



Developing Pedagogical Confidence in Primary School PE to Support Pupils with ADHD

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1. Why it matters

- Physical education (PE) provides opportunities for movement, participation, and peer interaction.
- Pupils with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) may experience challenges in fast-paced and highly sensory PE environments.
- Teachers’ strategies are shaped by training, experience, and school support systems.
- Little is currently known about how pedagogical confidence develops in primary school PE.

Aim

To explore how pedagogical confidence develops in UK primary school PE teachers, focusing on experience and teaching context, to inform PE-specific training and support.

2. Methodology



- **n = 9 UK primary school PE teachers** from mainstream and independent schools.
- **Purposive sampling:** teachers with experience teaching pupils with ADHD.
- **Semi-structured interviews.**
- Reflexive thematic analysis.
- Interpretivist, social constructivist.

3. Key Findings



Two overarching themes and four sub-themes captured how confidence developed in primary PE.

A | Develops through experience and reflection

“The more often you deal with pupils with ADHD, the more comfortable you become.” (P4)

B | Shaped by structural and contextual conditions

“You’ve also got a class of 29 others ... you’re constantly on the ball trying to think what to do next.” (P5)

Learning through practice and adaptation

Confidence developed through trial and error, reflection, and repeated practice.

Confidence regulated by success and disruption

Successful lessons strengthened confidence; disruption and challenge required adaptation.

Structural conditions shaping practice

Class size, staffing, and behaviour systems shaped confidence and adaptive practice.

Contextual supports for professional learning

Limited PE-specific ADHD training, but colleagues and Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) supported practice.

4. Implications



For Schools

Create low-cost opportunities for mentoring, peer observation, and strategy-sharing.

For PE Teacher Education and CPD Providers

Provide accessible PE-specific training to support inclusive practice.

5. Conclusion



Pedagogical confidence is built through **experience, reflection, and adaptation**, enabling successful responses to pupils’ needs, and is **supported by the systems, relationships, and conditions** surrounding primary school PE teachers.

6. Future Work

- Use **observations** to examine pedagogical **confidence in action**.
- **Examine** how experiential learning and PE-specific CPD influence **confidence over time**.



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