Gymnastics
### Summary of movement progression across the class levels:

#### Junior and Senior Infants
- Develop the basic movement actions of running, stopping, jumping, rolling, climbing, transferring weight, balancing, twisting and turning wrong body parts – exploring space
- Practice rocking and rolling activities
- Develop body awareness through variations of direction, pathways, levels, shape, speed etc....
- Work together to create and perform a sequence
- Talk about movement and answer questions about it.
- Develop ability to lift, carry and place apparatus safely.

#### First and Second Class
- Basic movement actions: e.g. balancing, rolling, turning, twisting, stretching, climbing, transferring weight (variety of rolls)
- Body awareness through movement (direction, levels....)
- Travelling on apparatus
- Individual and pair sequences
- Take off and landing skills
- Posture/good body tension
- Ability to lift, place apparatus

#### Third and Fourth Class
- Sequence of movement, vary direction, pathways etc.
- Move and travel on floor and an apparatus
- Headstand and handstand
- Forward and backward rolls (at the discretion of the teacher)
- Produce and perform sequence
- Develop good body tension and posture through gymnastics
- Show increased control in take-off, flight and landing

#### Fifth and Sixth Class
- Select and link a range of gymnastics actions to travel on the floor and on apparatus
- Practice and perform a range of skills
- Produce and perform more complex sequences with a partner on the floor and using apparatus
- Show controlled take off, flight and landing
- Produce group sequences
1. Warm-Up activities and games

- Colour Run
- Shape Stop
- Walk Stop Wiggle Sit
- Shape Detective

*Shape Outline*

Wide

Tall

Round/Small

*Balancing on body parts*

Call out a number. Each child must balance on that number of body parts.

One body part

Four body parts
2. Travelling through space

- Dynamic music warm-up
- Direction, pathways, speed, levels
- Travelling on hands and feet (benches)
- Transferring weight

Bear Walk

Caterpillar Walk

Tuck Roll

Donkey Kick
3. Jumping, Turning and Landing

- Jump in, jump out, circle game
- Spot jumps
- Run jump run. Run air shape run.
- N-S-E-W turns
- Run turn run
4. Balance, Poise and Co-ordination

- Balance the beanbag on different parts of your body
- Body balances

Image taken from:
Tiny Tumble Body Shapes | Gymnastic stretches-poses for kids
Selection of balances:

**Counterbalances**

Working in pairs – partners A and B

(a) Sinking movement

The partners stand and face each other with feet about 30cm away from each other. Clasping each other's wrists and with arms outstretched, they both lower into a sitting position and back to standing. Repeat.

(b) Seesaw movement

The partners sit on the floor facing each other. Sitting on each other’s feet, they clasp wrists and, with arms outstretched, rock with a seesaw action. Repeat.

**Standing balances**

(a) Working individually

Stand erect. Transfer the weight onto one foot. Raise the other foot to the front, to the back and sideways.

(b) Arabesque

Working in pairs – stand on one leg, facing your partner. Lift the other leg and straighten.

(c) Wine glass

Working in pairs – stand side by side with your partner, stretch the inside arms in the air with the palms touching. Keep your weight on the inside foot.

**Pair balances**

Horizontal pairs

The base lies on the floor with the knees bent. The top lies on the stomach with the feet on either side of the partner’s head and with the hands under the shoulders. The base places his/her upturned palms under the ankles of the top and clasps firmly. On a count of three, the base pushes up his/her arms to straighten them while at the same time the top pushes up with arms as if to do a push-up. Hold the balance for a count of three.
**Hands and knees balance – In pairs**

The base lies on the floor with knees bent and legs together. The top approaches from behind, leans forward and grasps the knees of the base. The base places upturned palms below the knees of the top. On a count of three, the base straightens her/his arms and the top balances lengthways.
5. Strengthening/Conditioning exercises:

a) Bunny jumps

- Stand, crouch low and jump two feet to two feet forward for five jumps.
- Remember to remind children to land with squasy legs, i.e. knees bent and as quietly as possible.

b) Wall Jumps

- Stand sideways to a wall.
- Stretch up the inside arm as far as possible and to note the point the fingers reach;
- Bend the knees and jump to try to touch a point above it.
- Land on the balls of the feet, knees bent.

c) Back to back

- Sit in twos, back to back.
- With knees bent, the pairs rise to standing and return to sitting.

d) Half press-up

- Place hands and knees on the floor with the back facing the ceiling.
- Press the palms of the hands into the floor and straighten the arms and to keep the upper body as long and straight as possible;
- Tighten the body for five seconds, holding this position, i.e. a half press-up position.

e) Circle walk

- Place hands and feet on the floor, with the back facing the ceiling.
- Keep the body as long and as straight as possible and walk the hands around in a circle keeping the palms of the hands flat on the floor.
- The feet should swivel around on the toes while remaining in position.
f) Bench Steps

- Step up and down on the bench slowly, leading with the right foot for ten steps, then leading with the left.
- Stand to face the bench.
- Hold in the muscles of the tummy.
- Look straight ahead.

g) Skipping

- Skip with individual ropes.
- Explore ways of skipping on the spot; moving forward.

h) Sit ups

- Lie with knees bent and feet flat on the floor.
- Move hands up along thighs until they hit knees.
- Emphasis is placed on not pulling head/neck up towards knees.

i) Selection of rolls

- Teddy bear roll
- Tuck roll
- James bond roll
- Pencil roll
6. (a) Creative Sequencing

- Create and perform a gymnastics sequence.
- Use apparatus and include:
  - Starting position
  - Movement variations
  - Shapes
  - Balances
  - Twists
  - Turns
  - Partner work
  - Strong finishing position

(b) Station Teaching
7. Safety In Gymnastics

The Forward Roll - Infants

Preliminary activities:

1. Animal walks – strengthening exercises
2. Pencil, log and egg/tucked roll
3. Rocking and Rolling exercises

Teaching Points:

- The child should stand with feet apart and place the palms of the hands flat on the mat with the fingers forward.
- With bottom/hips held high, tuck the head in and look backwards through the legs.
- Bend the knees, lower the head and with a push from the feet, roll like a ball onto the shoulders and upper back.
- Continue to roll to arrive on the feet.
- Stretch arms upwards and forward to help achieve the final standing position.

Teaching Points:

Emphasise to the children the need to look back through the legs.

The child’s head does not touch the mat.

The children who are not comfortable performing a forward roll can opt to perform stretched or tucked rolls.

It is advisable not to allow the children to perform more than four or five rolls.
**Backward roll – 1st/2nd Class**

**Preliminary activities:**

1. Animal walks – strengthening exercises
2. Pencil, log and egg/tucked roll
3. Rocking and Rolling exercises

**Teaching points:**

- With the back facing the mat, crouch down.
- Keep the hands close to the shoulders, near the ears with the palms facing the ceiling.
- Rock backwards onto the back.
- Place the palms onto the mat and press down.
- Roll over.

Initially, some children may only be able to bring their legs over their shoulders.
The Handstand – 5th/6th Class

Preliminary activities:

1. Arm strengthening exercises – circle walks, squat jumps, primary push up
2. Donkey kicks
3. Bunny hops

Teaching Points:

Teach the handstand:
Stand and stretch the arms upwards.
Bend the back leg.
Raise the front leg and, having stepped to plant this foot, place the palms on the mat shoulder-width apart, with fingers pointing forward. The head is kept down and the child should look at her/his hands.
Take the weight onto the hands keeping the elbows and arms straight and strong.
One leg is swung up straight and then the other leg joins it.
The body is in a straight line from toes to hands.
Return to standing by bringing one leg down first followed by the other.

The support should stand:
• With one foot in front of the other, slightly to the side of the performer.
• He/she should reach out to support the performer at the hips, taking care to keep the performer’s legs in line with one shoulder. As the child becomes more competent gradually reduce the level of support.
Cartwheel – 5th/6th Class

Preliminary activities:

1. Arm strengthening exercises – circle walks, squat jumps, primary push up
2. Donkey kicks
3. Bunny hops

Teaching points:

- Stand with the arms lifted, facing along the mat.
- Take a long step on one foot while the other foot pushes off the ground.
- Reach with the hands to place the first hand on the floor in line with the foot.
- Place the second hand beyond the first hand.
- Wheel the legs over the hands.
- Push from the second hand to stand on the second foot.
**Support:**

- Remind the children that the cartwheel sequence is: foot – hand – hand – foot – foot.
- It might be useful to chalk out this sequence on the floor/mat.
- The children may start from the left or from the right.
- Use chalk marks on the mat to help the children with the correct sequence of hands and feet.
- Ask the children to identify the point in the cartwheel when the shape is symmetrical.
- The support stands where the child’s hands will be placed and provides support by holding the child at the hips, if needed.
- If the children are having a problem with hand-foot coordination, it can be useful to practise the sequence using a bench.
- The support stands where the child’s hands will be placed and provides support by holding the child at the hips, if needed.
References

★ Physical Education Curriculum (1999)
★ Be Active After School Programme, www.beactiveasap.ie
★ Professional Development Service for Teachers www.pdst.ie/Gymnastics

Further Resources available from

★ Irish Primary Physical Education Association (IPPEA) www.irishprimarype.com
★ Active School Flag www.activeschoolflag.ie/physical-education.html

Equipment required for this workshop

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<td>N,S,E,W signs</td>
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