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# PE IN ALTERNATIVE PROVISION SCHOOLS

## WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

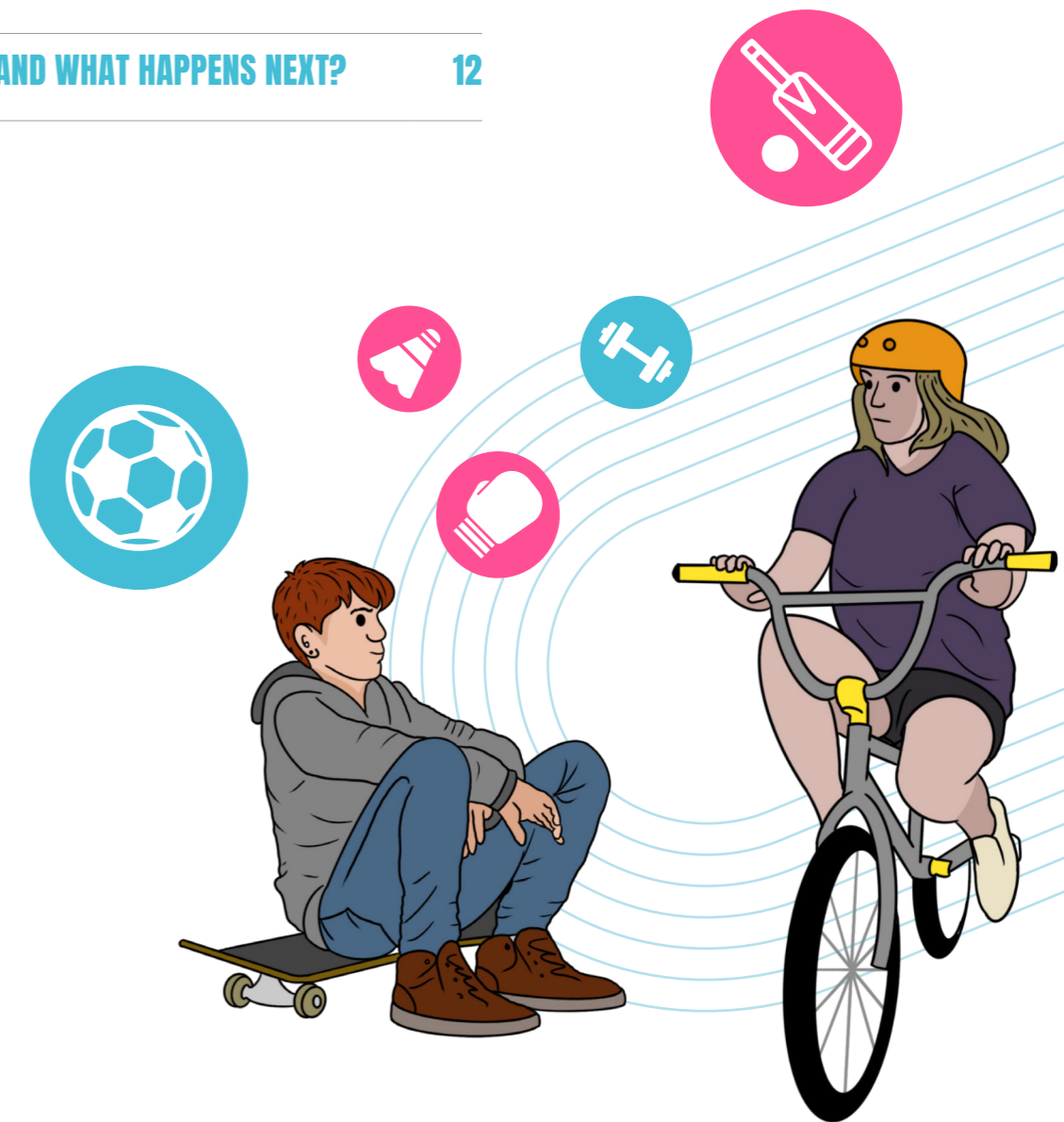


Thomas Quarmby,  
Anthony Maher,  
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## PROJECT OVERVIEW

### WHAT IS THE REPORT ABOUT?

We wanted to find out about physical education (PE) in alternative provision schools. We also wanted to explore what teachers and young people think and feel about PE and how it can be made better.

#### We had four questions we wanted to answer:



- Q1** In England, how many alternative provision schools teach PE, who teaches it, and what is taught?
- Q2** What do teachers and young people think and feel about PE?
- Q3** What supports or prevents young people from engaging in PE?
- Q4** How well supported is PE in alternative provision schools?

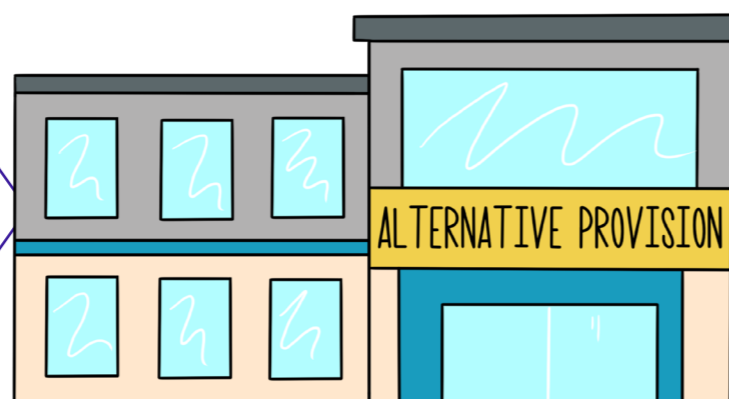
We wrote this report to say thank you to everyone who gave their time to share with us their experiences, thoughts, and feelings. This research would not have been possible without your help.

### WHY DID WE DO THE RESEARCH?

In 2022, there were around 35,600 young people going to school in alternative provision settings across England. We know that PE (and physical activity and sport) can help provide a number of physical and mental health benefits, increase confidence and develop social skills. Research has shown that PE can help build friendships between young people and with young people and adults.

For young people in alternative provision schools PE can even be used to support their transfer back to 'mainstream' schools and can promote positive behaviour.

However, we actually know very little about young people's experiences of PE in alternative provision. We don't know if they are getting the benefits that PE can offer. So, we wanted to find out more about the experiences of young people in alternative provision, and their teachers who deliver PE. This helped us to work out what works well, and how we might help to make things even better.



### WHAT DID WE DO?

We carried out our research from September 2021 to June 2022. This research was made up of 3 stages.



#### STAGE 1: >>>>

We created a questionnaire that was sent out to all alternative provision schools in England to see how many offered PE as part of their school curriculum and what it involved. 48 schools completed our questionnaire. These responses came from pupil referral units (PRUs), alternative provision academies, free schools, hospital schools, and specialist providers.

#### STAGE 2: >>>>

We spoke to 29 adults who taught PE, or who were responsible for those that taught PE, in alternative provision schools. This included 14 individual one-on-one interviews and one large group interview with 15 adults. These conversations explored some of the key messages that came from the questionnaire results in stage 1, and what they thought the benefits of PE were for young people.

#### STAGE 3: >>>>

We spoke to 25 young people from four different alternative provision schools in very different locations across England (e.g., 1 x London, 2 x North East and 1 x North West). These young people were aged between 11–16 years and included 20 males and 5 females. The conversations with young people included a range of different activities including drawing, mapping, character creation and the use of graffiti boards.

Below are different types of activities we used when speaking with young people. For example, Figures 1 and 2 are maps drawn by young people, with stars (\*) indicating the spaces they engaged in physical activity and sport as part of PE.

Figure 1: Map of a hospital school

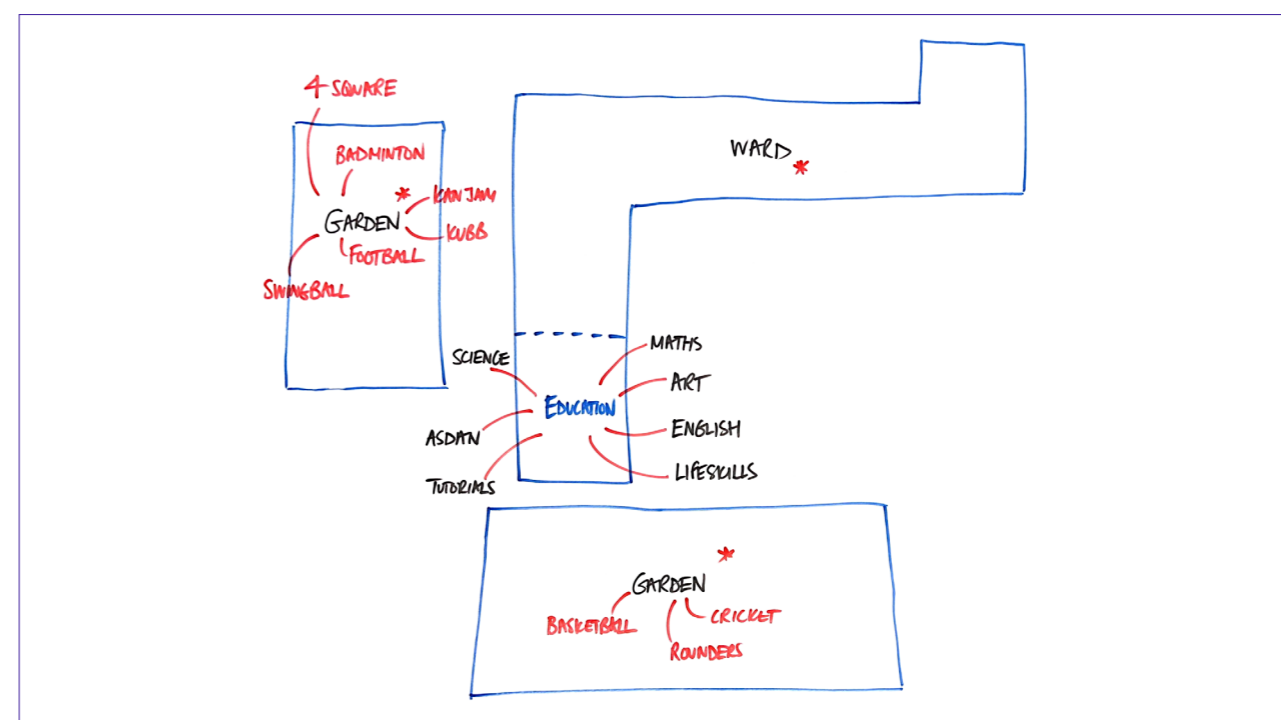
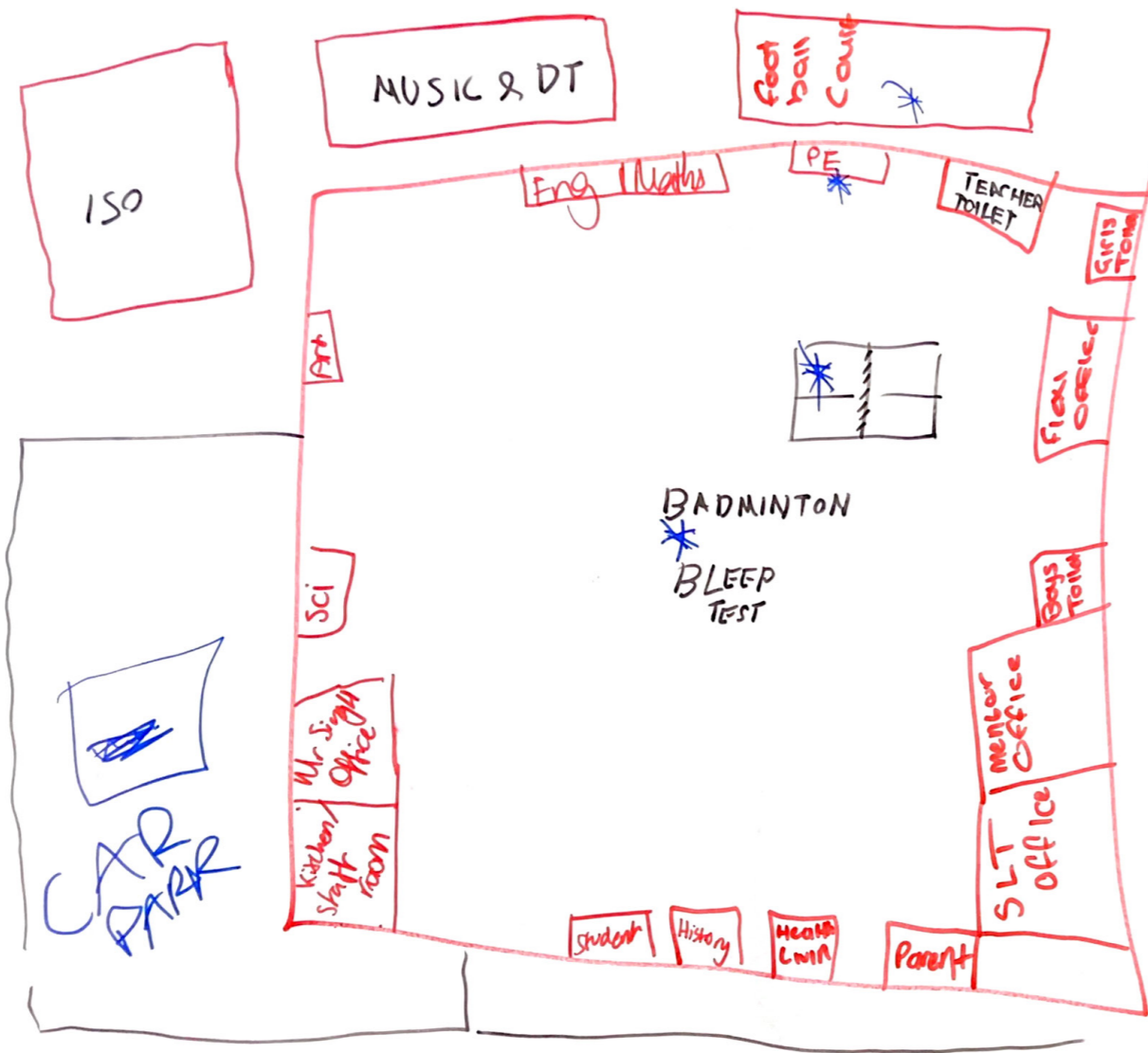
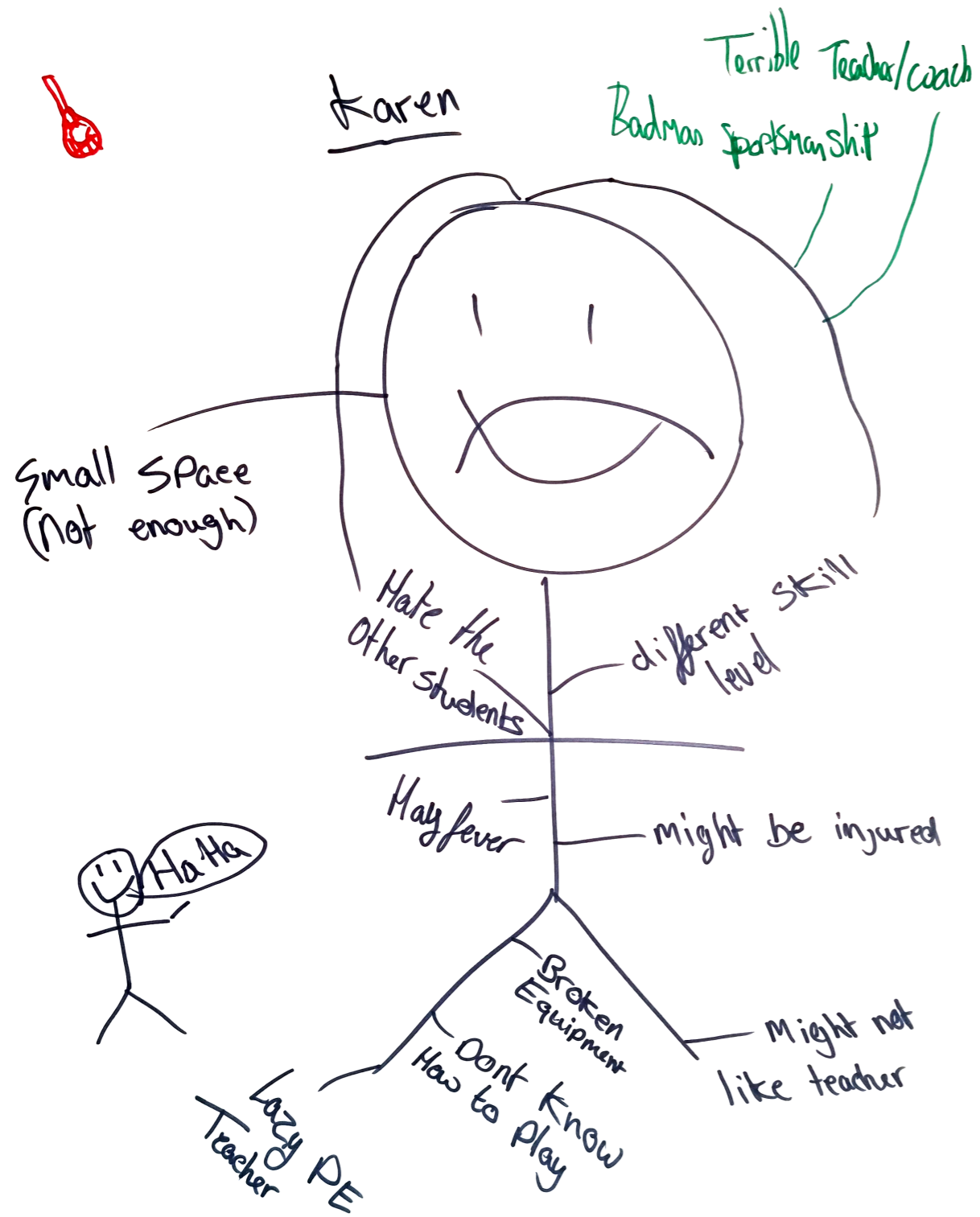


Figure 2: Map of an alternative provision school



**Why not have a go?** Draw a map of your school in the space below and mark the spaces and places you do any sport or physical activity.

Figure 3: Character creation of a negative experience of PE in an alternative provision school

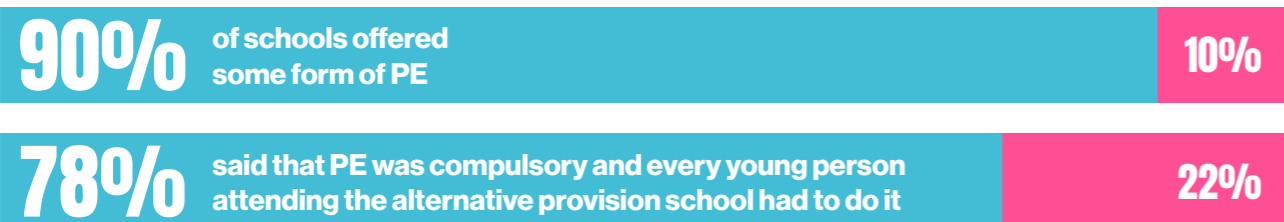


**Why not have a go?** Draw a character in the space below and write or draw around it the things that would make for a positive experience of PE in alternative provision schools

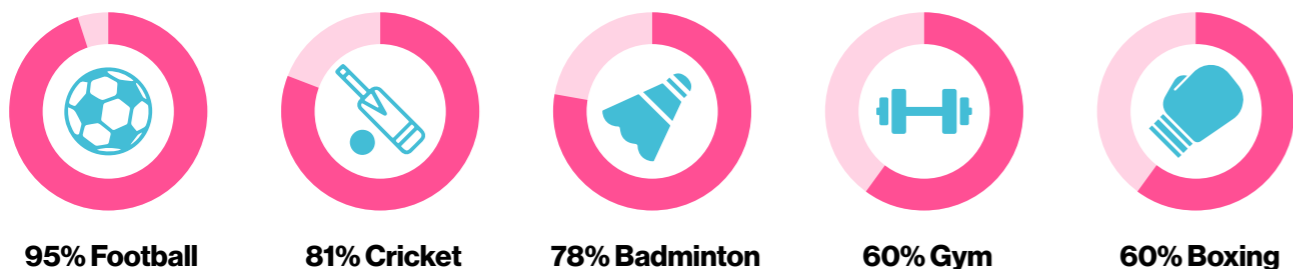
# ADULT'S VOICES

## WHAT DID WE FIND?

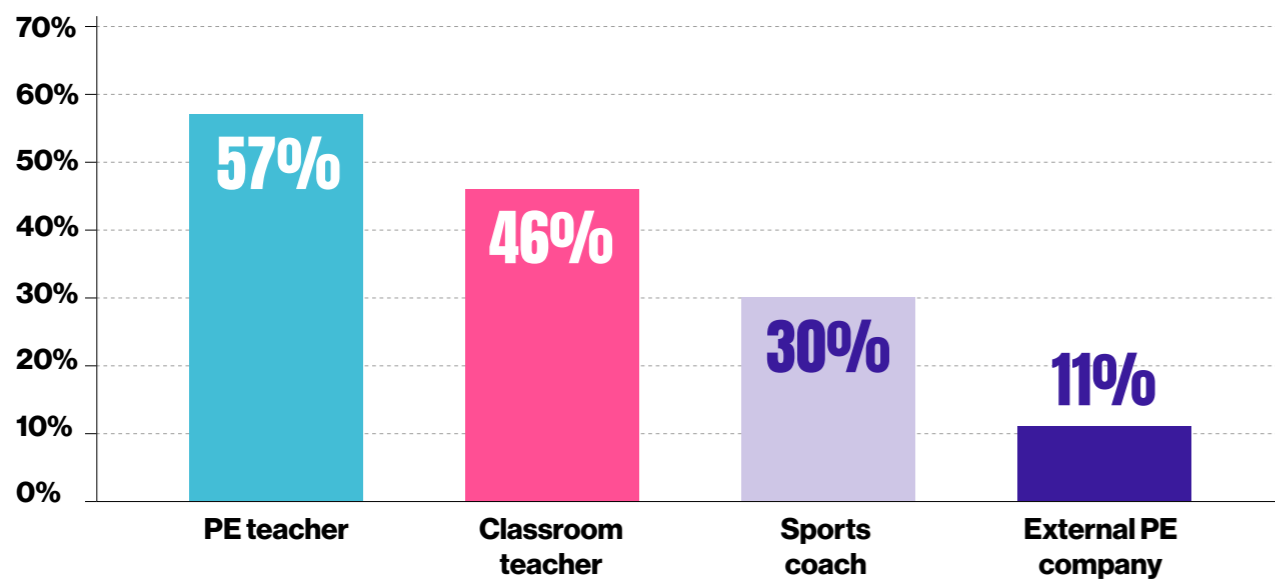
### HOW MANY ALTERNATIVE PROVISION SCHOOLS TEACH PE



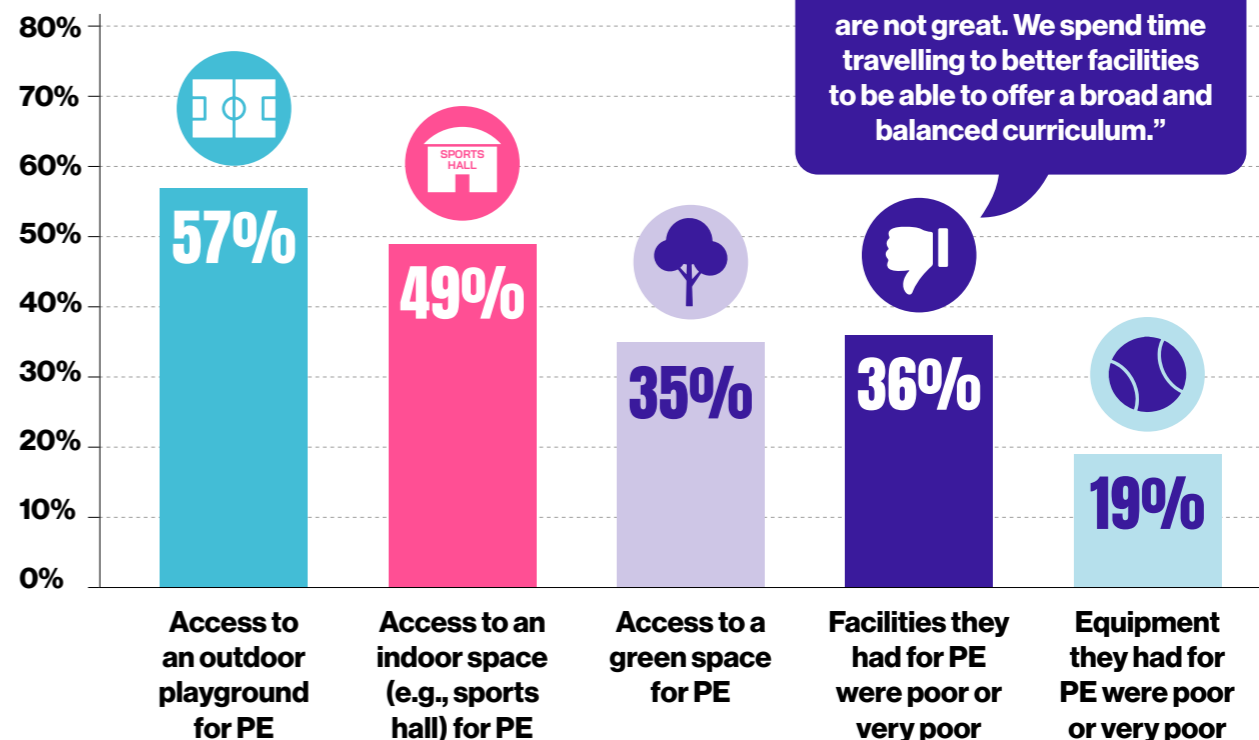
### THE MOST COMMON ACTIVITIES IN PE WERE



### WHO TEACHES PE IN ALTERNATIVE PROVISION SCHOOL



### EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES



### WHY SHOULD YOUNG PEOPLE DO PE?

✓ The **MOST** important reasons for PE were identified as:

- 51%** : Helping to develop social skills
- 49%** : Improving physical and mental health
- 41%** : Encouraging lifelong physical activity

✗ The **LEAST** important reason for PE was:

- 72%** : Providing an opportunity to compete against each other

### WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF DELIVERING PE?

Adults identified things that make teaching PE difficult in alternative provision schools. These included:

- ✗ Teacher's lack of confidence
- ✗ Re-engaging pupils with past negative experiences of PE
- ✗ A lack of space
- ✗ Poor equipment
- ✗ Transport to community venues
- ✗ Lack of funding

*“The lack of facilities prevents us from delivering lesson onsite, meaning we have to travel and spend money using local facilities.”*

## WHAT DID WE FIND?

### YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES

After speaking to young people from four different alternative provision schools, we put together some short snippets that reflect their voices. These represent what makes for a good or bad experience in PE.

#### ✕ NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

"PE can be really fun... but it's not always. I don't like it when it's really noisy. You know, when there's too much noise and everyone's shouting. Shouting at me, shouting at the game, just constantly shouting. Sometimes, other students are booing and that makes you feel crap, or if you fall over or trip up, everyone laughs and makes fun of you! I had a real fear of being made fun of in PE and that's why I never used to like it back in mainstream school."

"Getting hit in the face when we play dodgeball – yeah, I never liked that. And I used to hate how repetitive the sports were – it's just the same thing over and over again and the teacher always assumes you can do it, or you want to do it. And then when you can't, you feel like crap. Like they always thought I wanted to do football, but I never did. For football, they used to always pick teams and I'd always get picked last. I always felt like I wasn't gifted or like good enough to do PE well – I just didn't think I could do it!"

"In mainstream, I used to hate being removed from PE. I was only at the school a few weeks and I never got to do PE – not once. It sucks! If you don't have the right kit, you couldn't do it. We always had to wear a certain kit – it was never what we wanted to wear or what we felt comfortable wearing. And like, if your kit doesn't fit you or your shoes are ripped, like everyone notices and then you get bullied. I used to hate being bullied in PE, it made me feel worthless!"

"PE would be so much better if we had more space... Like we don't have the right space now, there's only a small indoor space and like nothing really outdoors like big open spaces or that. Outdoors, we've got some like cages, like fenced areas to play next to the car park, but they aren't that tidy. When the weathers rubbish and you can't go outdoors it's too cramped indoors. Like, if we had more space, we could do more stuff, we could do so many more activities."



#### ✓ POSITIVE EXPERIENCES OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

"I really like it when you score a goal, or nail a basket, or something like that, when you can show off to everyone and show them that you are good at PE. Like, you can show them that you have some skill, like you can run and keep running, you've got good stamina. That's really important to me that I can show them that I am a good player."

"PE is way better here, way better. Like for me, it's less competitive. Like, it can still be competitive if you want it to be, but in comparison to mainstream, it's less competitive and also less pressured. Like it's not just the same activities done over and over again. Here, you're not forced to do activities, like you can choose, and you have options. We could do individual activities with some bits of challenge, but not too much. I think it's good to have some challenge coz it keeps me focused so like some competition is fine but not physical if you get me. Not like me against you, but like, can I beat my score. And like, some of the activities we do in small teams which is great because it gives us a shared experience and something we can then chat about later. Like, I said earlier, I never felt good enough to do PE, but some of the small, individual activities we do here I really enjoy."

"I think like, having supportive teachers is a massive plus. No doubt. That's what makes PE good. If you don't have supportive teachers, then what's the point. They could be like super sporty, but they don't have to be. Like, it's just really nice when they take part and play the games with you. It helps if they're decent – you know, like funny, approachable and you can have some good banter with them. I think it really helps having a supportive teacher, someone who isn't biased, like doesn't judge you on what you did before or what you couldn't do before. They take time to get to know you and to explain things to you clearly, like how a new game is played. So yeah, having like supportive teachers is a biggie!"

"I like PE when it's social. Like, when you interact with other people who are supportive of you and what you're trying to do. And like, when you can do things with your friends. Like doing stuff in teams – it doesn't have to be you know, like, not necessarily competitive stuff – but like other stuff in teams. I can then help, I can contribute. That makes me feel wanted... it's a nice feeling."





## WHAT DOES IT MEAN AND WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

**MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE TO ENSURE ALL YOUNG PEOPLE IN ALTERNATIVE PROVISION SCHOOLS HAVE POSITIVE EXPERIENCES IN PE. WE WANT YOUNG PEOPLE TO...**

**Be helped to feel a sense of achievement**

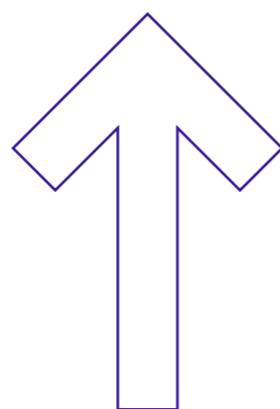
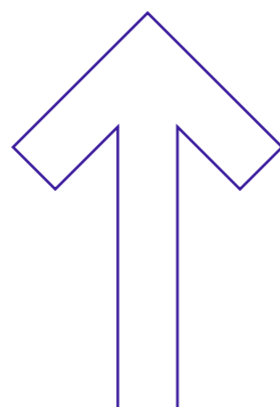
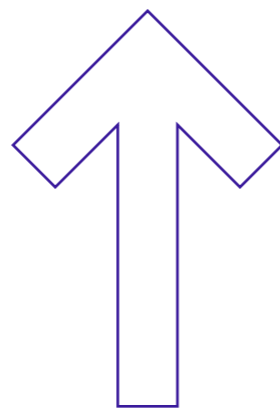
**Have the best space available to engage in activities**

**Have supportive and relatable teachers**

**Be able to play with friends**

**Have some input and choice over the type of activities**

**Have the opportunity to achieve their personal best through meaningful competitive experiences**



### TO SUPPORT THIS, WE ARE CURRENTLY WORKING ON TWO MAIN THINGS:

- 1** We are trying to talk to government to change their policy and ensure there is sufficient space within alternative provision schools for young people to engage in PE
- 2** We are bringing together teachers from alternative provision schools so we can share what works and what doesn't work to help teachers better support positive experiences for pupils.

### FIND OUT MORE

Our full report can be viewed here: [www.youthsporttrust.org/news-insight/research/the-role-and-value-of-physical-education-and-sport-in-alternative-provision-schools](http://www.youthsporttrust.org/news-insight/research/the-role-and-value-of-physical-education-and-sport-in-alternative-provision-schools)

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Youth Sport Trust, funded by Sport England National Lottery investment, supported this research study to enhance the inclusivity of the School Games programme. We would like to thank all the individual participants who gave their time to take part in the study, and share their honest, insightful, and reflective responses. This includes those lead practitioners (e.g., those responsible for delivering physical education and sport in alternative provision schools, and members of senior leadership teams), and the young people themselves, who were enrolled in alternative provision at the time of the study. Graphic images have been designed by [@Lesleysharpedraws](https://www.instagram.com/lesleysharpedraws).



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# PE IN ALTERNATIVE PROVISION SCHOOLS

## WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Thank you for taking the time to read this report. If you have any questions or want to find out more please get in touch:

✉ [T.Quarmby@leedsbeckett.ac.uk](mailto:T.Quarmby@leedsbeckett.ac.uk)



Braille and large print versions are available on request