Maria, Ireland Blog 1

1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND: I teach 20 children aged 11-12 who attend a small rural school. My class has two 30-minute PE classes each week. I teach all subjects and am not a specialist PE teacher, however I do value PE and am always open to improving my PE lessons.

2. REASON FOR GETTING INVOLVED: Teaching PE in primary schools presents unique challenges due to the wide range of abilities, engagement levels and interests among the children. As they grow older, this gap becomes even more pronounced, with some children actively participating in sports both in and out of school, while others show little interest and have minimal involvement. Bridging this divide can be difficult. Therefore, the goal of my PE lessons is to create an inclusive and enjoyable environment where all students feel challenged and engaged.

3. IDEAS I WAS DRAWN TO:

● A priority for the lessons to be fun and foster a lifelong engagement with movement, games and sport.

● Activities are designed to be adaptable, allowing the children to modify the challenge level to suit their abilities. This could involve introducing a timer, adapting rules of a game or choosing a different piece of equipment to complete the task.

● Children are given a degree of autonomy over their learning experience, encouraging discussions about challenges and collaboratively problem-solving. For example, they consider ways to make a game more challenging or introduce rules to promote inclusivity.

● Choice is integrated into the lesson, with children having opportunities to vote on games, lead warm-ups, or decide how groups are formed.

● The idea of personally relevant learning allows the children to focus on self-improvement, challenging themselves as opposed to competing (or not) with other children in the class.

● The children reflect on the PE lesson, they think about what they learned, how they participated, what they need to work on.

4. OPPORTUNITIES/ CHALLENGES

● I had to adapt to the reality that lessons might not always go as planned or envisioned, requiring me to be more flexible and responsive.

● I found that incorporating Meaningful PE was easier in some strands of the PE curriculum than others. For example, I found Games and Athletics readily lend themselves to the ideas of Meaningful PE but I found it more difficult in Gymnastics, Outdoor and Adventure, and Dance.

● While the children are accustomed to reflecting on their learning in other subjects, applying this practice in PE was a new experience for them.

5. HOW MY FIRST STEPS HAVE PLAYED OUT.

● I am confident that our PE lessons are fun, children enjoy PE, and I have observed increased participation, especially among the children who previously did not look forward to it

● Children quickly became skilled at adapting games and activities. They liked that I listened to and incorporated their ideas.

● Reflecting on PE lessons has been challenging for the children, so I have kept it simple by asking questions about what they enjoyed most and what they found difficult.