

News story

The Department comments on school sport target

From:

[Department for Education](#) and [Nick Gibb MP](#)

First published:

8 August 2012

This news article was published under the 2010 to 2015 Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government

The Department for Education has issued a statement on removing the duty on schools to report whether they met the two-hour-a-week school sport target.

The Department for Education has issued the following statement on the removal of the duty on schools to report whether they met the two-hour-a-week school sports target.

A Department for Education spokesperson said:

This was not a target - it was an unenforceable aspiration. No more than two in five pupils took part in competitive sport when we told schools they no longer had to inform us of how much sport pupils were doing.

We believe in freeing schools from unnecessary paperwork and form-filling. It used to take up far too much of teachers' time which could have been better used in the classroom or at the running track.

The Secretary of State made clear in his letter to Baroness Campbell in October 2010 that he would expect every school to want to maintain as a minimum the current levels of PE and sport each week for every pupil.

Private schools never had to provide information on levels of participation. But that has not got in the way of encouraging sport in those schools - as the number of pupils from independent schools in Team GB shows.

Background

1. Under the Education Act 2002, the Secretary of State is specifically barred from ordering any school to devote a certain period of time to any particular subject. That had the effect of making any Whitehall-sponsored guidelines on the two-hour target purely voluntary. In other words, there was no way it could be enforced. The relevant section of the Act can be viewed on the [Government's legislation website](#).
2. The obligation on schools to tell the Department for Education how much time was being spent on sport was lifted in a letter from the Secretary of State to Baroness Sue Campbell on 20 October 2010.
3. The move was part of the Government's key determination to free up teachers from bureaucratic form-filling when they could be doing more useful activities.
4. Despite the move to stop monitoring whether schools were meeting the target, the Secretary of State was clear that he expected schools to carry on spending just as much time on sport as they were before. He wrote: "In giving schools this freedom, we are trusting school leaders to take decisions in the best interests of pupils and parents they serve. I would expect every school to want to maintain as a minimum the current levels of PE and sport each week for every pupil".
5. Despite the target, only two fifths of pupils were playing competitive sport regularly when the requirement to inform Department for Education about participation was ended. Activities like yoga could be counted as part of the two hours.
6. Since 2010, the Coalition has acted to encourage competitive sport, especially through the creation of the Schools Games, designed to build upon and further the legacy of the 2012 Olympics by promoting intra- and inter-school competition.
7. The Government has provided £1 billion for youth sport. We are spending £65 million to release a secondary PE teacher from timetable for one day a week to increase opportunities in competitive sport. We have already announced that PE will remain a compulsory part of the National Curriculum for children of all ages. We recognise its vital role in school life and child health and wellbeing.
8. But top down Whitehall policies are not the whole answer. The drive to build a proper Olympic sport legacy for the young people of this country will instead be led by teachers, parents and communities working together to ensure competitive sport thrives.

DfE enquiries

Central newsdesk 020 7783 8300

General enquiries 0370 000 2288