



# ACTIVE SCHOOLS FRAMEWORK

Your Active Schools Framework Handbook

# HELLO AND WELCOME





# Welcome!

Welcome to the Active Schools Framework (ASF) Handbook. We are keen to help you with creating an Active School and meeting the needs of all children.

Developing children's social and emotional wellbeing through physical activity is key towards being an Active School and the handbook offers suggestions on how this can be achieved. It also recognises the essential roles that school staff, parents and communities play towards achieving this, and helping children to lead happy, active and healthy lives.

Regular physical activity is important for children's mental and physical wellbeing and academic performance. Unfortunately, too many children are not moving enough.

The Active Lives Survey, Sport England data shows that 46.8% of children and young people (3.3 million) are meeting the new Chief Medical Officer guidelines of taking part in sport and physical activity for an average of 60 minutes or more every day. Meanwhile 29.0% (2.1m) do less than an average of 30 minutes a day.

Whilst school systems and teachers can play a central role in providing high quality physical activity and transform this statistic, at present little guidance exists on what a true whole school physical activity approach should look like.

Nationally, researchers, policy makers and practitioners from the UK are laying the groundwork for getting there and this handbook will support schools with the initial steps needed towards building an active school and to create physical activity experiences that encompass friendship, fun and family, so that children have a love of moving.

We hope you find it useful. If you do have further questions or would like more detailed information on any of the sections covered, then please get in touch.

Thank you for making a difference to children and young people's lives, and we look forward to working with you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Evans". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Matt Evans**  
Chief Executive of Active Devon



# About Us

Active Devon is a community focused, non-profit organisation dedicated to inspiring and supporting people in Devon to be active. We believe that regardless of age, ability or background, being active is central to living healthier, happier and more connected lives.

To deliver our mission we work with and support an extensive network of partner organisations and individuals, to develop the right opportunities for people to start and stay being active.

If you would like to read more about the work that we do, then please visit our website [activedevon.org](http://activedevon.org).

# About Our CYP Team

Our vision is that children and young people (CYP) in Devon are physically, socially and emotionally confident, competent and motivated to be active for life. And our mission is to work in partnership with others to drive positive change for all CYP across Devon

We will do this through creating opportunities, support and experience by:

- 1) Facilitating
- 2) Influencing
- 3) Leading

We work collaboratively across the whole education sector and examples of our work include facilitating education network groups and delivering bespoke training and development opportunities across the sector.



# Introducing the ASF

Introducing the Active Schools Framework (ASF) for improved wellbeing, curricula and school experiences. Designed for all educators who have contact with children and young people in an educational setting.

At Active Devon we believe that if schools develop an Active School then the wellbeing of the whole school will improve, and the school will be able to make a difference to their environment and create opportunities to improve concentration, attainment, and behaviour.

The ASF supports schools with ideas to embed health and wellbeing through movement into the whole school day and not just during PE lessons. We also recognise within the framework the importance staff wellbeing can play and the role that active families can make to improving the wellbeing of pupils and the local community.

Every school is unique in its place and there is no 'one' solution. What we want to do is support all schools with the small steps needed to implement an Active School Framework.

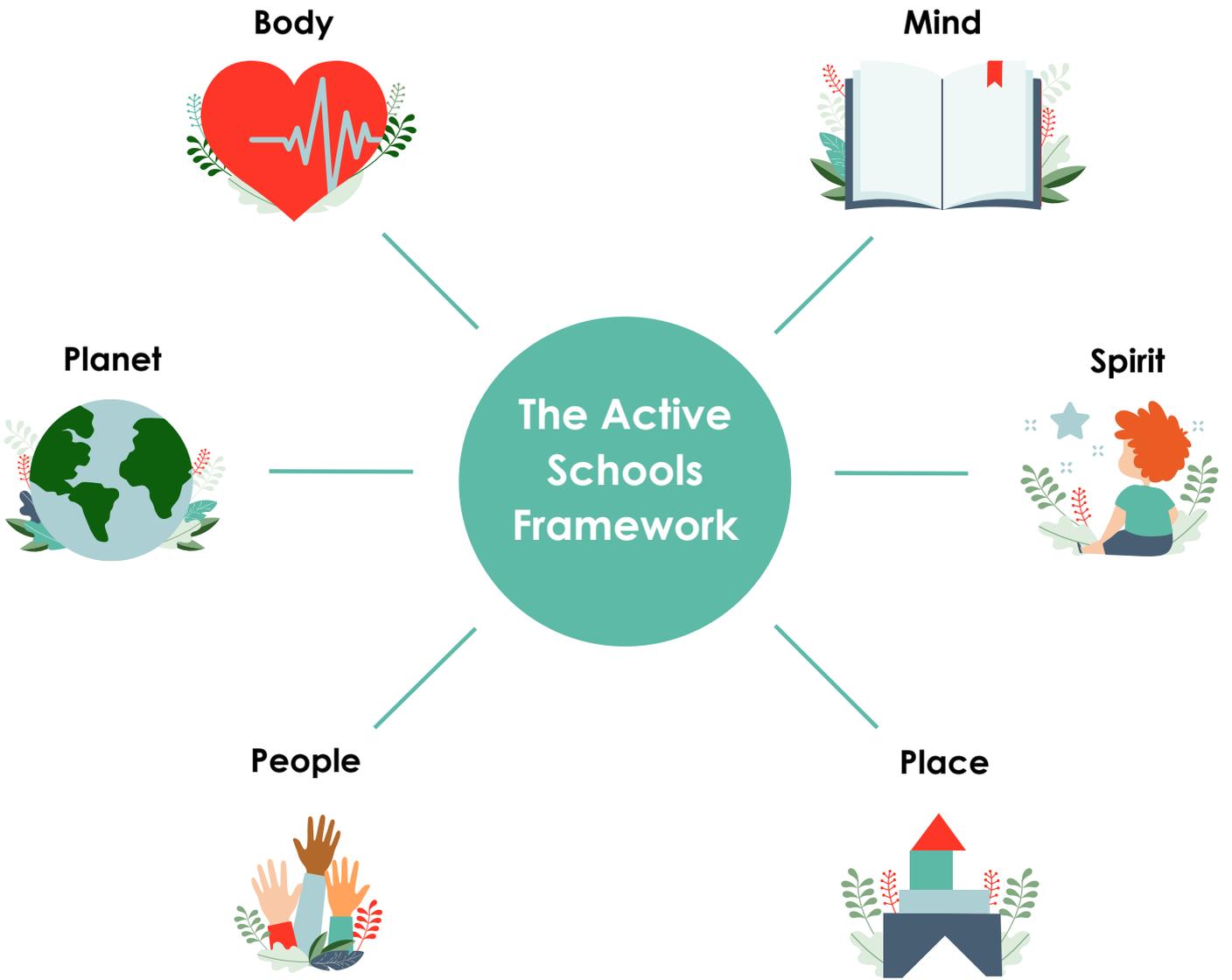
Our inspiration has been supplemented by the wheel of wellbeing where wellness can be achieved through six universal themes.

Each theme is individually recognised to give examples of how physical activity can help but it must be recognised that **wellbeing is holistic**, and the universal themes are connected.

Ultimately, we want to see children taking responsibility for their own wellbeing (**Body, Mind and Spirit**) so they can make a difference to the world around them (**People, Place and Planet**).

You can see the Active Schools Framework on the next page.

Please also read on for more information about these six critical elements of an Active Schools Framework.



# Overview of the ASF

## Body

At any age, the bodily benefits of movement and of being active is huge. Yet for children, this is dramatically increased due to both short-term health and wellbeing gains and to the embedding of behaviours that will support a long life.

Schools that build physical activity into the fabric of their culture offer their pupils the opportunity to grow stronger, more agile, and more resilient bodies with stamina, flexibility and balance that will likely stay with them for a lifetime.

## Mind

Perhaps the most obvious reason schools exist is to exercise the young minds of our community, to embed learning, exploration and problem solving as key themes in the early lives of children.

It is well established that active children do better when it comes to comprehension, concentration, and a host of educational outcomes across the board. Active Schools are therefore better performing schools.

## Spirit

Movement and being active, especially in children, encourages exploration, learning and creativity, as well as connectivity and empathy with others and an appreciation of nature and space.

Active schools offer their pupils the opportunity to benefit collectively, and as a culture to thrive. Physical activity is well proven to have positive mental health and wellbeing outcomes, that make for more positive, connected individuals.

## Place

Having a sense of place is important for anyone to feel true belonging. Yet for children the stability of a safe, welcoming, and inspiring place is crucial for development, particularly when it comes to relationships and confidence in later life.

Schools that consider the friendliness of their atmosphere, and how the physical architecture supports and engages their pupils, thrive when it comes to pupil wellbeing, creativity, and attainment.

## People

As everyone is different, a focus on people is critical to improving individual health and wellbeing. A strong community is proven to dramatically increase developmental learning and good wellbeing in children.

Schools are the centre of many communities, but strong communities require energy, empathy, and solidarity, and improving communication and a supportive culture goes a long, long way.

## Planet

Children who engage with nature are known to do better than those who do not. Learning about the planet and our environment are pillars of good wellbeing, and a strong special cognition.

Schools that integrate outdoor play and learning and showcase the wisdom of our interconnected relationship with nature, open a world of possibilities for their pupils.





# Body (Be Active)

Physical activity is important for both the physical and mental development of children, especially during the first five years of life. It's during this time that parents and educators should begin to encourage children to engage in physical activities and build good habits that can last a lifetime.

All young people need the chance to be playful, creative and have fun. We need to provide physical opportunities that match individual physical ability so this can develop and grow at an individual pace.

Schools that build physical activity into the fabric of their culture offer their pupils the opportunity to grow stronger, more agile, and more resilient bodies with stamina, flexibility and balance that is likely to stay with them for a lifetime.

## Examples

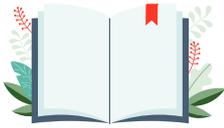
To create an Active School through the theme of body, look to try and increase the opportunities to move more during the whole school day. This can vary from structured PE and competition or getting children to be more active during lessons and breaks.

## Further Information and Reading

You will need plenty of ideas and support to transform your setting into a truly Active School. Get in touch as we can send ideas and resources to help you with this.

## Key Questions/Suggestions

- Do you feel your pupils sit too much throughout a school day and it's impacting their wellbeing?
- Do you know what digital active classroom tools and resources are available to you?
- Did you know you can measure the activity levels and interests of your pupils to help build a clear plan?
- Have you considered setting up activity clubs for the least active pupils in your school but need help with developing resources and ideas, so they are engaged?
- Do you know of local and national events or competitions available to your school and the impact representing your school has been shown to have?
- Can the PE/PA budget be more effectively spent to encompass whole school improvement through cross curricula links that blend physical activity with, (for example), Active Maths, Active Phonics etc.



# Mind (Keep Learning)

Perhaps the most obvious reason schools exist is to exercise the young minds of our community, to embed learning, exploration and problem solving as key themes in the early lives of children. It is well established that active children do better when it comes to comprehension, concentration, and a host of educational outcomes across the board. Active Schools are therefore better performing schools. Engaged learners are happy learners. We recognise the importance that good mental health plays in today's schools to build confidence and resilience.

## Examples

There are plenty of resources available online to support your change to a more Active School. The Youth Sport Trust (YST) and Association for PE are just a couple of places you might like to start looking.

## Further Information and Reading

Pupils who take part in physical exercises like star jumps or running on the spot during school lessons do better in tests than peers who stick to sedentary learning, according to a UCL-led study. The study also found primary pupils who had physically active lessons acquired four months' extra learning in spelling and maths.

Research by YouGov for the Youth Sport Trust shows 62% of parents think the well-being of pupils is more important than academic achievement. Ali Oliver, YST CEO believes, "What parents want most of all is for their children to be happy and healthy." The YST is clear that schools which foster wellbeing into their culture and climate create the best environment for learning. In a changing world, PE and sport play a vital role in developing the human skills that young people need to thrive. Get in touch with us as we can help get you started with resources and ideas.

## Key Questions/Suggestions

- Do Social, Moral, Spiritual, Culture (SMSC) lessons promote the importance of wellbeing through physical activity?
- Do your pupils find concentrating for long periods difficult? Do you have low level disruption in your class, and have you seen the evidence of how physical activity can improve this?
- How important is the wellbeing of your staff?
- Could your setting invest in training for all staff members to ensure outdoor learning opportunities that support mental wellbeing for staff and pupils are adopted more widely?
- Are you aware of how physical activity resources can also support mental wellbeing?
- Do staff know what training and development opportunities are available to support physical activity or sport?



# Spirit (Give)

Spirit represents the power that giving can have on improving people's wellbeing. It can be seen through fostering random acts of kindness, giving time to volunteer, or just learning to say thank you to others.

Movement and being active, especially in children encourage exploration, learning and creativity, as well as connectivity and empathy with others and an appreciation of nature and space.

Active Schools offer their pupils the opportunity to benefit collectively, and as a culture to thrive. This can be seen through creating opportunities for pupils to volunteer as sport leaders or as playground leaders to help others have fun during active breaks. Giving can also take place within the staff. Many teachers volunteer their time to run activities or senior leaders recognise the importance of giving staff opportunities to grow. Physical activity is well proven to have positive mental health and wellbeing outcomes, that make for more positive, connected individuals. Developing teamwork through sport and activity helps build strong positive relationships.

## Examples

The pupil voice is a crucial element of an Active School. We can support you to introduce this concept into your setting. Get in touch for ideas, resources and support.

## Further Information and Reading

**TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITIES:** Public Health England have published a document to support increasing physical activity in schools. There are other more targeted support documents for minority groups which we will be happy to point you towards. Get in touch with the team here at Active Devon. We are ready to help with ideas and support.

## Key Questions/Suggestions

- How does your school actively listen to the pupil voice? Can you think of ways to raise this in your setting? Need some help? Then please get in touch.
- At a younger age, pupils can foster a culture of giving through the power of unstructured play. Have you considered setting up play opportunities?
- Do any of the parents in your school community have skills they would be willing to share with your young people?
- Have parents been consulted about positive steps to support young people to increase their physical activity levels?
- Have you considered posting links to physical activity and outdoor experiences on your website to continue the rise in family participation and wider community sharing of ideas?



# Place (Take Notice)

Having a sense of place is important for anyone to feel true belonging. For children, the stability of a safe, welcoming, and inspiring place is crucial for development, particularly when it comes to relationships and confidence in later life. Schools that consider the friendliness of their atmosphere, and how the physical architecture supports and engages their students, thrive when it comes to student wellbeing, creativity, and attainment. We would encourage you to take notice to ensure both the physical environment and the emotional environment are safe. Create a space where all are welcomed, respected, accepted and can be themselves, surrounded by the support and love of friends, and feel that family is always around. Take notice not just in your surroundings but what exists locally to help you and your school community to be active.

## Examples

Active Travel is an ideal place to begin your journey towards a more Active School community. There are six steps to making this happen; seven if you include getting in touch with us to support you on your journey!

### School Street Steps

1) Set Up – establish School Street working group. 2) Assess Conditions – undertake site assessments. 3) Develop Scheme – consultation and engagement. 4) Implement Scheme – send out pre-implementation information. 5) Evaluate Scheme – collect and analyse follow up data. 6) Keep it Going – making schemes permanent.

## Further Information and Reading

The 'School Streets' approach is being trialled by a growing number of UK towns and cities. Sometimes called 'Healthy School Streets', 'School Exclusion Zones' or 'Car-Free School Streets', they lead to more children walking and cycling to school. The result is a happier, safer and healthier street environment for everyone.

## Key Questions/Suggestions

- Has your school community reviewed streets around the school to see how to make them safer for children to adopt Active Travel into their daily commute? Want some advice about getting started? Contact us for support and ideas.
- Do you know what local community clubs are near to you that staff or pupils could access?
- Are there local footpaths, parks or facilities nearby that could be accessed?
- Could staff go on a walk at lunch or during a meeting to help support their own wellbeing? How active is your place of work?
- Does your setting provide adequate, secure storage for bikes and scooters left during the school day?



# People (Connect)

As everyone is different, a focus on people is critical to improving individual health and wellbeing, and a strong community is proven to dramatically increase developmental learning and good wellbeing in children, as well as increasing life expectancy. Schools are the centre of many communities, but strong communities require energy, empathy, and solidarity, and improving communication and a supportive culture goes a long, long way. Connection is key here. The Active Schools Framework reflects growing Government commitment to recognising the importance that society plays in creating active communities from parents, staff, pupils to coaches and community leaders.

## Example

Parkrun: Parkruns are free, weekly, community events happening all around the world. Saturday morning events are 5k and take place in parks and open spaces. On Sunday mornings there are 2k junior parkruns for children aged four to 14. Parkrun is a positive, welcoming and inclusive experience where there is no time limit, and no one finishes last. Everyone is welcome to go along, whether you walk, jog, run, volunteer or spectate. There is sure to be a Parkrun near you. Here are just a few of the local Devon venues: [Haldon Forest](#), [Teignmouth Promenade](#), [Exeter Riverside](#), [Exmouth](#), [Torbay Velopark](#), [Killerton](#)

## Further Information and Reading

Many people feel that community activity is the key to increasing physical activity levels of children. Involving the whole family rather than making DPA a discrete school-based issue is now believed to be the key to long-term success. If we are to make it happen, there are **four fundamentals** that PE practitioners can start thinking about.

1) This should be an ambition about education and not participation. 2) Communicate your ideas to parents – get them on board. 3) Tell everyone the goals you want to achieve from this ambition. 4) Use other people and other departments.

Reach out further than the sports hall and playing field to show the exceptional core values that are attached to physical activity, such as resilience, determination, respect, and cooperation to name a few. If all this sounds scary get in touch with us. We have the professional expertise to support your ambitions and make them happen.

## Key Questions/Suggestions

- Are there parents with skills that can support activity in your school?
- Do you promote or signpost opportunities for families to be active outside of school?
- What local clubs are available to connect and engage with?
- Do you know what local activity providers are available to you?
- Do you know who your school games organiser is and get advice and guidance from them?



# Planet (Environment)

Children who engage with nature are known to do better than those who do not and learning about the planet and our environment are pillars of good wellbeing, and a strong special cognition. Looking after our planet has never been more important. Schools that integrate outdoor play and learning and showcase the wisdom of our interconnected relationship with nature, open a world of possibilities for their pupils.

## Example

Devon is rich with beautiful beaches, national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty that help us all to connect with nature.

The National Trust and the Woodland Trust provide free resources to help educators and group leaders deliver inspirational outdoor learning. Whether you're teaching a class about the trees in your school grounds or running forest school sessions, get in touch and we can help you by supplying support, resources, and ideas.

## Further Information and Reading

As we read more about the shrinking radius of play among our children today, it is all the more important that in schools, both primary and secondary, we offer the opportunity for our young people to engage in the cycle of the natural world, to participate in learning beyond the classroom and begin to value the experiences this can bring. The rewards of those lessons may well sow the seeds of future healthy lives.

Granted, not all schools have huge or even suitable grounds to use, but even small spaces can help to bring learning alive and allow exploration and creativity to take place in new ways. Please get in touch and we can show you how.

## Key Questions/Suggestions

- Have you thought of asking parents to suggest local places to connect with nature that are tried and tested and not too far for an afternoon walk?
- Do you know of local opportunities available to you to engage in environmental volunteering?
- Does your school know of local opportunities to connect with naturally healthy partners such as the Devon Wildlife Trust?
- Have you tried outdoor learning through forest or beach school?
- Could you adopt an 'all-weather' attitude to learning outdoors and provide CPD and suitable equipment and resources for getting outdoors in all the climate throws at us?
- How can your school environment be improved to make outdoor learning more accessible to all?
- Have you explored local parks and other open spaces for their learning?

# Next Steps – How We Can Help You

This handbook has been designed to support you through the initial stages of your journey towards becoming or maintaining an Active School. With every school being unique in its environment and needs, the next stage of the journey is to recognise what could help you and your school, and to then get in touch with us.

At Active Devon we have resources, research and toolkits to help you access further information on the Active School Framework themes. Our Active School webpage also has podcasts, blog posts, and a forum to discuss and share key topics and more detailed information on the power or movement and activity.

Please visit our Active Schools webpage [www.activedevon.org/activeschools/](http://www.activedevon.org/activeschools/) to find out more, and to get in touch with us for free advice and support.

## A Free Consultation

We are also able to offer personal support to your school with a free consultation to help you build more activity into your whole school based around your needs. This consultation can be face to face, through a digital meeting or by email and will be tailored to meet the needs of your school plans.

You can contact us for a free consultation by going to our Active School webpage [www.activedevon.org/activeschools/](http://www.activedevon.org/activeschools/).

## Notes

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Active Devon helps and supports thousands of people across Devon to get active and stay active but there are still thousands more that can benefit from being active. Your time, energy and commitment will contribute enormously to supporting the work we do towards helping people live healthier, happier and more connected lives.

**THANK YOU**

