

## Active Recovery

**An active child is a well child....Happier, more active children are ready to learn and more engaged in their learning**

Schools are invited to prioritise physical activity and time outdoors as their pupils return. Active recovery harnesses the benefits of play and sport to young people's self-confidence, self-belief, sense of belonging, re-socialisation as well as their physical and mental health.

There is significant evidence in the literature about the impact of physical activity on cognitive performance, play and sport on human relationships and the contribution of positive wellbeing to behaviour and achievement.

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Pupils with better health  
and wellbeing are likely to  
achieve better academically”

Public Health England and NAHT, 2014

“  
Physical activity is crucial to  
the way we think and feel... it  
can be the cue for the building  
blocks of learning in the brain,  
it affects mood, anxiety and  
attention, and guards against  
stress”

John J Ratey, Harvard University: Spark  
The revolutionary new science of exercise  
and the brain (2008)

Active Recovery draws inspiration from both Professor Barry Carpenter and Matthew Carpenter's [Recovery Curriculum Think Piece](#) and the [Five Ways to Wellbeing](#) by the New Economics Foundation.

### Why is an Active Recovery Important?

“  
67% of young people believe that  
the pandemic will have a long-term  
negative effect on their mental  
health”

(Young Minds, 2021)

Every child and young person will have had their own unique, personal, lived in experience during the Covid-19 pandemic.

All will have experienced losses to their routines, structures, friendships, opportunities and freedoms.

The result is that as pupils return to schools, they may arrive not feeling safe or secure. An anxious child 'is not in a place to learn effectively' (Carpenter 2020).

Children's activity levels fell during the first lockdown and there is acute concern that their fitness and well-being will have plummeted even further during the second period of school closures.

The recent Sport England Active Lives data reveals that **active children are happier, more confident, resilient and trusting** than their less active peers.

“  
The pandemic has had such a devastating  
impact on the social and emotional wellbeing  
of our children, causing high levels of mental  
distress. Active Recovery offers a positive  
and proactive route to recovery which builds  
physical fitness, stamina and social skills.”

Professor Barry Carpenter CBE, OBE, PhD

**By prioritising an Active Recovery schools will be able to support pupils back into school life ensuring they experience their return to school feeling happy, safe and engaged.**

### What support is there available for my school?

As pupils adjust to being back in school following the Covid-19 pandemic, educators may need to provide additional support for their pupils not least more opportunities to be active, outdoors, reconnecting and rebuilding their learning confidence.

Active Recovery is intentionally designed to spark ideas, draw upon schools own Recovery Curriculum plans, and offer additional resources and guidance to support action.

You can access Active Recovery resources at the [Active Recovery Hub](#)

“  
It is so important that schools find places for us to get to know one another again, through physical and social activities to help us develop our confidence, unwind and connect with friends”

Jess Lonnen, YST Youth Board Member

The following table captures **key challenges currently being experienced by schools** and highlights how Active Recovery may support school leaders to address these for their pupils.

Theme	How an Active Recovery can support.....
A need to re-establish both the trust and the positive relationships that previously existed between teacher and pupil	By encouraging physical activity through a range of ways (such as within lessons and break times), it can bring school communities together, providing informal ways of rebuilding trust through shared fun and enjoyment.
Behavioural or unpredictable incidents (particularly at break and lunchtimes) where pupils may find it hard to follow playground rules or interact positively with each other following such a long time away	Resources made available will have a focus on how schools can re-establish and rebuild a sense of belonging for all their pupils; inclusive of teamwork and differentiated activity ideas. This may also include ideas of re-establishing playground rules or considering more structured opportunities for physical activity and school sport during breaktimes.
Pupils struggling to adjust into new routines and adapt to a changed environment; where school may still not 'look or feel' like school as a result of having to adhere to Covid-19 rules/restrictions, lateral flow testing	Through actively encouraging the use of space, pupils are provided with the freedom of being outdoors, and are able to work both as a team and socially connect with one another. The resources will provide ideas on how schools can maximise outdoor space, encouraging and developing, exploration through a nurturing approach.

[www.yourschoolgames.com/active-recovery](http://www.yourschoolgames.com/active-recovery)

“ Promoting an Active Recovery shows how through our curriculum we can develop opportunities to support our students in recovering from the challenges of the last year. Focusing, rather than reinventing, what we do every day means this Active Recovery is both genuine and sustainable. As we refine our plans it’s vital we prioritise the space and time in our curriculum for students to engage in an active recovery, looking beyond the physical benefits to the confidence, resilience and friendships grown in being active.”

Matthew Carpenter, Principal, Baxter College

Theme	How an Active Recovery can support.....
Pupils having missed being with their friends but not necessarily aware of how to reconnect with one another and needing time to share their thoughts and feelings about their experiences during this time	<p>The <a href="#">inclusive youth voice toolkit</a> will support schools in soliciting pupil voice and provide space for pupils to express their thoughts and feelings from their experiences through this pandemic.</p> <p>Recommended activities will consider the different environments and positive experiences that you can create for your pupils</p>
Pupils returning to school demonstrating a lack of confidence in their learning- both academically and physically	<p>Resources will support schools in rebuilding competence and confidence in young people through a considered approach around what they choose to teach in the summer term.</p> <p>Through approaching in this way, new neural pathways and muscle memory can be developed in young people, which has a wonderful impact on subsequently kickstarting old learning pathways which may have been sluggish due to lack of connection socially and physically during this time. The resources will offer guidance in how to scaffold this learning for young people.</p>
Attachment issues- with pupils having spent such long periods away from school and more time in their homes with parents/carers	With parents/carers investing more time than ever before in their children’s education, the Active Recovery term will offer resources that support schools in enhancing the relationship between their school and families/communities.

“Positive attitudes towards sport and physical activity have decreased in pupils”

Active Lives Survey, Sport England 2021

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