

# Notes of the House of Lords Select Committee on a National Plan for Sport and Recreation engagement event with school students

**Wednesday 16 June 2021, 13:30-14:45**

19 young people attended the session from two schools: New College, Leicester and St Aidan's Church of England High School, Harrogate

## Attendees:

| <b>New College</b> | <b>St Aidan's Church of England High School</b> |
|--------------------|---|
| Ammarrah           | Peter   |
| Clarisse           | Freya   |
| Logan              | James   |
| Erin               | Eve   |
| Jessica            | Alec  |
| Ali                | Jessie  |
| Chloe              | Luna  |
| Shaariq            | Huda  |
| Filip              | Brodie  |
|                    | Delano  |

**Members:** Lord Addington, Baroness Blower, Baroness Brady, Earl of Devon, Baroness Grey-Thompson, Lord Hayward, Lord Knight of Weymouth, Baroness Morris of Yardley, Baroness Sater, Lord Willis of Knaresborough.

*Due to technical issues, the first three minutes of the session were cut off from the recording. Following introductions from Lord Willis, Chair of the National Plan for Sport and Recreation Committee, the young people were asked to share their views on the question: what do you like most and least about PE and school sport. **Brodie** told the Committee that he enjoyed PE because they get to do a variety of sports and activities.*

**Erin:**..... We (the girls) only had one lesson of basketball, and then we moved onto handball. And for me that wasn't fair because in Canada I actually played basketball and I didn't see why the boys could play basketball and we couldn't, and we had to move onto handball.

**Lord Willis:** Is that regular thing for you, across both schools, do the girls often say why aren't we playing the sports that the boys get to play?

**Freya:** At St Aidan's we do have clubs for basketball, but in PE we might have one or two basketball lessons, but for the girls we don't usually do basketball unless it's in extra-curricular classes.

**Lord Willis:** Is there anything that you would like to do, that you can't do or that you're not allowed to do.

**Freya:** There is nothing that we're not allowed to do. I think it depends on the weather, what rooms are available and what equipment we have.

**Erin:** Personally for me in Canada I played volleyball for the seven years that I lived there, and here we don't play it and I think it was just introduced and we're going to play it when we transition into year 11. But in previous years when we haven't played it, I asked some of my friends if they would like to play it and they said 'oh yeah, I've actually played volleyball with my friends when we went to the beach and it was fun, but we don't play it in school. So there are some sports that they could introduce that we don't do.

**Lord Willis:** Lord Knight, you wanted to come in there.

**Lord Knight:** Thank you very much and thanks to both schools for joining us. My name is Jim Knight aka Lord Knight for Weymouth. I was a Schools Minister for several years and now I spend my time worrying about technology and education and currently sport. By disclosure, I'm an Arsenal season ticket holder and bit of a runner with Park Run and so on. My question, just to expand on what the Chairman was asking you is, first of all I'm really interested in if you can recall your experience of primary- and obviously the contributor from Leicester who was in Canada might have a very different experience- but I'd like ideally for you to help us, particularly from those of you or your friends who are less keen on PE, what there was in primary, as well as in secondary that could be improved. And what was that primary experience really like for you in terms of PE? Was the teaching good enough? Were the facilities good enough? What was that experience like?

**Brodie:** Well I can speak for my primary school; I went to quite a small primary school where there wasn't much of a variety of sports. We didn't have separate boys and girls PE, it was all combined, so if the boys did one sport then so did the girls. And I think an idea such as that could be employed in high schools, and that could be very helpful. But then also in primary schools, the variety of sports that you do isn't as big as what we do at St Aidan's, and I really enjoy the PE scheme that we have in school.

**Lord Knight:** And Brodie, did you do swimming at primary school?

**Brodie:** Yes, we did. I think it was every Thursday morning where we would get a bus, and we would go to a bigger town where there was a swimming pool and we would practise swimming. And that was very helpful for those who hadn't learnt to swim before they were now able to enjoy things like going to the seaside.

**Lord Knight:** Was that unpopular with anyone because that is something that everyone had to do, did anyone dislike being required to go swimming?

**Brodie:** From my primary school no, I think most people really enjoyed the times that we spent swimming because there was always separation of people who were really talented at swimming, who were very fast, and then the group who were learning were separated. So it was well done.

**Lord Knight:** So it was in part viewed as recreation and partly viewed as a sport and they were able to separate those two things off for you?

**Brodie:** Yes.

**Lord Knight:** Great, thank you. How about in Leicester?

**Ammarrah:** In my primary school there was very little equipment, so we weren't able to do lots of different sports.

**Lord Knight:** And, do you think that it's possible and easy enough to catch up in secondary school with sport and recreational activity and physical exercise if you've had a poor primary experience. Do you see some kind of difference?

**Filip:** From my experience, in primary school we didn't have much PE so when I transitioned into secondary school having PE once or twice a week made it hard to engage in it, because I didn't get much in primary.

**Clarisse:** In primary school, as everyone has said, there is very limited amount of sports that we do. And also, we we're mixed with boys and girls, and it's not that it makes it less enjoyable when you move into secondary school and you get split up, but it feels more united when it's mixed groups. In secondary school it feels like we're more divided, and you feel like you can't engage as much. And also, in primary school we enjoy it more because we're all kids and we have a higher amount of energy. Not everyone enjoys sport as a teenager because we don't always have that motivation to actually endure a sport, which is why I think that doing a lot of sports in primary school is more important than doing it in a secondary school. Not that it's not important in secondary school.

**Lord Knight:** Can I ask one final follow up question and then I'll shut up- I promise the rest of the Committee. My stepdaughter is currently in year 5 and I know that some of her classmates are starting to go through puberty and were there issues with changing facilities in primary where when you're getting older it becomes more difficult to be in a mixed changing facility.

**Clarisse:** In my primary school we had different places for boys and girls to get changed, but in secondary school it's obviously way more important to have that privacy. So I completely agree.

**Lord Willis:** Thank you for that. I'm going to move onto Baroness Morris.

**Baroness Morris:** Hi everyone. I'm Estelle Morris and I'm a Labour Member of the House of Lords, and before that I was a Labour MP for a constituency in Birmingham and before that I was a teacher at an inner-city school in Coventry. So thanks for talking to us today. One of you talked about a sport that you did as an extra-curricular sports club, and that made me wonder that you've got your sports lessons and your PE lessons, and I was wondering how many go to a sports club at school beyond what you're required to do as part of your lessons. Can we just see a show of hands? I can see five hands from Leicester and four from Harrogate. For one of you that does go to the sports club is it because it's a different sport or because you're really good and you're on the team and you

want to practice. What I'm really trying to get at I think is how different it is in the sports club from the sports lesson.

**Delano:** So I play football outside of school. I think the difference is that the people that go to clubs outside of school want to be there, and I think that in school there are some kids that aren't really as keen on sport so they don't really want to partake in them. So I think when you're surrounded by people want to be there and want to do well it makes it more enjoyable and more fun to play sport.

**Baroness Morris:** So do you feel that it's at your football club where you get the chance to improve, and not so much at school? Is that a good way of putting it?

**Delano:** Well currently in Year 10 I probably play about two lessons of football, but when I go to football practice, I can play football three times a week consistently and have better lessons.

**Baroness Morris:** Are you on the school football team?

**Delano:** Not at the moment.

**Baroness Morris:** But you play for a team for the club outside of school?

**Delano:** Yes.

**Baroness Morris:** So do you think when you leave school, you'll be able to stay with the club so that you'll still be playing football?

**Delano:** Yeah, you never know when I get older, I might join a 5 a side team. When I'm 30 years old.

**Baroness Morris:** That's years away yet. Thank you everybody.

**Lord Willis:** Thank you. Let's move onto Baroness Brady.

**Baroness Brady:** Good afternoon everybody, my name is Karren Brady. My day job is the vice-Chairman of West Ham Football Club. Some of you might also have watched The Apprentice and I'm also a Conservative Member of the House of Lords. What I'm really interested in knowing from you is how do the negative gender stereotypes affect your attitude of PE and sport? Or, have you indeed experienced any negative gender stereotypes that have out you off?

**Erin:** So, as of now where sport is split up by the sexes in this school. I feel like there are a lot more stereotypes, because females and males aren't playing together. I think we have a few times throughout the year, or in a term, where we come together, and you do whichever sport you like, and I feel like that is way more fun because those stereotypes are broken. When we were playing dodgeball, I heard people say 'you throw like a boy, you throw like a man' and I didn't know whether to take it as a good thing or a bad thing. When you say I throw like a girl, I am a girl of course I throw like one, but they see it more as pathetic, so they're shocked that I can actually play a sport. Whereas when it was unisex where I lived before, it was more fun because we didn't have any

stereotypes. Every single time we did PE we played together therefore there was no reason to think of stereotypes because we see each other playing.

**Baroness Brady:** And when you get comments like that does it put you off playing sport?

**Erin:** For me personally it makes me want to play harder, to show them that of course I can play, what did you think I was going to do. And also there are things like sexuality. I know that a friend of mine feels uncomfortable changing with the boys, because they feel uncomfortable and as a result to that homophobic tendencies- like making comments- tend to come out so he changes in a separate room. And he shouldn't have to move, just because he likes your sex, doesn't mean he's going to do anything to you, you play sports with him every time you have PE. And then in our school we actually do teach mixed in years 7,8 and 9 now, but not in our year.

**Baroness Brady:** Thank you for that, it was very insightful.

**Lord Willis:** I wonder if anyone from Harrogate wants to come in on that? Yes, Alec.

**Alec:** I think there is a stereotype that girls are worse at sport and boys are better at sport, but this isn't true. Even amongst my PE group, which is all-boys, there are plenty of boys that don't want to take part in PE or are worse than others, and there are girls that are worse than others. So I think that instead of segregating the groups randomly into girls and boys, it should be more intersex and based more on the skill level. So therefore it is more fun for everyone. So those who want to try and do sport are surrounded by people who are also trying in the sport, and those who don't want to try and just want to have a bit more recreation can also have the environment to do so.

**Baroness Brady:** So I guess you're saying that you should be picked due to your ability not your gender, for your teams and mixing them up would break down those stereotypes.

**Alec:** Yes, that's what I'm saying. That people who want to try at sport are allowed to choose to go into groups of higher ability, and those who want to try and less at sports can go into lesser groups.

**Baroness Brady:** I read a report recently that 75% of girls have heard discouraging statements about girls in sport which have put them off and have any of the schools watching had comments like that which have put them off.

**Freya:** I don't have exact examples of comments that have been made, but there are always girls in general, aren't as interested in certain sports, so things like football, basketball, or rugby. In our school, we don't explicitly go into those topics, we do sports like dodgeball or bench ball, games that some might say are softer. I'm not saying that that's necessarily a bad thing, but why are we being separated for sports that I'm sure we can all do but we're not being allowed to.

**Baroness Brady:** Interesting.

**Chloe:** Sometimes in certain sports they'll say that it's too masculine. I have a friend who plays rugby, and she tells me stories of how sometimes people have told her that it's too masculine and she shouldn't be playing sports like that.

**Baroness Brady:** And Chloe, is that another pupil that said that to her, or a teacher or other adult.

**Chloe:** I think it was one of her friends.

**Erin:** When we have that time in the term where we have three or four sports or activities, and I remember that on one of the days my friend wanted to do dance and gymnastics, and his friends would say to him 'you want to gymnastics? That's gay, don't go there' so he felt pressured to go and play with them, whatever it was they were playing. And then the next day, me and my group of friends went to do cheerleading because we thought it would be fun. The gymnastics hall was split into two, and we went into the softer bit, and when boys were walking in to do their activity, they would laugh at the boys in my friend group and saying 'that's feminine.' First of all, it's none of your business and second of all there is nothing wrong with being gay and they can do whatever they want to do.

**Baroness Brady:** And I'm sure you told them that.

**Erin:** Yes, I did.

**New College Teacher 1:** We have another female student who is off camera who does boxing, and she has been told that she punches like a man and that she shouldn't be doing the sport because she's a girl. And when she cut her hair she got judged when she cut her hair because they told her that she looked like a boy and not a girl.

**Baroness Brady:** And did that put you off doing boxing? Have you given it up or are you still doing it? I think she said that she hasn't given it up and is still doing it. So I'm glad that the peer pressure and the negativity hasn't put you off.

**New College Teacher 1:** She is very much like Erin, she's not going to let anybody put her off doing things, but I'm sure there are other girls that are probably not as strong-minded as her. But she's not going to be put off.

**Baroness Brady:** Good for her.

**Lord Willis:** I'm just conscious that there are a number of students that we haven't heard from this afternoon, and this is a really important question about whether in fact you're put off doing PE because of stereotypes, so things like not wanting to play with the boys, or thinking that is a girls sport. Is that a problem with that at St Aidan's? Eve, do you feel happy playing sports at St Aidan's?

**Eve:** Well, I currently feel happy in year 10 because there is a lot more variety, and if you don't take it as a GCSE you can have a lower expectation from the teachers to be the best at it. Because I was never particularly good at sport, so I always felt really pressured to be incredible and I just didn't want to focus on that. I prefer other subjects, like the arts for instance, but I do like it when we do dance. And I know that sometimes the boys won't get much of an

opportunity to do dance, which is a bit sad because I think everyone can enjoy it and they just need to be given the opportunity.

**Lord Willis:** And what about someone that I haven't heard from at New College? Is it a big issue how we actually group boys and girls and what sort of sports they are offered? Is it still very stereotyped where the boys will do football and rugby and the girls will do rounders?

**Filip:** Whenever I do sports like gymnastics or just dance, I'm a male, I identify as male, but whenever I do so I get strange looks from people, and people say annoying stuff to me and it makes me feel so uncomfortable.

**Lord Willis:** And that puts you off doing it?

**Filip:** Yes, it doesn't engage me at all.

**Lord Willis:** Ok. Well that brings me on to a really important area now, which Baroness Grey-Thompson is going to introduce.

**Baroness Grey-Thompson:** Thank you very much, good afternoon everyone. I'm Tanni Grey-Thompson, I'm a Paralympian- I competed in five Paralympic games- and I'm a crossbench Peer. I'm really interested in what you see are the benefits of being active and I'd like to know how you balance the sport that you do in school and what you do outside, whether you do things like the daily mile. And also your relationship with afterschool clubs.

**Huda:** I think that sports is definitely something that builds teamwork skills, communication skills and it's really good because it builds confidence. Not only that, but because of the stress with exams and other stuff it helps you feel less stressed and it helps people to focus on something that they love and enjoy. I do badminton and table tennis after school, I do rounders as well, but badminton and table tennis is outside of school and I enjoy that because it just builds a nice community where you can focus on making friends, which is really good. And I feel like it will help people who are more reserved to build their confidence as well which is nice.

**Logan:** Personally, I feel like with sport it's not just good health that comes with it, you can get a lot of other things from it such as getting to explore other people's culture. In year 8, I went on a ski trip to Italy with the school and we got to see all of the culture that they had to offer, see the different scenery and environment and it was really nice to get away and experience something else- to get a different view of the world. So, it's not just good health from sport it's culture and you get confidence from it. I think its beneficial in that way.

**Clarisse:** I think sport is also a good way to discover good mental wellbeing. I myself find sport as a way to motivate myself to do things that will compliment my mental wellbeing. I think for a lot of us now, because obviously with COVID and the lockdowns, we've all been in quite a difficult place and so the way that I like to do things to motivate myself is through sport. I think that making sport more enjoyable and relating it to things that people will enjoy will help people to motivate themselves and then improve their mental wellbeing.

**Lord Willis:** Baroness Grey-Thompson was talking about what do you do outside of the PE curriculum. One or two of you said you joined clubs; do you do the more general things.

**Ali:** So after school I go to a boxing gym. And I go there because, one the school doesn't do exotic sports like MMA and boxing, and it helps at the end of the day to work off the stress.

**Erin:** What I had to say is that integrating other sports into school would be really good because it actually helps with the relationships in schools. Maybe I'm biased because I played the sport for so many years, but with volleyball I feel like it really helps a lot with friendships and understanding. Because in school some of the girls might have had issues with each other, but when we started playing together because in volleyball you have to communicate, and you have to get to know each other really well. So integrating that into schools would help in relationships with people in PE, and if you play outside of school and in school you can bring your knowledge into school. And it would really improve communication between teachers and students, and student to student as well.

**Student off camera:** As Erin said, I met half of my friends through sports and I feel like by playing sports you learn new stuff and meet new people.

**Lord Addington:** I'm Lord Addington, I'm an old rugby player and my greatest sporting achievement is that I bled all over Leicester Tiger's pitch on a couple of occasions. I was wondering about when it comes to activity outside of school, how much encouragement are you given to go and try sports that you don't get to do in schools or take them on at other levels. Are you given formal encouragement or is it all done through your parents and friends?

**Brodie:** I think that sometimes people are encouraged by the sport they see on television. For example, with the European Championships happening now that might encourage people to take up football. For me, I was watching golf on the television and decided I want to try that, and I've been playing golf for three years now, and I really enjoy that. I think the way that we broadcast sport is very important, because it's very influential and helps students to want to take up new sports and try new things.

**Ammarrah:** They teach us that it's healthy for us and that encourages people. And sport takes your mind off things from your daily life and that motivates people.

**Shaariq:** I think that we're encouraged to do extra-curricular activities, but there are also a lot of barriers. How far I live from the school is a barrier for me because I have to walk all the way home and my dad can't pick me up. And that stops me from taking part in extra-curricular clubs because I have siblings that I need to pick up as well. You have to make way through your schedule and sometimes I might have to do stuff after school, like chores or helping my parents, so that's the stuff that they need to combat. So maybe changing the times or having them before school or at lunch would be quite nice.

**Logan:** I feel another issue with people not going into extra-curricular sports after school is that most of the time it leads onto competitive play. And some



people don't want to go onto that, they just want to play casually and enjoy the benefits, like the confidence that you get from playing sport. Competitive play isn't for everyone. Just every week doing a bit of sport, and not going onto big tournaments, just casual play would be nice.

**Freya:** I think when I was younger, from primary and up to the middle of year 9, I was encouraged more to do sports inside or outside of school, it could be competitive or casual, and it was anything that was active, that was fun and I could make more friends. But when important exams or mocks came up, I wasn't exactly encouraged less but it was mentioned less. It wasn't as much an active thought in the minds of the people around me. It was just more important to be focusing on something that would impact my future unless I was thinking of going into sports- which I'm not.

**Lord Hayward:** I'm Lord Hayward, a Conservative Peer and former rugby referee and in light of comments that were made from Leicester I'm the founder-chairman of the world's first gay rugby club. Can I ask a question to Jessie at St Aidan's and Logan in Leicester? Are there people: teachers, parents, famous sportspeople who have actually motivated you to get involved in sport, and if so in what way.

**Jessie:** Honestly, no. I think for me being motivated comes more from my friends. I prefer to do sport for fun, both outside of school and even in the one lesson of PE we have a week. I much prefer to do it non-competitively and my friends are the main people that make me want to do it and have fun.

**Logan:** Some motivation that I got a while ago, I met all the players of the Leicester team for basketball called the Leicester Riders and after meeting them it really inspired me to look into basketball more, to get an idea of how it's played and the culture that comes with it. Getting to know the rules and just expanding your knowledge on sport.

**Shaariq:** In primary school we had a time when Leicester won the league and some players from the team came to our school, and it was quite nice to talk to them and see how they were motivated to get a career in the sport or just play it in general. So I think it would be nice if we could organise meetings with people who play different sports professionally and see what we could do to do sport like them, or to just be active in general.

**Lord Willis:** Before I move onto Baroness Blower could I ask you about swimming? Do both your schools have swimming lessons particularly for those who arrive at secondary school not being able to swim. Can I start with you Luna?

**Luna:** We don't have any swimming lessons or opportunities to swim within school at St Aidan's.

**Lord Willis:** So do you know children who cannot swim? Amongst your friends for instance.

**Luna:** All of my friends can swim because we did it at primary school or we did swimming lessons when we were younger.

**Lord Willis:** Anyone else in Harrogate that hasn't learnt to swim or know people that can't swim?

**Peter:** I've got one friend who is a particularly weak swimmer. I'm not sure if he did it at primary school, but it would be helpful if he continued to do it at secondary school because it is quite an important skill and quite a nice recreational activity.

**Lord Willis:** Thanks Peter. Leicester, what about you? Can you all swim and can everyone else swim around you.

*Mixed reaction from students.*

**Jessica:** As there is only one swimming pool in the area, and plus it's a big area, they can only provide swimming for the year 7s. And as most students enjoyed swimming in year 7 it was quite sad when we weren't able to do it again.

**Erin:** I was born in England, and I went to primary in Gloucester and we never learnt how to swim. To this day I don't know how to swim, and I feel like if I had learnt it previously it would be easier for me to learn, but because I'm older it's not as easy to pick up. But we never learnt how to swim.

**Logan:** Just on swimming and aqua sports it would have been quite nice to see other aqua sports integrated, like water polo, just to get a feel of how other sports are different from each other and to get some diversity.

**Freya:** I can't swim, and neither can my brother. It was a small community primary school, but we did enough number of students and places around it that we could have gone to learn how to swim, but we didn't get the opportunity and neither in high school and now I just don't have the time to do lessons that will teach me an important life skill.

**Lord Willis:** To Leicester, is there an opportunity to learn how to swim?

**New College Teacher 2:** I'm Head of PE here and have been for 12 years now. We've always done swimming for year 7, because we found that when they come to us in year 7, they don't meet the requirements of swimming that 25 metres as the primary schools can't always get pool time. So although swimming is not on the secondary national curriculum, we still provide it because we think it's such an important life skill for our students, and the parents of our young people don't always take them swimming. Unfortunately, this year we are not allowed to do swimming because our local leisure centre has been closed down and there is no funding for travel to another leisure centre. So sadly after my 12 years of being here, we're not allowed to do swimming anymore.

**Lord Willis.** We will take note. Thank you for that.

**Baroness Sater:** Hi everyone. I used to play a lot of tennis when I was younger, and I now do a lot of work in the charity sector supporting sporting charities. But I'm very keen to give access to all sports and physical activities to young people and to adults. Quick question for all of you in the room, have any of you been on an activity week or weekend with a sporting organisation. Have you been on an outbound trip outside of your local area?

**Lord Willis:** Peter, could you say where?

**Peter:** In year 8 we go to the Lake District to do an outward bounds trip for a week. We do hiking, some rowing and orienteering. That sort of thing.

**Clarisse:** All year 7s when they join get the opportunity to go on a PGL trip and it gives an example of the many activities that you can do on a PGL trip. It's very fun and very active. I think that having that opportunity to go on a PGL trip is very important, especially when moving onto secondary school.

**Lord Willis:** That is an area we haven't looked at colleagues a great deal.

**Siobhan Conway:** Sorry Lord Willis, we have a hand up at St Aidan's. Delano had their hands up.

**Delano:** In my old school in year 8, I went to Amsterdam on a hockey trip with the school. And there were 30 boys across the two-year groups, and we played three matches. We went and explored the city and did some activities there. I was born in South Africa, and my family have lived there for many years, so they've also gone on big sports trips for the sports that they've played. I think that in South Africa, sport is drilled into when you're young, you really want to play sport and it's a big pride thing back there, and big sport activities and trips they're offered lots over there so I think they could be offered a bit more here. And it's the same in Dubai, I lived there for five years as well, and all these sport trips are offered, and I think maybe in England some sports trips could be offered more to give students a taste of around the world.

**Lord Willis:** Yes. Thank you very much for that. Can I move then to Baroness Blower?

**Baroness Blower:** I'm Christine Blower, I'm a Labour Member of the House of Lords. I was a teacher for number of years. One of the things that I engage with now is that I'm the Vice-President of Show Racism the Red Card, which is a charity that uses the medium of football to try and defeat racism on the terraces, but more importantly and schools and in society. So I'm really interested in all the things that you were saying about community building and team building and communication. As you know the reason for this committee is for us to make some recommendations so we're delighted hear all the observations that you're making for us today and these will be really helpful. So here is my question: what's the number one thing that you would change about PE and school sports in order to make it better. I think the only person in Harrogate that we haven't heard from is James, so are you happy to start with one.

**James:** Yeah. I think if we gave students more choice over what they do in PE, then they might be more motivated to try harder and actually be more active. For example, if you play football in PE and you know that people have fun with it, and don't take it too seriously then you are still quite active, and you work up a sweat running around. Whereas, if you play a sport that people aren't that enthusiastic about, like last week we played badminton and table tennis and most people weren't trying that hard and they wouldn't actually get their hard

rate going and weren't being physically active properly so they're not getting much from it.

**Baroness Blower:** And James do you think there is any particular sport that could be added to the curriculum and what is available at the moment.

**James:** I think maybe giving more of an opportunity to take people swimming like you did in primary school. If people really hate running, and a lot of sports are centred around running, but if you got swimming then it's different to what you would usually do, so people might enjoy that more and therefore try harder and they might even find something that they enjoy and they might do it outside of school.

**Baroness Blower:** Ok, thank you. Is there anybody else before we move to Leicester? Huda.

**Huda:** I think that to improve we could have a sports day or a sports week, that just focuses on having different sports and trying something new. We did that have in primary school, but now we don't have that at all, but if people got to choose what sports they wanted to do and had a week to do something like that it would be fun, because everybody is mixed together, and you also have people that know are skilled in that sport, and they are all joined together and they're having fun. It's something that I think would be really good to have in the future.

**Baroness Blower:** Thank you. So essentially, your number one thing is that there should be more choice, that's what I'm hearing from James and Huda. Is that correct?

**James and Huda:** Yes.

**Baroness Blower:** So, shall we move to Leicester for some answers to that. Your number one thing that you would change about PE and sport in school to make it better.

**Erin:** I've got two things to say. I think making it more unisex for the older kids would be better, because when you're younger you don't have as much bias, you're not on social media you don't have as much bias towards other sexes and other groups of people, but as you get older you get more on social media and you're seeing other things and you get lots of influences on you. Maybe I'm biased because I'm a girl, but I see most of the time that it's boys who negative stereotypes of girls, or they have a lot to say and have an opinion on things that they don't need to have an opinion on, and they make rude comments. So I think having unisex PE for older kids would be better for growing up because it's harder to break those habits when you get older. And also since I was in Canada previously, I experienced unisex PE and it was a lot more fun than having just girls and just boys. Also, I wanted to say having more sports introduced would be good, because I feel like a lot of cultures are not represented in PE. I feel like PE is mostly British sports and that's really it. Personally, when I ask about the curriculum, I haven't heard them talk about sports that they maybe play in different countries that aren't heard of here very much. Those could help break barriers in between students and build up your knowledge of sport.

**Logan:** Just as Erin was saying there about getting more sports, it would be nice to see sports like lacrosse or fencing because then it would let kids know that there is a much bigger variation of sport than just football, tennis and rounders. It lets people know that there are more sports out there to try and to give a go.

**Baroness Blower:** I should say that my granddaughter does fencing at primary school so there clearly are some places where they are expanding their repertoire.

**Clarisse:** I think that we shouldn't ignore the fact that mental health can contribute to the amount of motivation that we have so I think that the choice of being able to do what you want brings a lot of comfort to someone who doesn't feel that they have a lot of skill within a certain sport. So I think that being able to choose your sport, and feeling comfortable, will increase motivation for people who might not have the best mental wellbeing.

**Jessica:** One thing that is looked down on is sets. We have got different sets in PE, so if you're in Set Two it's highly looked down on by the Set One kids. When we go outside and we're doing football and the Set One kids are going rounders, you can see each other, and it can make you feel uncomfortable because of the way they are judging you. Most of my form is in Set One, and I'm in Set Two and they talk about it a lot and make fun of people for it.

**Baroness Blower:** Are those sets based on academic ability elsewhere, or are they based on sporting ability?

**Jessica:** No it's just based on sporting ability.

**Shaariq:** I have something to say about what Logan was saying about how they can expose us to different sports. I was thinking about cricket and it's a bit annoying about how people see what country you're from and they think 'oh he definitely plays cricket.' And you get made fun of it for it, because even though cricket was made in England, they still associate it with India and Pakistan, and they think it's not a good sport. But they haven't tried it themselves so I feel like it would be nice to expose students to that more.

**Lord Willis:** Can I just bring Baroness Brady in?

**Baroness Brady:** Just a very quick question, if you're in a competitive team does it put you off that you have to win. Does it stop you enjoying being active and playing games if your PE teacher wants to win everything? Does it affect your enjoyment?

**Alec:** I would say that winning in a less competitive environment doesn't award the same satisfaction as winning in more competitive environments. Playing in a competitive environment really allows every student to be at their best and try their hardest. And even if you lose, you can still go away with the satisfaction of knowing that you played well and that everyone around you was having a good time and really trying hard at what they're doing. Compared to a less competitive environment where some people might be messing around, and so teams may become lopsided, and it can become really unfair and unbalanced where you can have a team where half the students aren't trying their best and

just messing around. So the other team may be able to win because they faced little competition. But the team that loses will have a couple of players that feel really defeated and hopeless as everyone around them isn't trying. So I think having a more competitive environment for all students will allow for an enjoyable experience for everyone, instead of just letting some students mess around.

**Siobhan Conway:** We've got Brodie's hand up at the back.

**Brodie:** I was just going to add to what Alec said, and how we're really lucky at St Aidan's that the school organises inter-form sports activities. Our form classes will select a sport team, and it's inter-form football for the boys, and hockey for the girls and although that's gender separation, most people who want to play in a competitive environment aren't too bothered about gender separation in our school. The inter-form sports are really, really helpful and as Alec was saying it's more fun to play in a competitive environment, and then win because you feel a real sense of achievement.

**Lord Willis.** Thank you. Can I come back to Leicester and Ali?

**Ali:** So right not we're doing PE in dodgeball, and when we were playing yesterday and what I experienced was when we were casually playing people weren't as motivated as they were when we started to have competitions. As soon as you started to win you get that rush, but even if you lose at the end you still know that you got a couple of people out and you played.

**Logan:** I feel like the pressure of winning isn't put on from the teachers but more from the people around you. If someone keeps telling you that you need to change the way you're playing, then it takes your freedom and the fun out of the sport. You can't play the way that you want to play because someone is telling you how to play it, for me it's just takes the fun out and makes you not want to play anymore. That's just my experiences anyway.

**Lord Willis:** Thank you for that.

**Erin:** I have a friend who has an underlying health condition and sometimes when he plays people will pressure him to 'do more, do better' but they don't understand that due to his condition he gets tired easier. And they're not listening, they're yelling at him and one day he just broke down and cried because people are yelling at him. And it's like it's not his fault, he's sick and he can't change that. But he's doing his best and it's upsetting for him. He's not athletic, but he likes PE, but he literally said that he wanted to leave and didn't want to play as he was scared that people were going to get mad at him.

**Lord Willis:** Thanks ever so much. The Earl of Devon now.

**Earl of Devon:** Thank you everybody for your contributions today. My name is Charlie and I'm the Earl of Devon. I'm a former rugby player but my interest here is very much as a rural landowner and farmer where we have a lot activities like cycling, hiking, yoga and wellbeing. A lot of the conversation today has been around school sports and PE and competitive activities, and what I was wanting to ask you about was non-competitive wellbeing activities so things such

as dance and nature walks, and the extent to which there are friends of yours or members of the two groups who don't like sports at all but are willing to do those other kind of activities? And how far do your schools support people who may not be good at sport, who may not be sporty, or not very athletic, but who want to take part in other activities? Brodie, shall we start with you.

**Brodie:** I was just going to say how at school we don't have the facilities to offer stuff like orienteering. And we do have the facilities for dance, but I don't think the boys are really interested at our school, but there are a few. We're lucky enough to put on a show every year- which unfortunately has been stopped this year due to COVID- called Spotlight where children are encouraged to take part in dance, drama and acting. It's not competitive, it's not forced, and you don't have to be good it's just if you want to have fun and enjoy it you're allowed to. And I think more schemes like that should be introduced in other schools.

**Lord Willis:** Baroness Blower, I'm anxious for you to finish off your question about what we would change.

**Baroness Blower:** So we're really looking for some recommendations here, so can you come up with one particular thing that you would change. We've heard about having more variety and more choice, is there any other specific change that you'd like to make.

**Peter:** For me, I would say that there needs to be more curricular PE a week. So in key stage three we did two lessons of PE per week, whereas when we got in to key stage 4 that's gone down to one hour. I think if we stepped that back up to two then that means we can have twice the variety as we have twice the lessons, or you can spend twice the amount of time on each sport so kids have the ability, to get better at them and get more involved in them which would then encourage them to go extra-curricular clubs and continue them there.

**Huda:** I've already mentioned having sports week and sports day but following on from what Peter said I also think that we should be encouraging A-Level students who didn't chose PE to actually do PE. Because I think people forget that they also need a way to take out their frustrations from all the exams and stuff they are doing. So I think we should have more clubs for A-Level students as well.

**Jessie:** My point was pretty much the same as Peter's because I know from year 7 to year 9, I didn't hate PE but I liked it a lot less, and now that I've come into year 10 there's a lot more freedom of what we get to do and it really is just such a shame that we only get one lesson a week. For me, especially now that we've just done our mock exams, it was such a nice change to get away from everything that we've been doing. So it is just a shame that we lose that lesson. But I do try to get fresh air and stuff with my friends as well.

**Lord Willis:** That's lovely, thank you. Shall we go to Leicester?

**Student off camera:** I feel like the kit should be changed so that people who don't have the ability to buy kit or can't afford it. And if they forget their kit they shouldn't get a detention unless there is a really good reason.

**Shaariq:** I think we should be able to meet more celebrities. We had the Leicester Tiger Rugby team visit us and that was quite nice and bring in professional people to talk to us.

**Logan:** I think if I had the chance to change anything it would be to get rid of sets or ability-based levels in our PE lessons.

**Erin:** I think there should be more options and I agree with Logan. I'm in top set PE and a lot of my friends are in second set and I would like to be able to play with them. And a lot of people in the top set do look down on people in the second set, and it's like why? Just because they don't play as much sport as you doesn't mean you're any better than them. I think there should be more options for people who don't like playing certain sports. Even in top set there are people who don't like playing and they just sit down on the floor, so there should be another option for them to get active.

**Jessica:** I think we should be allowed to have more options. At our school the teachers choose what sports we do, and for how long, so I feel that if we had different options, we would enjoy it more. I like some sports more than others, and when it comes round to a sport that I don't like, I just don't want to do it.

**Clarisse:** I think making PE a more comfortable environment for those who don't exactly enjoy it. So letting them know that it's ok to not enjoy PE and that no one is going to judge you for not being able to do something that you maybe feel you don't have the skills in. And I think that making people aware that they can be comfortable in a PE situation will motivate them more.

**Lord Willis:** I'm really sorry that I have to end the session, just as all the hands are going up. Can I just say that the Committee have put an extra session in as we have another session later this afternoon and I'm grateful to you all for doing that. But I'm particularly grateful for the students at New College Leicester and St Aidan's Church of England High School, and your staff, for coming together today and giving us exactly what we wanted which was a wide range of opinions and thoughts about PE, and PE in the future. You've not disappointed us. We thank you very, very much enjoy. We hope the experience has been a good one for you and I will make sure that when the report is published a copy of it is sent to both of your schools for it to be put in a glass cabinet for the great and almighty to look at. Thank you all very much indeed.

**All:** Thanks.

*14 July 2021*