

Episode 4 – Sports Premium

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Respondent: Kate Stephenson RES

INT: Good afternoon everybody and welcome to our governor podcast for March. We're recording today, it's the 4th of March. We've just had that lovely warm sunny weather where we saw so many children and young people out running around and enjoying the fresh air, which is very appropriate because today we're going to be talking about the sports premium, which is obviously some of that additional funding that our primary schools receive to support physical education in schools. So, secondary governors, if you've tuned in, I'm ever so sorry but this is money that you won't know about, and that you don't get, so whilst you're very welcome to stay, I'm not sure that this going to be so useful to you. So, it really is a podcast today especially for our primary governors. And I'm really pleased that in addition to Donna, who's doing the recording work for us today, one of my very long serving colleagues from sport development, Kate Stevenson, is joining us. Kate, you're very, very welcome. Thank you for giving the time this afternoon. Kate, tell the governors a bit about yourself and what you do.

RES: Thank you for having me, Gabrielle. I'm slightly disappointed that our listeners won't see us in Book Day costumes which we appropriately wore today. Gabrielle's basically laughing at me right now because we're not wearing costumes but I really wish we had. So, I'm Kate Stevenson, and I'm a subject professional development advisor for Education Durham, working with Gabrielle and my lovely colleagues. My background is primary school teaching as an advanced skills teacher, and in school leadership, but I've worked as a specialist across county developing curriculum physical education, and wider school sport, and physical health and wellbeing opportunities, which we know are crucial when we consider the role of schools and staff to support children's health and wellbeing, especially now, Gabrielle, when we're thinking about that recovery back into schools and post-national lockdown measures. I look very much at school PESSPA programme. Now, for those of you that don't realise what that is, that's an acronym. So, it's PE, school sport and physical activity, and I would encourage all

our governors to use that acronym in and around their talking about how they're using this premium. So, we talk about PESSPA and it's those three distinctive separate things that we want to spend this money on but they're equally interlinked and very valuable for a school.

INT: Kate, take a breath for me, take a breath.

RES: Yes.

INT: Absolutely. Kate, absolutely loves her, and knows so much about, her subject area. I'm going to pause for a minute because, do you know what governors, I always learn an acronym when I'm talking to expert colleagues, and that's a new one on me. So, we're going to get Kate to talk to us a little bit more. And Kate, I know that this is something that we get lots of questions from governors about sports premium and we know, as you quite rightly said, at the moment school leaders, governors, we are really concerned to re-establish physical education opportunities, aren't we, for children and young people. I mean, I know a head of PE recently said to me that she feels a real, almost a sense of a moral imperative about getting children out and active and, you know, really doing all those things, because we know that physical health is so important for mental health, don't we, and for that success in school. Kate, it wouldn't be a conversation with me if I didn't ask you to talk a bit about history first. Kate's going to laugh here because she and I, whilst we share a love of many things, including the Northumberland coastline, it's not a shared love of sport or history because I was the girl, Kate, who always held the coats in netball, and I was very good at making the orange juice, but I wasn't necessarily that good at the rest of it. Kate, tell me just in a couple of sentences really, why was sports premium introduced in the first place? Where did it come from?

RES: Yes, well, it started in about 2014 basically, and it's – There was about £320m spent from government funding to improve physical education at the forefront, both that broader offer of school sport and the opportunity to support children to reduce their sedentary lifestyles basically.

INT: So, that was a concern even as far back – it seems like a long time ago now.

RES: It is a long time ago.

INT: Am I right in thinking it was kind of on the back of the Olympics and that kind of feeling wasn't it, that kind of feeling of investing –

RES: A little bit.

INT: For sport activity teaching for the future.

RES: About a legacy but predominantly in and around reducing sedentary behaviour. And, you know, the money came from that sugar tax, so it was heavily linked to the childhood obesity strategy. And when we look at the indicators on that premium it's very much about encouraging active lifestyles and getting children to be self selective in later life about being healthy participators.

INT: So, that's where it came from. And just give us a snapshot, when it's used at its best, tell me what do you see, what have school used this money for that has been, you know, I suppose best practice really?

RES: Yeah, well, there's quite a lot of governance and compliance around it, Gabrielle. So, there's a lot of what you can't do and what you should do. So, there's five key indicators around what it should be spent on, and those briefly are – because, you know, governors can have a look at this themselves but number one is in and around that physical activity agenda and about improving children's opportunity to be physically active in school. So, schools that spend their money on that key indicator really work at embedding a wellbeing agenda in their school. So, they look at active routes to school, how children are maybe park and ride, or scoot to school with parents, and they'll raise the profile of the importance of physical activity right into the home. They'll enrich their after school provision, they'll maybe spend money for local coaches to provide opportunities for a range of activities children haven't previously engaged in. But they also look at a school development that really engages activity in the school day. So, looking at pupils to be young sport leaders, and encouraging their younger peers to join in active lunchtimes and activity. And, you know, investment in school CPD for staff, so that we start to see active approaches to learning in mathematics, and literacy, or history, Gabrielle, so our children use movement to engage in their learning.

INT: I think that's really interesting – I'm going to tell you a lovely one I saw actually, Kate, I know you'd have really enjoyed. And it was some children at one of our schools over in the east of

the county who were telling me about their training to be skipping leaders. And they were the new skipping leaders for the school, they'd visited the infants, and taught the infants to skip. And there'd been some investment in some skipping equipment, which was great, because I seem to remember having to use an old clothes line, so that was fantastic. And there was such enthusiasm, and there was a real participation at break time and before school as well actually, which was lovely to see the children arrive in the yard at school and straight away they could get active, so there was something there. So, that was a really nice one and, I suppose, combined that activity and that young leadership in sport as well, isn't it, which does so much for young people's self esteem. So, you've mentioned there – so, that's physical activity. What about some of those other areas, some of those other indicators?

RES: Yeah, so that one fits directly into the chief medical officer's recommendations because we're asking schools to, you know, pledge to commit 30 minutes of physical activity in a school day, and that's including your PE lessons, including after school clubs, including five minute active blast time before a spelling test, or when we're doing active learning, all of those things accumulate into trying to do as much active time or reducing sedentary behaviour. So, that key indicator one kind of fits into all of the others as well because we've also got an indicator about improving competition, and opportunities for, I call it, healthy competition, Gabrielle, because it's not just about the gifted and talented. We do want a platform for our advanced physical, and capable, students and pupils to achieve, and have a route to county level, but we also want a fully inclusive competition that supports children's resilience, their social engagement with others. So, you know, investing in opportunities for children to do a range of competitive opportunities, be it in school, in clusters against another local school, and then moving into, you know, country finals, etcetera. So, it's looking for health competitive routes.

INT: And so really including as many children as possible in that, an inclusive, not that exclusive elite competition but would actually –

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INT: We've got those opportunities. And I know schools, especially, they're looking at more internal opportunities, aren't they, because obviously they're not travelling, they're not meeting up with other schools. It might even be within the same bubble, it might be that competition within bubble, or I know one of our schools where there is some trial time competitions between different bubbles. So, bubbles are completing a competition together

but there's a little bit of competitive element with a couple of the other bubbles. I believe this is something to do with time spent throwing bean bags, times and distance of bean bags.

RES: This is about what competition is and it's not something to be scared of because actually it's about personal best opportunities and many of our schools have been looking at remote ways of engaging, or continuing, their competition framework. So, engaging in those goal setting opportunities or how many bounces of the ball can I do correctly within, you know, five minutes. Or can I outwit my mum and dad by balancing the bean bag on my head and squatting up and down on my leg for three seconds? All of those are lovely opportunities that actually are fun, and engaging, and putting links to other schools as well, you know, some of our sport partnership providers have committed to do remote opportunities for competition.

INT: Lovely. Right, let's move on and think a little bit about the paperwork. Because of the funding that goes alongside this, let's talk a little bit about amounts of funding and the expectations that there are for schools keeping track of this and looking at the impact.

RES: Right, so I said, Gabrielle, that this funding started in about 2014 and it's been a year on year, fingers crossed will we get this money again? And in around 2016, '17, the funding was doubled, so at any point it could actually not double. But we're talking quite a significant amount, so currently if you have a one form intake of children into your school, the money is based on how many pupils are in year one to year six. So, we're talking about £18,000 to spend, which is a significant amount. Again, it's ring fenced for making a sustainable improvement to your PE school, sport, physical activity, so we're aiming of that compliance in – thinking about how we're making sustainable improvements, so it's not a throwaway spend, it's about looking at how do we develop opportunities for children, that if this funding ceases to exist at any point there's a legacy to it.

INT: Oh, Kate, there's a couple of really interesting words there, can we just pause on them a moment because they might be new to some governors? But you said there that the funding is ring fenced.

RES: Yes.

INT: Just explain that a tiny bit more in case governors are new to this.

RES: Yes, so it means that it has to be spent on PE, school sport, physical activity. It can't be randomly absorbed into other areas of the school budgeting and there's a particular emphasis on any spend matching one or more of the five key indicators which you look at. We've talked about two of them already, about physical activity and the competition. There's another one linked to broader activities. There's another one that links into whole school improvement, so how can we use PE to support whole school improvement? So, we might spend our money in engaging new activities, new ways of learning, that actually support children's behaviour or their social engagement. So, we can actually make some significant impacts in school development but there's a few rules that we must abide by and those are we mustn't absorb that money into, for instance, paying for our swimming provision. So, governors would need to check that our school isn't using the PE premium to pay for the normal swimming school budgeted amount. They can use the money to buy additional booster sessions if we've identified that our swimming needs to be boosted, we're going to pay for additional slots, we're going to target particular children, then that's additional money. But when we think about that money could stop at any time, we have to remember that we've got a core budget to pay for swimming because that always has to exist because it's part of every child's entitlement.

INT: It's part of the national curriculum there, isn't it?

RES: Exactly.

INT: I'm going to ask a question because I'm just thinking here that one of my governors I think will probably have said to me, so, can we use sports premium funding, for example, to support children participating in, I don't know, a swimming competition? How would that be?

RES: So, if it was linked – Well, it would fit into those key indicators two ways because if your school was providing the competition and they had to pay, for instance, maybe for transport or facility use, then, yes, you may use your money to pay for that. If you're doing – Because it's additional, you know, so this funding can be really utilised well because it can pay for the transport to competitive events. It can pay for the supply cover release. So, if a teacher is going on some training with me, or with other providers of professional development for PE and school sport, etcetera, the cost of their release and having a supply teacher in, that could be paid for as long it links to those key indicators.

INT: Lovely. Kate, let's come to that other word that you used and I really liked, it was that word about sustainable. And it's this idea, isn't it, that let's build some foundations with this funding that can stand us in good stead and actually sort of build the strength of the PE and activity in school, even when the money's no longer there. What do you mean by that? What do you think governors should look out for? What would be the signs of investment that would lead to a sustainable future for this?

RES: Yes, well, schools have to actually report on how they're spending this money, so there's a compliance around that. And the report comes in the form of an impact document, and in that impact document as well as detailing the actions that you've taken, or the developments you've done, linked to those key indicators, it also has a column that specifically says a sustainability question mark. So, it's asking schools to think about investing in things that build on the developments that have worked really well. So, we're thinking of things like development of school staff. We want to build high quality physical education at the forefront of every child's education an inclusive opportunity. And that's something that, you know, building that sustainability is about building the capacity in your own school and the capability of your staff in your own school. So, investment in CPD is crucial, that's, you know, 100 per cent, sustainable. Even if your staff move onto another school, if we're all doing that then actually our movement across county just means that we're raising the quality provision across the county regardless of whether your staff stay with you or not. But the one off throwaway events aren't the sustainable ones. Yes, we can use our money for that but we do have to be mindful that a higher percentage of that spend needs to be on things that leave a mark, leave a legacy, you know, so the sibling who isn't in school yet is going to benefit from what you've spent your money on of their older brother or sister that's in school now.

INT: Yeah, that's really interesting, Kate. And I know one of my governing bodies that I work with were talking to me about how they've asked their school over the last couple of years to actually give more emphasis – rather than necessarily coaches coming in and delivering something to the children, actually coming in and training the staff and doing some, if you like, team teaching with staff so that this year staff are delivering that new – You know, we've got some staff now fantastically training rugby players, delivering gymnastics far more confidently, delivering dance with great, great enthusiasm and panache. And I suppose that there is – that's more sustainable, isn't it? And, you know, Kate, you and I are both in the business of developing colleagues and developing new teachers. And, you know, every teacher actually trains at least one other teacher, don't they, in their lifetime? So, actually if

you've got those skills, you're passing them on, not just to the children, but you pass them on to your new colleagues coming into school because all of us have been watched by our new colleagues to the profession, haven't we, at different times? And, you know, we want to know that we've got those skills. Kate, I'm very conscious of time and let's just talk a bit more about that paperwork. It's obviously a requirement that that document's published and I think lots of governors, you know, they'll have been used to hearing a report about that document. It's probably gone to the finance committee first, then maybe it might come through the head teacher's report, and then might be a report at full governing body.

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INT: So, you know, governing bodies might have slightly different processes about how they look at that report and it must be on the school website. I think it's fair to say that you and I, when we look at those documents on school websites, there are things we notice are missing, don't we, quite often? And those impact statements, they're really important, aren't they?

RES: They are. And, again, I'll just add quickly – touching on what you said there earlier about CPD and raising the capabilities in schools, we do have to be mindful of coaches providing PE, for instance, in school time because part of the rules of what you can't spend your premium on is to cover PPE, for instance. That's a red flag and quite a serious one. So, if there are coaches in school time, not necessarily the extracurricular provision, but in school time, it must be an upskilling agenda. So, there must be the class teacher or a staff member present so that it is CPD, they're working alongside, which is what you were referring to. Yes, so that document – the impact statements, we're looking at evidence, and evidence can be very qualitative. And by qualitative, I mean it's opinions, it's what we've noticed, it's what we've observed, and that's wonderful. We also can have that quantitative data stuff as well, and that's – But predominantly it's about raising confidence, engagement, enthusiasm, the happiness of children. Have we used this money and has it improved behaviour? How many children are actually active for, you know, 30 minutes within a school day? Because roughly, we know that we're doing certain whole school events, it could be a wake and shake assembly every day. It could be that the majority of our children do at least one after school club, all of these things. So, we've got an indicator of we're improving the amount of opportunities, there's more participation. We might have attendance registers, you know, a quick show of hands to show that it's improving. We could have the information from staff to say that they're now confident and competent in delivering a certain aspect they've been upskilled on, maybe

they've taken part in some gymnastic training or something. And we're also looking at children's physical capabilities and their assessment in PE. So, if our staff have been on training, what does that mean for our children? Great if the staff member's more confident but everything's back to pupil outcomes. What does it mean for our children? What will it mean for our children of the future who aren't at the school because actually everything's improved?

INT: So, that's really helpful to governors, Kate, I think because there's a real breadth there to the evidence that can usefully show the impact of this additional funding into school. And I think that because of the numbers, the amount of financial oversight governors are involved in, I think it's understandable that sometimes just the sports premium document maybe has not had quite the same amount of oversight as other areas but it is important. And one of the reasons it's important is so that we can demonstrate it's had that impact and so that, you know, we can say please let's keep it, please let's keep providing this money to our schools in the form of sports premium. Kate, I always ask our visitors to the podcast if governors want any more advice, if they want more support, how can they –? They're going to want to know how can we get in contact with Kate. If we get in contact with governor training can forward questions to you, is that all right, because that's an address our governors would know?

RES: Yes.

INT: So, are you happy if we send you questions?

RES: Absolutely because, you know, questions that I haven't answered, I do tend to talk a lot as you know, Gabrielle, I get passionate about this area. It really can make a difference. There's the DFE site if you do quick Google search of the primary PE and school sport premium, that will give you all the information about those indicators and some of the rules around it, and what governors should be looking out for. Because actually, governors, you can really help your school staff by, you know, raising the profile of how wonderful this money is. We want it to continue, don't we? So, we want to say how beneficial it has been for our children. And, yes, do just forward any questions to me. I'll be happy to oblige.

INT: Okay, that's fantastic. And Kate's very kindly – I mean, she does put training on. In the days when we were all at the Leadership Centre or Stanley, Kate was one of our regular contributors to governor training and, you know, we'll be asking her to contribute again next

year with her expertise. You know, governors, if you were sitting where I was sitting and you could see the enthusiasm and the passion with which Kate speaks about our children's physical activity and their wellbeing it's truly infectious. And I'm having a moment of envy here because I can't help thinking, Kate, that if you'd been my PE teacher at primary school clearly, I could have been winning a medal –

RES: Wonderful.

INT: Because my motivation would have been marvellous. Kate, we really appreciate all you continue to do with supporting governors with their oversight of this additional funding because it's such a critical area of governance. And thank you so much for giving your time this afternoon, I really appreciate it. I'm going to say thank you on your behalf, governors, as well to Donna who records these podcasts for us and then by some technological process, which I don't pretend to understand, then records them for me and even now has inserted our own little theme tune at the start, which I have very much enjoyed some of your feedback about governors. So, thank you for that. Just a reminder to all our governors this afternoon, or you could be listening to this at any time of course, if you've got an item you'd like us to discuss on the podcast, just let us know. We seem to be getting quite a lot of requests now, so I will let you know that our next podcast that we'll be recording is going to be about governors and safeguarding. That's going to be towards the Easter holidays when we send that one out. We've also had a request from a couple of governors in a school, would we do a governor podcast recording about the whole area of catchup and children coming back to school, and support for reading? And that was actually from some of our secondary governors. So, we're going to be having a look at that as well but as always, if you've got a suggestion governortraining@durham.gov.uk or just through your usual chair's email is absolutely fine. I'll just take this opportunity, governors, as I always do, is to thank you for giving your time to the governance of our schools in the county, making life better for our children and young people across all our schools. And we are about to have the children back into school, as I say, it's the fourth. As Kate rightly reminded me, it's World Book Day. I'm afraid my days of World Book Day costumes, Kate, have thankfully receded somewhat into the past. But I think that our children are about to come back to school on Monday. So, I know governors, that you'll be really looking forward to hearing about what the children are doing back at school. And as Kate said, really important they're physically active, really important that they get those opportunities which, you know, the sports premium is there. And, of course, some of that will not have been spent yet this year because there hasn't been the external competitions, there

haven't been the other things going on, so there may be a bit of money to allocate and actually to support that. So, thanks for your interest in this topic. Kate, are you going to say goodbye to everybody?

RES: It's been a pleasure, thank you for listening.

INT: Kate, we've loved having you, we're going to get you back in the summer to talk to us. Maybe we should have an active 30 for governors, we'll have to think about that. But thanks so much for that. And governors, I wish you well, and we'll be back in touch very soon. Thanks for joining the podcast. Bye bye.

RES: Thank you. Bye bye.

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