (Creavery Primary School)

I feel the teachers involved in the programme have benefited from being part of the coaching sessions. From watching the children taking part in sessions it is obvious that they enjoy every lesson. I feel that the programme benefits the children socially; it improves their self confidence and ultimately their Fundamental Movement Skills. (Carris Glen Primary School)



Excellent specialist coaching. The needs and stages of development of each child were taken into consideration. What was delivered and the skills developed could clearly be transfers to other sports. This programme was excellent professional development for the staff that were involved. (Fivemilletown Primary School)



The Curriculum Sports Programme has been most beneficial to our school. Not only has it aided with teacher confidence and give us ideas but it has most definitely improved listening skills, concentration skills and gross as well as fine motor skills within the children. The children enjoyed the sessions with a coach other than their class teacher and were by the end of the programme, confident and happy enough to have a go at all the activities delivered. The cross curricular element of the sessions was very much taken into account by our coach who asked for topics being covered in WAY, Literacy and Maths. This was a very worthwhile programme with an excellent coach who most definitely contributed to school life.

Thank you.

(St. Patrick's Primary School, Legamaddy)

## 2.4 Case Studies

The following three case studies will provide further evaluation of the effectiveness of the Curriculum Sports Programme from individual perspectives. These case studies are therefore a snap shot of many stories that could be shared in relation to the social and physical benefits associated with participation in the Irish FA Curriculum Sports Programme.

### Ben (Primary 1 – Florencecourt Primary School)



Ben participates in the Irish FA Curriculum Sports Programme delivered by his coach Gary Wallace. Due to Ben's low muscle tone and poor core stability he finds it hard to carry out simple daily tasks such as walking up and down stairs. Over the past year Ben has improved each week on the programme. Physically he is able to participate fully in all games and activities and as a result his social and interaction skills with other pupils and the coach, have also improved.

The inclusive games and activities in the programme have given Ben the opportunity to challenge and improve himself while fully participating with all his classmates.

His Teacher Ruth Wallace, said, "The programme has been a huge success for Ben and all the children in the class" she went on to add, "Ben and his fellow P1 class mates look forward to their Friday morning session with Gary. He has built up a fantastic relationship with each child and his clear explanations and demonstrations make it easy for the children to follow."

The picture above shows Ben showing off his football skills with the ball, something he would have found impossible to achieve at the start of the year. His mother, April, has also noticed huge improvements in Ben saying, "We are very pleased with Ben's progress, at the beginning of the year Ben really struggled with day to day task and had no interest in any sport or physical activity. Now Ben looks forward to playing outside and has much more confidence when stepping down stairs, in and out of the bath and we even had him sit upright on a swing in the park! Ben really looks forward to his Friday morning sessions with Gary and he even goes outside himself to practice his toe taps on a Thursday night!!"

The Irish FA Curriculum Sports Programme has had a huge positive effect on Ben and all the children who have participated in it over the past number of years. Through its well-developed programme, skilled coaches and the help of the local primary schools the programme will continue to have an effect on the lives of many children for years to come.



### **Eoghain (Primary 1 – St Patrick’s Primary School, Castlederg)**

Eoghain is one of many children that have benefitted from the Irish FA Curriculum Sports Programme. As a toddler, Eoghain was diagnosed with Osteogenesis Imperfecta, (brittle bone syndrome) meaning he is at risk of fracture if he falls.

Following an initial meeting with Eoghain’s teacher Mrs. McLaughlin at the beginning of the school year, it was decided to spend a few weeks conducting baseline measurements to gauge what Eoghain could do during Physical Education lessons. For the first few weeks Eoghain took part in isolated activities with his teacher and then was gradually integrated into a buddy system setting. Here he mirrored the activities the rest of the class were doing alongside a new partner each week. The only Fundamental Movement Skill which Eoghain could not replicate, were the lessons on jumping as Mrs. McLaughlin had stated in Eoghain’s report that jumping activities were not advised.

Taking into account the recommendations from Eoghain’s Physical Activity Report, Mrs. McLaughlin wished to continue Eoghain’s development in Physical Education within a small group setting for the duration of the first term. Towards the end of first term, Eoghain missed six weeks due to an accident at home fracturing his arm. On his return, he continued with activities isolated from the rest of the class in a small group setting.

At the beginning of the second term Mrs. McLaughlin had another meeting with Eoghain’s parents. Together they felt it was best to continue his programme as it was in the first term. This was the case until the mid-term break. During this period Eoghain demonstrated huge progress both in his physical and social development. His ability to stay on task and focused throughout the lesson was excellent for a child in Primary 1 and extremely quick in creating his own ideas for activities that the class were working on. He also brought his learning home with him to demonstrate to his parents what he had mastered in Physical Education. At this point it was decided to integrate Eoghain with the rest of the class during Physical Education lessons. At all times, either Mrs McLaughlin or the Primary School Coach shadow Eoghain to ensure he was protected as much as possible. Lessons were planned in advance and regular risk assessments were carried out during lessons to ensure there was no concern for Eoghain’s safety.

In the last term, Eoghain had progressed extremely well in both his physical and social development. Having flat feet, he moves with his feet slightly turned out and this affects his balance, however, his ball manipulation and coordination skills are above average for his age. The Irish FA Primary School Coach, Steafan Deery, commented that, “Eoghain greatest improvement over the year had to be his social and psychological development. Through involvement in Physical Education, his improved confidence is evident for all to see as well as the satisfaction he gets from gaining success at whatever Fundamental Movement Skill is practiced. Eoghain is always eager to learn and doesn’t give up at anything he does. He is extremely competitive but also gives great encouragement to his teammates during tasks.”



Steafan added, “Eoghain will be involved in the Curriculum Sports Programme next year again and I look forward to observing his progress at first hand as he typifies the importance of Physical Education to enhance a child’s experience of a broad and balanced curriculum.”

### **Scott (Primary 3, Lowwood Primary School)**

On commencing my role in Lowwood Primary School I encountered a Primary 3 pupil called Scott. During the first lesson Scott displayed very low self esteem and I was shocked to learn that in relation to Physical Education he had no aspirations or expectations for himself and sadly as far as he was concerned he would never be one of the boys playing football in the yard with his peers. I took this opportunity to empathise with Scott but more importantly I wanted to boost his confidence. I spoke to him about how we should never compare ourselves to others and instead try to be our own personal best. I talked to Scott about how I have never been very good at mathematics (something his teacher told me he was good at) and that maybe we could strike a deal and help each other.

Over the coming months Scott would supply me with two sums and I would complete them to the best of my ability as long as he would always try his very best during my coaching sessions. Scott’s willingness to engage in Physical Education is now on a different level. He is always committed to having a go and in a recent Champions League Festival Day he highlighted that matches were ‘not always about winning but having fun’.

Also, in a recent conversation with his teacher, Mrs Adair explained that Scott’s renewed confidence had transferred to his class work. Scott is no longer afraid to make mistakes nor is he reluctant to accept new challenges. In addition, Scott’s ability to engage with his peers has increased dramatically.



## SECTION 3: CURRICULUM SPORTS PROGRAMME INITIATIVES

### 3.1 Player of the Week

After each lesson the Irish FA Primary School Coach awards one pupil from each class with a 'Player of the Week' sticker. These stickers can be gained by the pupils demonstrating improved abilities, or a range of inter-personal skills, such as listening well, working well within a team or having confidence to answer questions.

### 3.2 Irish FA Website

The Irish FA Curriculum Sports Programme has a dedicated page on the Irish FA website. This link gives an insight into the programme, profiles the coaches and gives some educational/coaching advice on working with pupils at the Foundation and Key Stage 1 level. The Primary School Coaches Manager is currently producing new features and articles that can be added to regularly update this dedicated page. The Manager is also investigating new ways to promote the programme in the form of interviews and video content that can also be transferable across social media.

### 3.3 Curriculum Sports Programme Facebook

Since the New Year the Irish FA Curriculum Sports Programme has also developed a dedicated facebook page. This platform has provided opportunities to share stories, news items of interest, photographs and video content. The page engages a targeted audience and provides useful insights into how the information contained is digested and shared. The page has also been utilised as a tool to drive traffic to the Irish FA Curriculum Sports Programme web page. Since March content on the page has reach over 15,000 people and the Primary School Coaches Manager is confident that this will greatly increase as more Primary School teachers begin to follow the page.





### **3.4 Player Booklets**

The 'Player Book' provided Key Stage 1 pupils with a series of fun activities/challenges to work on at home with their parent/guardian. This resource complimented and reinforced the skills they have learned in the Curriculum Sports Programme with a series of activities/skills challenges. The book also provided healthy eating and physical activity advice for pupils to share with their parents. The Primary School Coaches Manager is currently reviewing this resource to include improvement suggestions from teachers and Primary School Coaches.

### **3.5 Literacy/Numeracy/Science/World Around Us Worksheets**

A series of worksheets were designed and implemented with Key Stage 1 pupils. These worksheets were used to compliment the various coaching topics and were used to help support and develop the pupil's classroom skills linked to the lessons in the gym/playground. The Primary School Coaches Manager is currently looking to further developing these resources to include more topics for the 2014/2015 academic year.

### **3.6 Teacher Training**

During the 2013/2014 academic year the Primary School Coaches Manager and the Primary School Coaches began the process of designing a Grassroots Fundamental Award. The new course has been designed to sit within the Irish FA Coach Education framework and can now be delivered to teachers, students and community/club coaches. Unfortunately, this course could not be implement this academic year but the Primary School Coaches will be tasked with delivering one course in the Primary School environment that can take place during teacher training days. This 3 hour course is a mixture of theory and practical and will be aimed at teachers currently involved in the Curriculum Sports Programme, but more importantly offered to teachers within the school who have yet to benefit from the programme. Other courses will be delivered in a community environment during school holiday periods. The course outcomes are as follows:

- To fine-tune observational and analytical skills to coach good movement patterns – whether for a specific sport or in multi-skill sessions.
- To help youngsters master the fundamental techniques of movement – from stability to rhythm and from acceleration to jumping and kicking.
- To understand how the FUNdamentals can be adapted to suit different needs (eg disabled children) and different environments (eg schools and clubs), and promote lifelong participation in sport.

### 3.7 Irish FA Primary School Coaches In-Service Training

An IFA/GAA Joint In-Service Training Day was hosted in partnership with Sport NI at the University of Ulster at Jordanstown on 3rd September 2013. This Children's Coaching Event was entitled "Excellent Coach, Every Time, For Children" and drew together a range of specialist speakers to deliver a series of workshops in the following areas:

- Developing Game Sense and Quality Movement Skills through Sport-Related Coaching
- Coaching for Creativity, Learning and Fun
- Guide to Development Better Connection with Young People and Young Athletes
- Coaching for a Growth Mindset

This day proved to be hugely valuable learning experience for the coaches and was also an excellent opportunity for the Irish FA and GAA coaches to work together and share experiences of their current roles.

In December the 30 Primary School Coaches took part in a Special Education Movement Course that was delivered by SAQ International. The course was aimed at developing fundamental motor abilities, balance, co-ordination and complete control of body movement for children with physical and learning disabilities. The purpose of this training was to assist the Primary School Coaches in being able to work with children with a disability within mainstream education.



The Primary School Coaches took part in two days of training on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> April. A one day Disability Inclusion Training course was delivered by Disability Sports NI at Stranmillis College, Belfast. This course provided attendees with the knowledge and understanding to make their programme and activities more inclusive of people with disabilities through a variety of theory and practical exercises. Autism awareness training was provided by Autism NI at Windsor Avenue, Belfast. This workshop provided the attendees with an introduction to the main features associated with Autism Spectrum Disorder and an awareness of how to adapt session delivery to accommodate participants with Autism Spectrum Disorder.



### 3.8 End of Year Festivals

Towards the end of the school year the Irish FA Primary School Coaches held a number of school based festivals which brought together either entire school year groups or neighbouring schools for a full day of fun activities. This year the theme was based around the FIFA World Cup. 20 festivals took place over 4 days with over 3,500 children taking part in World Cup matches and coaching sessions. The events took place across all five Education and Library Board areas and all children were given the opportunity to learn about the countries involved in the tournament and some even got to hold the famous gold trophy.



The festivals were a great way for the Irish FA Primary School Coaches and the pupils involved in the programme to celebrate the school year just past. The hope was that all the children involved in these events would be inspired by the World Cup and the other great sporting events taking place in the summer and as result encourage them to stay activity over the summer months.



### 3.9 Fit Families Project

The Irish FA Primary School Coaches delivered another year of successful 'Fit Families' initiatives during the 2013/2014 academic year. The purpose of these projects was to bring families together through exercise and lifestyle management. The project provided opportunities to reinforce what was taught during curriculum time and ensure that parents had a strong grasp of the importance of Fundamental Movement Skills and the academic attainment benefits of participating in physical activity. On a practical level the project provided opportunities to provide sample ideas to help foster lifelong participation in exercise and physical activity with little cost, need for space or equipment.



30 of these events took place across Northern Ireland within the Primary School setting and with over 300 parents attending. It is envisaged that there is potential to expand the delivery of these after school events and more have been planned for September and the 2014/2015 academic year.



## CONCLUSION

The Curriculum Sports Programme continues to play an integral role in many of the schools throughout Northern Ireland. The programme has become an established and trusted component in the delivery of the Physical Education Curriculum. The mentoring element of the programme with the school teachers will have a long term impact on the standard of Physical Education delivery within Primary Schools in Northern Ireland.

Evidence has been gathered and documented within this report to show the positive impact the Curriculum Sports Programme is having across pupils, teachers and schools. Information collect through the evaluation forms clearly shows that teachers and principals believe the Curriculum Sports Programme has had a positive impact on improving pupils' agility, balance, coordination, self confidence, self esteem and the ability to work as part of a team. Bespoke testing measurements also indicate participation in the Curriculum Sports Programme improves performance in a range of agility, balance and coordination tasks and fundamental sporting skills.

The evaluations have also supported that the Curriculum Sports Programme is having the desired effect on improving teacher's knowledge and understanding of Physical Literacy and Fundamental Movement Skills and is developing them in terms of their own Physical Education delivery. School Principals also overwhelmingly agree that the Curriculum Sports Programme is meeting and surpassing the objectives set out by the Department of Education NI and strongly agree that initiatives such as this should be continued.

As year on year health figures for Northern Ireland are produced and conclude shocking results, it now more important than ever that we produce citizens that are physically literate, so that they have the ability, confidence and knowledge to engage in physical/sporting pursuits that will develop long term participation rates and in some way help counteract the health problems society faces. The Irish FA believes that the Curriculum Sports Programme is an important element in addressing this issue. If children grow competent in Fundamental Movement Skills, research has shown them to have a higher level of physical literacy and have a more positive outlook toward sport and physical activity. As a result these children are more likely to maintain an active and health lifestyle throughout their life.

The Irish FA thanks the Department of Education for their continued support and is confident that the Curriculum Sports Programme will be a massive success in the 2014/2015 academic year.



# APPENDICES

# Irish FA / DENI Curriculum Sports Programme

## Teacher Evaluation



School Name

### 1. Would you describe yourself as a Physical Education specialist? *(Please answer)*

Yes

No

### 2. At the beginning of the 2014/15 school year describe your understanding of Physical Literacy/Fundamental Movement Skills. *(Please answer)*

Poor

Below Average

Average

Good

Excellent

### 3. At the end of the 2014/15 school year describe your understanding of Physical Literacy/Fundamental Movement Skills. *(Please answer)*

Poor

Below Average

Average

Good

Excellent

### 4. How would you rate the level of support the Irish FA Primary School Coach provided to you during the school year? *(Please answer)*

Poor

Below Average

Average

Good

Excellent

# Irish FA / DENI Curriculum Sports Programme

## Teacher Evaluation



### 5. How would you rate the Curriculum Sports Programme in relation to supporting you as a teacher in the delivery of Physical Education? *(Please answer)*

Poor

Below Average

Average

Good

Excellent

### 6. Do you feel there should be more emphasis put on teacher support within the Curriculum Sports Programme? *(Please answer)*

More emphasis on children

Programme balance is correct

More emphasis on teacher development

### 7. What further assistance would you require in order to improve your Physical Education delivery? *(Please answer – you can select more than one option)*

Resources (lesson plans, video content etc)

Education (coaching awards)

More experience with corrective feedback (mentoring support)

Information sharing with other teachers

None

### 8. Please provide a short comment on your experience of the Curriculum Sports Programme this year. *(Please answer)*

Completed forms should be sent to  
Jonathan Michael, Irish FA, Unit B, Adelaide Business Centre, 4 Apollo Road, Belfast, BT12 6HP

# Irish FA / DENI Curriculum Sports Programme

Principal Evaluation



School Name

**1. Do you feel that the Curriculum Sports Programme has benefited the pupils in the area of Physical Literacy/Fundamental Movement Skills?** *(Please answer)*

Yes

No

Undecided

**2. Do you feel that the Curriculum Sports Programme has benefited the pupils in the area of self confidence/esteem?** *(Please answer)*

Yes

No

Undecided

**3. Do you feel that the Curriculum Sports Programme has benefited the pupils in the area of cross curricular development?** *(Please answer)*

Yes

No

Undecided

**4. Do you feel that the Curriculum Sports Programme has improved/enhanced your school Physical Education programme?** *(Please answer)*

Yes

No

Undecided

**5. Do you feel that the Curriculum Sports Programme and the Primary School Coach has improved/enhanced your teachers understanding and future delivery of Physical Education?** *(Please answer)*

Yes

No

Undecided

# Irish FA / DENI Curriculum Sports Programme

Principal Evaluation



**6. Do you feel that further investment should be made by the Department of Education in developing children's physical literacy/physical activity opportunities?**

*(Please answer)*

Yes

No

Undecided

**7. On average, how many hours of Physical Education would a pupil in your school receive a week during curriculum time? (without the involvement of the Curriculum Sports Programme)** *(Please answer)*

Less than 1 hour

1 – 2 hours

2 – 3 hours

3 – 4 hours

4 – 5 hours

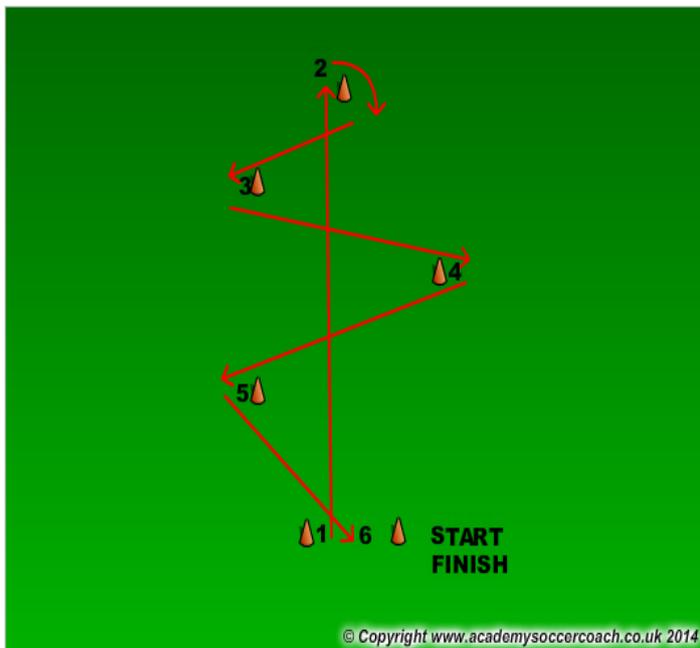
More than 5 hours

**8. Please provide a short comment on your experience of the Curriculum Sports Programme this year.** *(Please answer)*

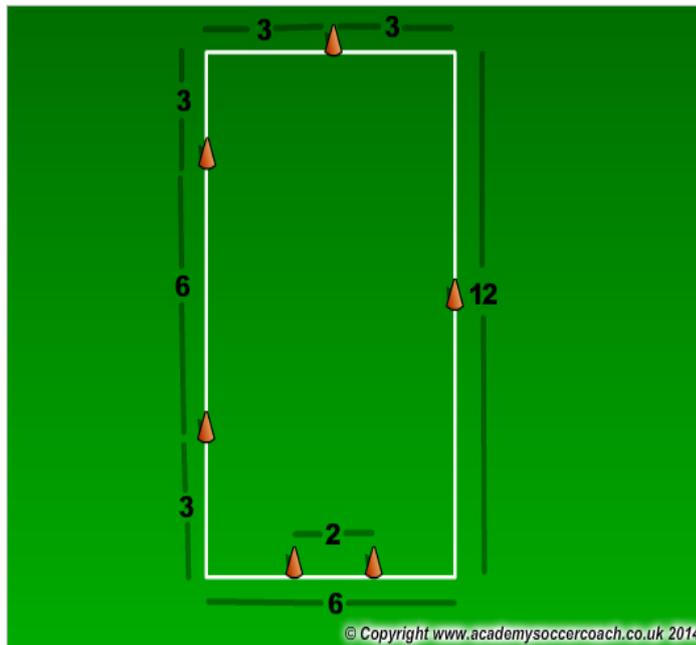
Completed forms should be sent to  
Jonathan Michael, Irish FA, Unit B, Adelaide Business Centre, 4 Apollo Road, Belfast, BT12 6HP

### Agility – Modified Zig-Zag Test

Course Path



Course Measurements



#### Equipment

- 6 cones
- Stopwatch
- Measuring tape

#### Procedure

Set the cones out as pictured above. Pupil must complete the course as quickly as possible. On 'Go' pupil sprints straight and around the left side of the cone furthest away. On their way back the pupils must zig zag around the cones in order as indicated above. Pupils must go around each of the cones and will finish with a sprint through the two start cones. The pupil's time is recorded to 1 decimal place e.g. 12.8s.

## **Standing Balance Test**



### **Equipment**

- Stopwatch

### **Procedure**

The pupil stands on one leg for as long as possible. The timing stops when the elevated foot touches the ground or the person hops or otherwise loses their balance position. The better of their two attempts is recorded. Repeat the test on the other leg. The pupil's best times on each leg are recorded (Times recorded to 1 decimal place). When balancing the pupils elevated leg should not be touching their standing leg.

### Coordination - Toe Taps



#### Equipment

- 4 cones
- One size 3 leather football
- Stopwatch

#### Procedure

The pupil will stand over the ball, in the centre of the 4x4 yard area. The pupil will perform as many toe taps as they can in 20 seconds, alternating feet, and using the sole of their shoes. Any attempted toe taps that do not touch the ball will not be counted. If the pupil/ball leaves the 4x4 area they may use their hands to lift the ball back to the centre of the area and continue with their turn. The pupil will get two attempts and the better of these attempts are recorded.

### Dribbling Test – Slalom



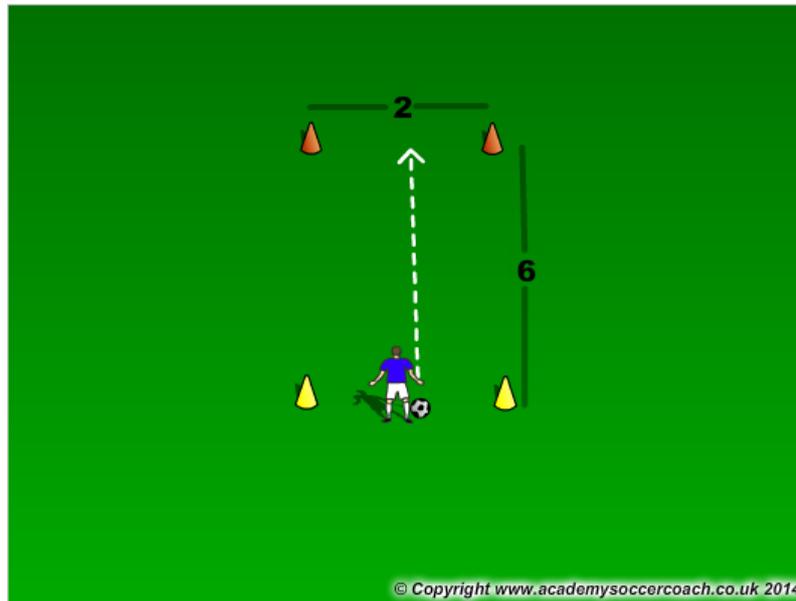
#### Equipment

- One size 3 leather football
- 6 cones
- Stopwatch
- Measuring tape

#### Procedure

Place cones as pictured above (total distance 8 yards). On 'Go' pupil must dribble the ball, using only their feet, through each of the 2 yard gates in order. When the pupil reaches the top cone, they must dribble around the top cone and turn and dribble back through each of the gates. If a gate is missed the pupil must dribble back to the gate they have missed and continue. The time is stopped when the pupil dribbles the ball through the two start cones.

## Passing Test



### Equipment

- One size 3 leather football
- Cones
- Measuring tape

### Procedure

Pupils start between two start cones and have 10 attempts to pass the ball through the target gate (5 attempts with left foot and 5 attempts with right foot). Pupils are instructed to complete the passes remembering to use correct technique. Pupil scores a point only if the pass goes through the gate without touching the cones and if the pass is executed using the inside of the foot.

# Irish FA / DENI Curriculum Sports Programme

## Baseline Measurements



Measurement 1 - School 1						Measurement 2 - School 1							
	Agility	Balance		Coordination	Dribble	Passing		Agility	Balance		Coordination	Dribble	Passing
Foundation - 1		R	L				Foundation - 1		R	L			
Foundation - 2		R	L				Foundation - 2		R	L			
Key Stage 1 - 1		R	L				Key Stage 1 - 1		R	L			
Key Stage 1 - 2		R	L				Key Stage 1 - 2		R	L			
Measurement 1 - School 2						Measurement 2 - School 2							
	Agility	Balance		Coordination	Dribble	Passing		Agility	Balance		Coordination	Dribble	Passing
Foundation - 1		R	L				Foundation - 1		R	L			
Foundation - 2		R	L				Foundation - 2		R	L			
Key Stage 1 - 1		R	L				Key Stage 1 - 1		R	L			
Key Stage 1 - 2		R	L				Key Stage 1 - 2		R	L			
Measurement 1 - School 3						Measurement 2 - School 3							
	Agility	Balance		Coordination	Dribble	Passing		Agility	Balance		Coordination	Dribble	Passing
Foundation - 1		R	L				Foundation - 1		R	L			
Foundation - 2		R	L				Foundation - 2		R	L			
Key Stage 1 - 1		R	L				Key Stage 1 - 1		R	L			
Key Stage 1 - 2		R	L				Key Stage 1 - 2		R	L			
Primary School Coach													





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