

## An introduction to active learning and active classrooms.

There is a lot of pressure on school staff and pupils to fit as much as possible into a limited amount of time. So, it's no surprise that sport, PE, and other forms of physical activity - even free play at break times - can have their time allocation squeezed. Introducing active learning can not only help increase activity levels across the school day, but also improve engagement, behaviour, and outcomes.

### What is active learning?

Active learning is an approach that integrates physical activity into lessons in a variety of ways. This can be having the students move around the room to use different workstations, learning outdoors, incorporating active breaks within and between class activities, and incorporating movement into the learning activity itself. It is therefore not a different curriculum, but rather an approach to lesson delivery.

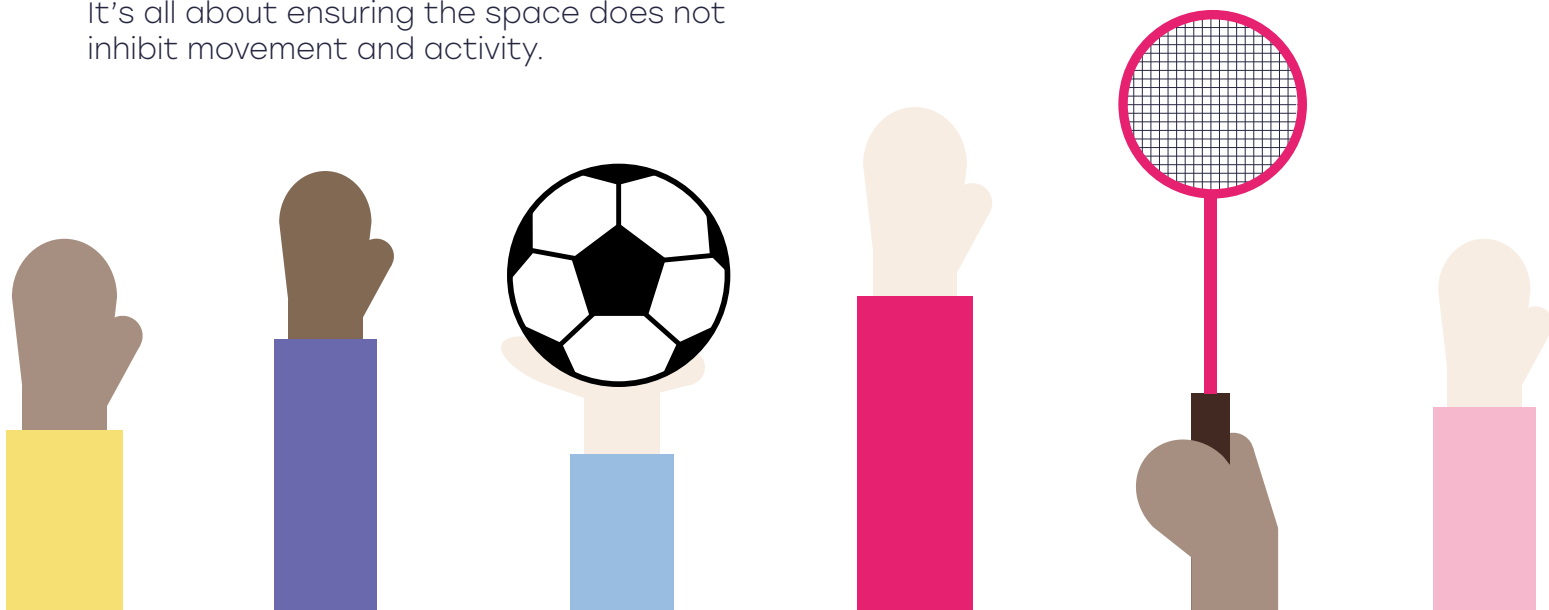
### What are active classrooms?

They're simply classrooms and other school spaces that are designed to enable more active lessons and students. This can be as simple as arranging desks differently to create more open space for movement, or allowing teachers to make use of other spaces within the school for their lessons, through to significant investments such as having adjustable standing desks and yoga balls. It's all about ensuring the space does not inhibit movement and activity.

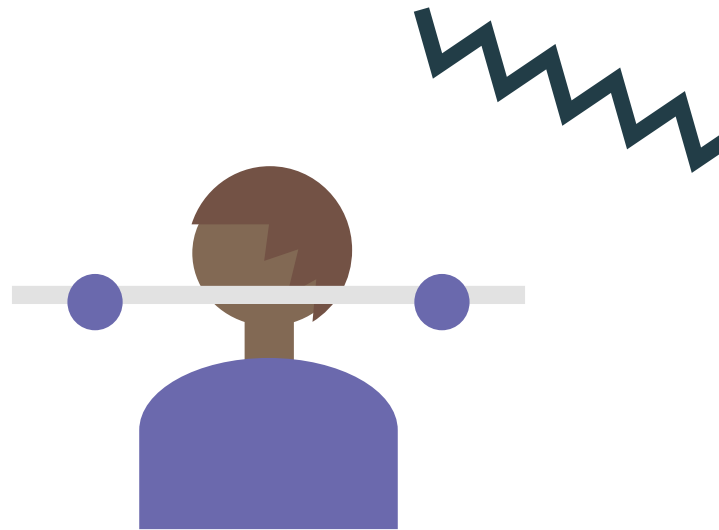
### What are benefits, and the costs?

There are two main benefits from moving to an active learning approach - more engaged pupils, and an increase in general physical activity. Somewhat counterintuitively, pupils who are regularly encouraged to move during lessons demonstrate increased focus and improved behaviour; active learning has been proven to lead to improved academic performance.

In a similar vein, one 45 minute active lesson can contribute up to nine minutes of moderate-to-vigorous activity for pupils. Given pupils should manage at least 60 minutes across the day and that currently only one in five achieve this goal, active learning is a potentially huge boost to physical activity levels.

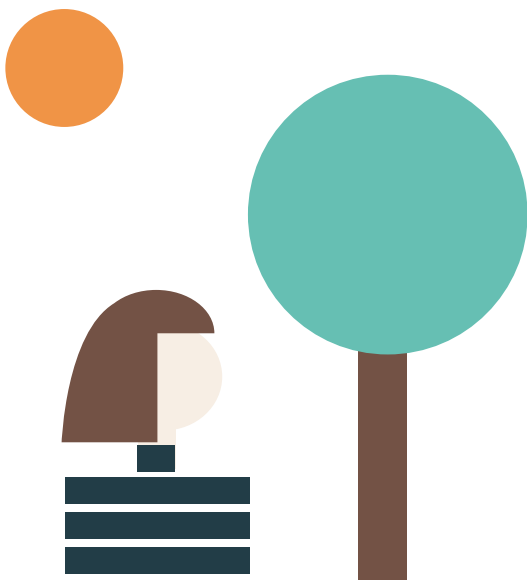


The costs of adopting this model are by in large quite minimal. It isn't necessary to invest in any new infrastructure or equipment, it's more about making use of what is already available. Staff may want/need some training in creating and incorporating active learning elements into the curriculum but there are plenty of resources available in this regard. One example is [Teach Active](#), which can form part of the CPD offering or even fall under sport premium funding. In reality the main 'cost' will be the effort required up front to adapt how lessons are delivered.



### This sounds 'operational'?

It's not the role of governors to determine how pupils are taught. However, it is worth discussing active learning with SLT to determine if it might be a viable part of the school's wellbeing and physical activity strategy going forward. Staff may be concerned about disruption, the workload of creating new lesson plans, or other potential implementation costs; the board may therefore be able to help ensure adequate support is in place to enable a change, particularly through funding access to external resources and providers. There may be other valid reasons why active learning is not suitable for your school, but it's worth exploring as an impactful method of improving physical activity levels and culture within a school.



### More information about active learning

To learn more about the impact of active learning Governors for Schools is hosting a presentation by the [Children's Health and Exercise Research Centre \(CHERC\)](#) at the University of Exeter. Jon Smedley, founder and director of [Teach Active](#), will also be joining our panel webinar on physical activity in schools. Both of these resources will be subsequently uploaded to the [webinars section](#) of the Governors for Schools website for future reference.

