



fit for girls

Case studies pack

sportscotland



The Girls in Sport and Physical Activity Pilot Programme

Between 2005 and 2007, 27 secondary schools in Scotland took part in the Girls in Sport and Physical Activity initiative; a training programme for PE staff and Active Schools Coordinators designed to facilitate new ways of engaging girls and young women in physical activity.

The programme grew out of a desire to put in place ideas stemming from a wealth of research and experience of issues influencing girls' participation in sport and physical activity. Investment from BIG Lottery and Health Promoting Schools presented the opportunity to pilot the programme and a partnership between secondary schools, the Youth Sport Trust and sportscotland began.

This DVD and collection of case studies is an opportunity to share the difference that the Girls in Sport and Physical Activity programme made to girls in many of the participating schools. By sharing the work of the schools and the girls, we hope that they'll be a source of inspiration to other schools facing similar issues!

The dedication of PE Teachers and Active Schools Coordinators in working together has had a direct impact on participation levels. Monitoring of the programme clearly demonstrates an increase in girls taking part in PE and extra-curricular activities:

- In the first year of the programme, 72% of schools saw an increase in participation in physical activity and sport.
- In that same year, the percentage of girls participating in physical activity and sport rose from 18% to 27%.
- Six of the schools have seen girls' participation exceeding or matching boys'.



Thanks to the success of the Girls in Sport and Physical Activity programme, sportscotland and the Youth Sport Trust are seeking additional funding for a national roll out of the programme under the name Fit for Girls.

The aims of the Fit for Girls programme have never been more important. Studies show that 65% of 14 year olds do not reach recommended levels of physical activity and 43% of adult women do little or no exercise. Fit for Girls aims to bring about a sustainable change that builds a positive future for girls' participation in lifelong physical activity.

In our current climate of increased concern for girls' and women's health, childhood obesity and the economic, physical and mental health cost of inactivity, the programme aims to stimulate discussions around inventive approaches to reverse the trend.

We are confident that the Fit for Girls programme, coupled with the engagement of PE staff and Active Schools Coordinators, has the ability to make a significant impact on girls' physical activity levels as well as their perception of physical activity and sport.

We would like to extend a huge thanks to all of the schools and individuals involved in the Girls in Sport and Physical Activity programme. The success of the project is testament to their time and effort, their willingness to take on a challenge, their creativity and their readiness to try new ways of working. The results are here for all to enjoy.

It has been a pleasure to work together on this project. We are delighted to publish this evidence of good practice and to highlight your fantastic work.

Jessica, Hazel and Linda

Jessica Lindohf

Women, Girls and Sport Officer, sportscotland

Hazel Williamson

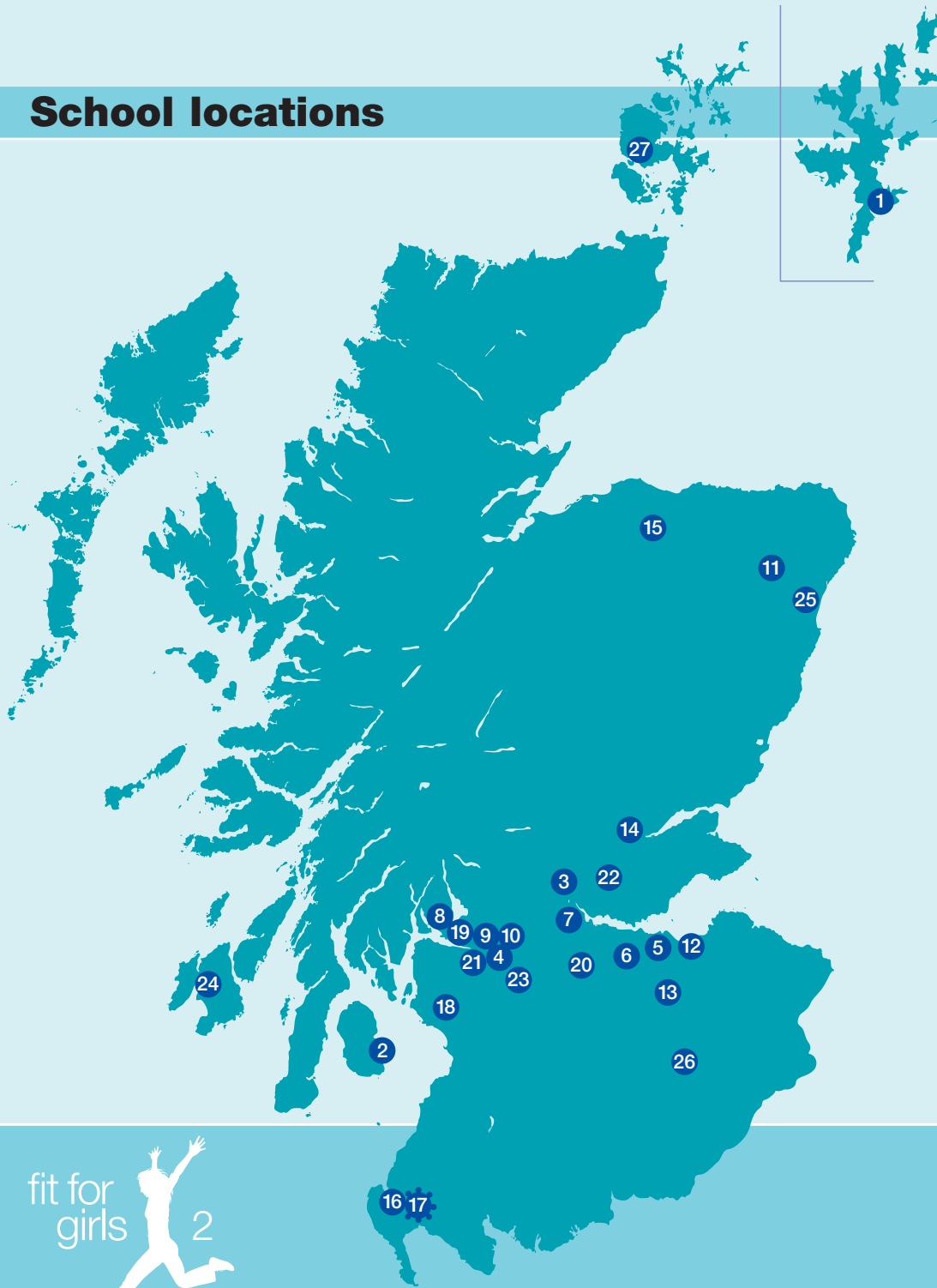
National Development Officer, Youth Sport Trust

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School locations



School	Local Authority	School Roll Number	Page
1 Anderson High	Shetland Islands	842	3
2 Arran High	North Ayrshire	320	4
3 Bannockburn High	Stirling	1670	5/6
4 Bishopbriggs Academy	East Dunbartonshire	1036	7
5 Castlebrae Community High	City of Edinburgh	390	8
6 Currie Community High	City of Edinburgh	936	9
7 Falkirk High	Falkirk	1250	10
8 Hermitage Academy	Argyll and Bute	1437	11
9 Hillhead High	Glasgow City	1216	12
10 Kirkintilloch High	East Dunbartonshire	650	13
11 Meldrum Academy	Aberdeenshire	819	14
12 Musselburgh Grammar	East Lothian	1201	15
13 Newbattle Community High	Midlothian	922	16
14 St Columba's High	Perth and Kinross	553	17
15 Speyside High	Moray	814	18
16 Stranraer Academy	Dumfries and Galloway	1511	19
17 Stranraer and Annan Cluster Primary	Dumfries and Galloway	–	20
18 Stewarton Academy	East Ayrshire	844	21
19 Vale of Leven Academy	West Dunbartonshire	1158	22
20 Whitburn Academy	West Lothian	1040	23/24
21 Woodfarm High	East Renfrewshire	765	25
22 Alva Academy	Clackmannanshire	1130	–
23 Clyde Valley High	North Lanarkshire	760	–
24 Islay High	Argyll and Bute	271	–
25 Old Machar Academy	Aberdeen City	110	–
26 Peebles High	Scottish Borders	1270	–
27 Stromness High	Orkney Islands	431	–

Girls Try Out

There are a group of girls in every year group who are less active than others for a number of possible reasons: they are embarrassed by their appearance, size or weight; they feel they fail in PE; they lack confidence to try new or difficult things; they may have been bullied or they have had a period of illness.

We wanted to encourage these less active girls to come together and try out new activities. We wanted to encourage a good group ethos, improve self-esteem, boost self-confidence and help them meet new friends. We were conscious that the girls would need a mix of attractive ideas to get them on board.

What we did:

With the help of key staff (core subject teachers, guidance staff and PE teachers) we identified a group of fourteen S2 girls. We gained school management approval to meet with these girls during the school day to explain our idea of a girls group to run once a week after school. At this initial meeting we explained why we wanted to help them become more physically active. We gave out a letter and permission forms to take home.

The girls seemed very attracted by the idea of a single-sex club. We had a second meeting at which we involved them in the planning of 'come and try' activity sessions over eight weeks. These sessions (each about two hours) included team building fun, frisbee, trampolining, badminton, golf, climbing wall, canoeing, making smoothies and a skincare session. After eight weeks the girls were keen to continue into the summer term for four weeks and were encouraged to invite a friend along to join the group.

Outside instructors helped to provide activities and were accepted by the girls. There was always a member of school or Active Schools staff supervising the group and joining in. In advance of an activity (often the week or two before) the group would discuss what they were trying to do, how it would be structured, where it would be and what other requirements there might be. We felt that it was important to have as many of the decisions as possible not taken by us. The strategy worked in that we maintained the attendance and the group grew in individual and collective confidence.

The difference it has made:

Ten out of fourteen girls attended regularly and started to share experiences together, giving each other encouragement and confidence to try at times, to continue and finish off a task or just to share a laugh together.

What was particularly successful was having a go at less traditional activities (in which of course they have not 'failed'). The group wish to continue into another school year and help plan a programme, inviting a friend along as well if they want to. A new group of S2 girls will be targeted next year and a few of the girls involved this year have volunteered to come along and talk to the new group at their first meeting. Notice boards to inform and display materials for girls are in the female changing rooms as well as in their year group social area. The next step is to encourage the girls to link into clubs and groups in the community if they have enjoyed a particular activity. It is much more likely now that they will join in physical activity with enthusiasm and maintain this in later life.

"I like when it is all girls, it's not mixed."

"You get to know others in our year."

"I tried activities I've not done before."

Pupils

It worked because:

The most surprising part of the project at the beginning was the interest and ideas the girls came forward with when planning a programme, although only a small group.

Their involvement in choosing and planning of the activities and the time frames was key to the success so far. Talking through the feelings and reasons, and/or benefits of the group for the girls who attended was an important factor. Asking a friend or another person from their year to join in an activity helped them realise the responsibility they had to the group – all this only happened as the group became comfortable with each other and confident as a group.

It was good to have such flexible staff and instructors involved and to find such a range of activity for the girls in Shetland.



P7-S2 'Girls Only' Swimming Club

Every year the Active Schools Coordinator circulates a questionnaire to all the new first year girls and every second year it is circulated to girls of all ages. As a result, swimming was identified as an activity which girls frequently cited they would like to participate in but had no present opportunity to do so.

The Auchrannie Country House, a private hotel, owns the nearest swimming pool. Local primary schools were able to make use of this pool for primary PE lessons but no provision was in place for Arran High School use, other than those young people taking standard grade PE and the S5/6 recreational swimming option.

The challenge was to provide a recreational swimming club which would:

- fill the gap between primary swimming and Standard Grade swimming lessons
- encourage more girls to take part in Standard Grade swimming lessons
- improve the girls' personal swimming ability, physical health and fitness levels
- provide recreational, social and competitive opportunities across P7-S2
- provide opportunities for girls to swim in an all female environment.

It worked because:

The girls only swimming club worked because we carried out a needs analysis; we asked girls what activity they wanted to participate in and developed an appropriate opportunity.

We have conducted ongoing consultation with the girls to ensure that we continue to engage them and keep them motivated in the club. This also ensures we continue to meet the girls' needs.

What we did:

Two members of staff and a swimming coach attended the initial 'Girls in Sport' training session and one attended the update meeting. The training enabled this team to discuss what the potential opportunities could be and helped establish a shared vision and support network.

We were conscious that the club needed to be an out of school experience with girls mixing from different age groups, particularly from primary and secondary transition years.

School PE teachers were engaged in discussions around the club and parents were consulted in order to gauge interest in those who would like to be involved as parent helpers.

Discussions took place with the Leisure Department within the Auchrannie Hotel to determine time, venue and costs. The club was set up and ran for 3 x 6-week blocks on Wednesday evenings from October to March. There were no initial start-up costs but running costs were funded by charging the girls £1 per session and through OSHL funding topped up with Active Schools funding.

Headteachers from the primary schools and the Deputy Head from Arran High School promoted the club to girls in their schools.

The Auchrannie Hotel also ensured that where possible, a female life guard was on the poolside when the girls club was running and also provided three sets of swimming goggles as prizes for an initial competition. This competition was in the form of an evaluation questionnaire with prizes being awarded to the girls who had put the most thought into their answers.

The difference it has made:

The training allowed us to focus our mind on producing a project plan. Issues such as positive partnership working were shared as a group in order that potential barriers could be prevented or considered during the planning process.

There are 10 primary and 17 secondary pupils registered with the average number attending the club each week around 20. Only one girl has dropped out to date.

The club has enabled girls from different primary schools and Arran High school to mix in a social environment.

"You get to make lots of new friends and also to meet girls from the high school."

"It has made us more confident to take part in clubs and competitions."

P7 pupils, Brodick School

"Girls at this age can be quite self-conscious so not having to mix with boys has allowed them to participate more freely within the swimming club. Members of the swimming club are choosing to swim more often outwith their club night."

Jill Plenderleith, Leisure Manager, Auchrannie Hotel and Spa Resort

Results from a post club questionnaire show that, of those surveyed:

- 100% enjoyed the club
- 94% liked working with girls from other classes and girls from other schools
- 100% stated that they would be interested in gaining badges/awards at the club.

We are now planning to expand the club to reach S3 girls as they want to continue coming along to the girls swimming club on an on-going basis.



Strictly for Girls

Some girls at Bannockburn High School did not join in core PE lessons as the activities (e.g. football, rugby, and basketball) were often chosen by boys in the class. This meant girls were sitting at the side, not participating.

As a consequence girls often refused to bring kit to PE and teachers had to follow discipline procedures – punishment exercises, letters home, detentions, etc. However, this did little to change the situation.

We wanted to target a group of girls who did not like PE and were lacking in self-esteem and confidence, these girls were very demotivated and were difficult to engage with.



What we did:

We developed an all-girls core PE lesson and asked the girls what activities they wanted to do. The PE staff and pupils agreed that if the girls bring their PE kit the staff would accommodate where possible some of their choices, e.g. if they were quicker to get changed at the beginning of the lesson then they would have longer to get changed at the end.

Dance, trampolining, cheerleading and power walking were timetabled as activities. When timetabled for the outdoor area the girls liked the idea of walking and power walked to the bakers to buy healthy food for lunch. This also provided an opportunity to discuss healthy eating with the girls.

From talking to S3 girls we recognised that the girls had an interest in beauty, we therefore decided to use this as an incentive to get girls involved in sport. We developed a challenge which involved girls scoring points by bringing their full kit, taking jewellery off, helping with equipment and trying their hardest. If the girls won enough points by the end of term their prize would be a school visit from a beautician to give the girls beauty treatments.

The girls designed a poster and chart to keep record of their points. Two pupils were in charge of writing a letter to the beautician explaining the challenge.

As an incentive the girls were given a half way prize, this involved a session in which the girls gave each other facials. A girl in the class, who also attends a beauty course at college, led a session for the rest of the class on how to give a proper facial.

The difference it has made:

Through involvement in the S3 challenge the relationship between the girls and PE staff has improved. Staff no longer have to nag the girls to bring kit and participate in PE, therefore the atmosphere in the class is very positive.

“I never knew the PE staff before now but I think they are really good now.”

“Female PE staff makes me feel more comfortable taking part in activities, especially trampolining and dance.”

Bannockburn High School, S3 pupils

Of the target group of girls there has been a 90% success rate in having the correct kit and participating in curriculum PE. Girls have now even requested more periods of PE per week.

The girls have grown in confidence and self-belief. This is evident in their approach to physical activity; they appear less inhibited and more willing to try new activities. The girls also allowed female PE staff to video their performance in dance then watch it back. This was a big step for these girls as in the past they had completely rejected this idea.

It worked because:

Girls took ownership of this challenge by coming up with the points system, making posters and filling in charts. This was something the girls took pride in and helped contribute to the success of the project.

We used activities which were not included in the normal curriculum and the activities were only available to this group of girls.

The class was not about trying to be the best but was focused on encouraging them to be more physically active. We focused on developing the girls as people, i.e. improving their confidence and self-belief.



Standard Grade Aesthetics Course

We wanted to increase girls' uptake of Standard Grade PE. To help achieve this we wanted to offer girls an alternative Standard Grade course where they would feel more comfortable with the activities and where girls would outnumber boys.

The activities presently offered did not suit the large majority of girls as they were games-based including basketball, football, badminton, swimming and canoeing. Most girls wanted to participate in dance/gymnastics activities.

We wanted to target a group of girls who were very interested in dance and gymnastics and who do not choose Standard Grade PE due to boys being present in the class.

What we did:

PE staff re-considered the Standard Grade course and added an aesthetics option as well as a games-based option; both were open to boys and girls although no boys opted for the course therefore creating a girl-friendly environment.

Activities were carefully chosen to bring out the best in girls and make them feel comfortable in their participation. Activities included gymnastics, dance, trampolining, netball and volleyball. All these activities were deemed 'acceptable' for girls to be good at and were also seen as being feminine.

The PE Department have been flexible with the timetable and allocated appropriate teaching areas and staff. A female member of staff has been allocated to teach the aesthetics course.

The aesthetics course was promoted to PE classes using posters, and S2 parents were informed of the course at parents evening. The S2 course was also changed to allow girls to sample some of the activities that would feature in the Standard Grade aesthetics course.

The difference it has made:

In 2006 the number of girls attending Standard Grade PE was 12. Following the introduction of the Standard Grade aesthetics course in 2007, the number rose to 38.

Girls are happy with the activities offered; they are more girl-friendly and teaching and learning has become more effective in this atmosphere.

Girls who would be graded at general level in the games-based course are able to achieve credit level in the aesthetics course.

The attitude towards girls and PE has changed; it is now 'cool' for girls at Bannockburn High School to be good at PE and girls now recognise PE as an important and worthwhile subject.

"We prefer having a woman teaching us...it just doesn't feel right if it's a guy. Woman teachers understand us more and we are more comfortable to talk to them about things."

Bannockburn High School, S3 pupils

Girls' standard grade PE now has a high profile which is having a positive impact on core PE.



It worked because:

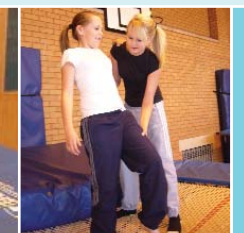
The flexibility of the timetable allows girls to work in the gym four blocks in the year and the games hall once a year.

This also allows for female members of PE staff to be allocated to classes.

Girls like the idea of a course being created for them, and the environment is more comfortable for girls.

The strong possibility of an all-girl class attracts girls into taking standard grade PE.

PE staff have been willing to learn how to teach new activities such as dance and netball.



S1/S2 East Dunbartonshire Girls Netball League

We wanted to increase girls' participation in sport and physical activity. Through the promotion of healthy lifestyles we aimed to improve girls' fitness levels and improve their overall attitude towards health and fitness.

We also wanted to develop girls' attitude towards competitive sport and encourage a sense of pride and identity in representing their school in sporting activities.

To do this we wanted to establish an East Dunbartonshire Netball League to provide an opportunity for girls to represent their school and show commitment to training and league fixtures.

What we did:

An S1/S2 Girls Netball League Plan was drawn up following consultation with Active Schools Coordinators, Netball Scotland and local sports centres; the plan was issued to all secondary schools within the Local Authority.

We kick-started the programme with netball team trials evenings, using posters and staff to promote the events; approximately 60 girls from S1 and S2 attended. We then used a second trials evening to further encourage these pupils and to sustain their interest. At this point girls were informed they had all been successful in their try-outs, that they would all be invited back and that they had 'made' the team.

Schools conducted weekly coaching sessions with a focus on netball skills and fitness; the sessions ensured a fun but competitive experience. Healthy eating/lifestyles were promoted through the provision of fresh fruit and water/fruit juice.

Monthly specialist coaching sessions, linking with Netball Scotland and associated national coaching staff, were conducted in which all participating pupils/schools came together over two community venues to train and compete in friendly games.

A weekly competitive league was then implemented with all participating schools; six schools play one another twice – once at home and once away.

The difference it has made:

"The netball league has been a huge success and has fostered a real team spirit. All the girls enjoyed themselves. The regular weekly training sessions and competitive matches have significantly developed and improved the girls' skills and fitness levels."

PE teacher/netball coach

On average 90 girls from the six participating schools competed in the league competition. Around 40-50 of these pupils also attended the monthly coaching sessions. The league has resulted in a significant increase in the number of girls participating in regular sport and physical activity.

The trials evenings ensured the girls developed a sense of identity and pride in representing their school and allowed us to sustain the high number participating in weekly training sessions, match fixtures and monthly specialist coaching sessions. We now find ourselves with around five squads and struggle to provide them all with a team kit!

We have seen a vast improvement in the fitness level, skill level and overall attitude towards sport and physical activity; 80% of our S2 girls have gone on to select Standard Grade PE as one of their subjects to study in S3/S4.

"Training and match nights were great fun and taught me a lot more skills and how to play netball better. I think that S2 netball was really good. I hope the S3 league is as good as I hope to have great fun again."

S2 pupil

All schools have committed their involvement to the S1/S2 league next session, and an S3/S4 girls' league will be introduced to continue the pathway for current participants.

Netball Scotland has also requested that this programme be taken forward to set up an East Dunbartonshire Coaching School to develop an elite squad of netballers who will have the opportunity to be selected by scouts to represent Glasgow and/or Scotland Netball squads.

It worked because:

Support from partners has been essential. Netball Scotland provided specialist coaches, constant guidance and advice; the local sports centre provided the hire of facilities/equipment; and local newspapers promoted the league and reported on fixtures.

The combination of a transition netball programme for P6/7 girls and a league style competition between primary schools helped to raise the profile of netball and prepare girls for participation at secondary school.

Commitment and effort of teaching and coaching staff helped to provide fun, interesting coaching sessions with an element of competition to ensure the commitment and continued involvement of the girls.



Castlebrae Girls Project

The uptake of sport and physical activity among the girls in the school had been low and a large number of girls did not take part in PE at all. There were huge challenges with truancy, attitudes and behaviors and sport and physical activity was seen as un-cool. Only approximately 20% of girls chose to do PE and very few took part in after school clubs.

It worked because:

- there are devoted staff running the clubs and who are engaging with the girls on their level being real role models
- new PE staff that are enthusiastic and willing to try new things
- supportive school environment where the need for change is recognised
- girls only classes and a focus on taking part and becoming fitter and healthier
- having a full time Active Schools Coordinator has made a radical change to what the school is able to do.

What we did:

Girls in Sport was used to address some of the problems, to increase participation, offer new activities and make extra curricular activities and PE more appealing. Consultations were held with girls to find out what they wanted to do and what the barriers were.

- A high proportion regularly 'forgot' their PE kit and did not like the existing kit. The staff and girls together chose a new kit that was more appealing to the girls. The PE kit is held in the school and washed after each lesson or activity so that no one can forget to bring it.
- Dated, dirty and unappealing changing rooms were seen as a real problem by the girls. Girls in Sport funding bought mirrors, soap dispensers, hairdryers, etc. Changing rooms were painted, cleaned and a new vanity area built with mirrors, shelving, hair dryers and straighteners. The showers now have shower curtains and towels are available that are washed after use. Staff made efforts to make the changing rooms in line with what one expects in a leisure facility.
- Dance classes were offered to the girls using an external dance teacher and new routines were developed. These have been popular and very well attended with two classes now being offered each week. The class was also opened up for transition girls in primary school and these girls were taken by a minibus or walked along to the school. The girls have continued to attend and now make their own way to the club.
- Fridays used to be a problem with many pupils not showing up to school and so a breakfast club was established. The club is on at 7am and offers dance and running for girls followed by a healthy breakfast. Running has proven popular and there are between 12-18 girls coming to run each week and also some members of staff.
- A gymnastics class is offered to the girls once a week, offering more variety of activity.
- For those identified as having a serious weight problem, the Active Schools Coordinator, the teaching assistant and other staff work together if the pupil wants to address the problem. The pupil is informally encouraged to become active in ways that suit them and a personal fitness program is offered which the coordinator undertakes with the pupil. Through Edinburgh Leisure's obesity scheme the pupil gets a free annual leisure pass and some personal training sessions. This approach is informal, supportive and personal and follows the pupil throughout school.

The difference it has made:

- 50% of girls chose PE for next term, compared to only 20% this term
- more activities are offered for girls and more girls take part, e.g. due to demand, the dance class is now offered twice a week instead of once
- the girls involved in the transition program have continued to come from the primary school and are now making their own way to the classes
- more girls want to take part and being fit and doing exercise are now seen as 'more cool'
- behaviours have changed radically and the school is still challenging but not a 'problem' school
- no-one forgets their PE kit and more girls take part because of the new kit
- the new dance teacher has really appealed to the girls and the dance classes are increasingly popular. The girls have also been asked to perform at school events.

"I participate in football, short tennis and basketball every week and this helps me make new friends. Sport also gives me a rush of energy and when playing football I get to show the boys that girls aren't fragile and not all sugar and spice."

S3 pupil

"Being involved in sport has made me a lot fitter and helps me control my weight."

S1 pupil

"I play for Hibs ladies football team and playing football has improved my fitness and makes me a hard tackler. I love playing football."

S1 pupil

"Once the girls start coming along to the dance class and start to learn the moves you can see their confidence grow. We make sure it's a friendly atmosphere and that's what makes it fun."

Dance teacher



Engaging S2 and S3 girls in a range of non-competitive activities

At Currie High School we have a strong tradition of girls' hockey, with over 20 years of an established girls' hockey club.

However, there were a number of girls within the school who did not participate in any extra-curricular activity. The challenge was to engage these girls in non-competitive activities to increase their participation in after-school physical activity.



What we did:

As an extra-curricular activity we established a dance club and dance lessons were led by senior girls who were good at dance and had completed training in good practice and child protection. A member of PE staff is always in attendance at the club.

A link was made with Stevenson College to further extend our non-competitive opportunities. The college was able to come into school during core time and offer aerobics to S3 girls. The PE staff member also took part in this lesson as an opportunity for CPD. This was well received by the girls and activities such as body combat, body attack and other aerobic activities are now part of the curriculum.

As a result of this success within core PE, we were keen to offer extra-curricular activities for girls. An opportunity arose through Active Schools that put the school in touch with a local cheerleading coach. As a result a free taster session was offered to the girls and now there is an established weekly cheerleading activity held within the school between 5pm – 6pm giving the girls time to go home and return to school later. The club is sustained through a charge of £2 per session for those girls participating.

The successful partnership between Currie and Stevenson College has been extended to offer additional extra-curricular activities for girls. When Stevenson College send a dance or aerobics tutor into schools they enrol all class members on a 'short registration form'. This means that the school pupils are students of Stevenson College for the duration of the class. The registration form enables Stevenson College to claim money from the funding council and so helps to make the class sustainable. The money per student ratio is comparatively small for this type of course but the minimum number of 18 students per class ensures the cost of the tutor is covered, also enabling sustainable activity.

The difference it has made:

"I am delighted to see such a range of activities available to our girls. Their participation enables them to keep fit as well as have fun."

Headteacher, Currie High School

In addition to the 60 girls attending the established hockey club we now have regular attendances of:

- 12 girls at the extra-curricular cheerleading club
- 10 girls attending a dance club
- 16 attend aerobics
- 18 girls attending girls football
- 13 girls at the girl's basketball club.

Some of the S3 girls who took First Aid for their Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award service section then had to do six hours as a volunteer first aider at school clubs. Six of the S3 girls who attended football and basketball clubs as first aiders, realised that the sessions were fun and now attend the extra-curricular clubs as participants!

Students have commented on how they are motivated by and enjoy attending clubs with external coaches and instructors:

"Aerobics with a different instructor makes it feels less like a school class. She is friendly and fun."

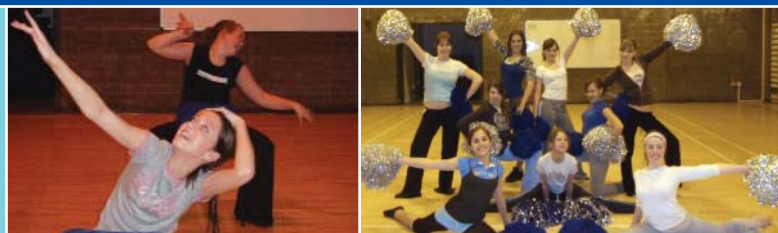
"The cheerleading instructor is really fun and bubbly; she really makes you want to do the class."

PE teachers have commented on improved attitudes, participation and skill levels during core curricular PE lessons.

It worked because:

Offering a wide range of extra-curricular activities that include aesthetic non-competitive classes helped cater for all interests and abilities. They also provided girls with an opportunity to meet others who have similar interests.

Bringing in external specialists to deliver activities and clubs where appropriate has been important in promoting good practice and providing CPD for our staff.



Meeting the needs of girls

A cycle of non-participation, especially in S3/4, had been established amongst our female pupils. Swimming and games orientated activities were unpopular. Girls did not want to wear shorts or get changed; there were often complaints that they didn't get enough changing time. This manifested in some behaviour problems but mostly defiance of the school over bringing PE kit and girls taking up to 15 minutes to come out of the changing room at the start of the period.

Our aim was to best meet the needs of female pupils in relation to increasing their participation in both curricular PE and extra-curricular sport and physical activity.



It worked because:

Success has been aided by whole school support of the programme as well as PE staff. Although improvements have been noted we are conscious that further improvements are necessary.

Pupils were surveyed about their thoughts, feelings and interests in relation to PE and physical activity; this allowed us to construct a database to enable pupils to be targeted with appropriate information regarding participation opportunities.

What we did:

Pupils were surveyed about their thoughts and feelings around PE and physical activity. After consultation with the full PE department, including the Active Schools Coordinator and Senior Management Team, a development plan was constructed to run in tandem with the whole school development and action plans.

Rules were relaxed around the PE kit to allow for any plain t-shirt – many girls choose to wear vest tops and a large number prefer to wear full length bottoms. In addition, girls are now allowed to cover up in the pool by wearing a top over their swimming costume.

In S2/3 core PE lessons all pupils are offered the opportunity to choose a single sex or co-ed class.

All S4 core programmes were restructured to include a team games course, individual and mixed activities in addition to a Fitness and Aesthetics course which was designed specifically to attract girls and includes activities such as dance, gymnastics, boxercise, step aerobics, and trampolining.

Staff trained in the delivery of Sports Leaders Awards and the Heartstart programme (a British Heart Foundation programme that teaches pupils emergency aid; pupils learn to give CPR and recognise heart attacks etc). These courses were chosen to offer variety, a new challenge and a different skill set.

Level 1 Sports Leader Award was offered to S4 core pupils, with the Level 2 award introduced this year. Pupils gain leadership experience in local primary schools, help with junior pupils in high school and also work with Active Schools and sports development. Sports Leaders were also engaged in helping to challenge a number of talented girls who were at risk of becoming disaffected.

The difference it has made:

Some improvement in participation is evident; teachers' observations and reduced referrals to the management team demonstrate that participation amongst girls has improved. By offering extra-curricular non-competitive activities groupings have had to be rotated to accommodate numbers.

Relaxation of PE kit rules has led to an improvement in curricular PE.

"I hate my legs and am now happier taking part in PE now that I can wear jogging bottoms."

S4 pupil

There has been a good uptake amongst girls for the S4 core programme in Fitness and Aesthetics with a reduced rate of drop out.

"I like that it is all girls taking part ... we don't have to compete with boys."

S4 pupil

Uptake of the Level 1 Award in Sports Leadership has been high amongst girls. In this first year the ratio was 27 girls to 16 boys.

The success of the Heartstart programme means it will now be rolled out to all S2 pupils through the PE curriculum and will be delivered to pupils involved in our extra-curricular girls group.



Girls in Sport Forum

We wanted to establish a 'Girls in Sport Forum' to provide a mechanism for gaining feedback on girls' barriers to participation.

We also wanted the girls to be more involved in the decision-making process and to help the planning of future programmes. The longer term aim is to increase participation and enthusiasm for sport and physical activity among girls in the school.



What we did:

We opened the forum up to girls from all age groups, emphasising that it was not necessary to be particularly keen on PE and sport already. An initial meeting was held to raise awareness and establish the main aims of the group. As a result the group agreed to meet at lunchtime approximately every six weeks. The meetings have been held in a very relaxed manner.

Initially the group members were volunteers as a result of open advertising in the school notices. As the programme moves on we are making an effort to target members and ensure that the group is representative and well balanced.

The group influence what clubs are offered and what activities the girls want to do then staff do their best to provide the activities that the girls want to take part in.

The school have decided to re-design the PE kit to one that is more in tune with what the girls like and feel comfortable wearing. The new kit will be available from the new term with kit guidelines being relaxed in the meantime e.g. allowing tracksuit bottoms of their choice.

It worked because:

- Girls have been highly motivated to be involved and have enjoyed the responsibility in taking on the challenges; they feel valued by their peers and by staff.
- We have a better understanding of what the girls want.
- Staff have worked hard to implement changes to effect the issues that have been raised by the forum.

The difference it has made:

- The group is now well established and continues to meet every six weeks.
- There have been improvements in the girls' self-esteem as their role is valued by their peers and by staff.
- Improved communication with peers on issues relating to participation through questionnaires to pupils, analysis work on these and use of reporting mechanisms.
- There are fewer girls sitting out of PE because clean kit is provided and girls now remember their own kit.
- The group is still evolving and in the next six months we will analyse attendance rates of new activities provided, raise the profile of the group and gather accurate feedback from peers.
- We now have a better understanding of what the girls want to do and due to the forum's work we will begin running a girls' multi sport club in the new term.

"This group has raised awareness of girls in sport within the school and they have had opportunities to experience new and different activities."

PE Teacher

"We think it has worked well. More girls have started to do PE more often, which is a great start."

Pupil

The Local Authority have recognised the work that has been taking place and the positive outcomes of this work and have decided to roll the approach out in all their secondary schools.



Trampolining for S1-S6 girls

We wanted to provide an alternative after-school club for girls to attend which would extend the range of girls attending after school clubs.

We wanted to provide a club focused on recreational, non-team participation in a 'social' setting. The club would offer the opportunity to achieve awards and to have fun through participation.

Through this club we also wanted to provide opportunities for S4 young leaders to be involved with leading younger pupils in sport and physical activities.

What we did:

Discussions with the Active Schools Coordinator and consultation with the girls identified trampolining as the most popular activity that girls would like to participate in. Based on this we organised a suitable venue and time to deliver the activity. One member of staff trained in trampolining and a link was formed with our local community club. A community coach from the club came in to assist with the delivery of one of the sessions.

Girls were invited to participate in the club every Friday from 2.45 – 4.45pm during term time.

British Gymnastics resources were ordered – posters, certificates, achievement sheets, tops and badges. These provided an option for the girls who wanted to earn certificates and recognition as they developed their physical skill.

Targets and rewards were agreed with the group in order to give the girls a sense of involvement and ownership of the club. We felt it important that the girls got something they wanted and that they found it worthwhile.

We recruited and briefed S4 young leaders who had attended and completed the JSLA courses. Many of these young leaders had experience of trampolining and were given trampolining specific guidance every week whilst assisting the teacher with delivery of the sessions. Their 'non-teacher' input was very encouraging to the younger girls.

The difference it has made:

"This kind of work affects self-confidence, self-esteem and has a positive knock on effect on everything related to the school – attendance, achievement, behaviour and so on."

Principal of Learning Community

20 girls have been regularly attending the club using four trampolines. Attendance has been good despite being held on Fridays after school. A wide range of pupils were involved, including pupils from different ethnic backgrounds and pupils with varying levels of behaviour.

Physical activity levels of the girls involved has increased. Some S2 girls have gone on to select Standard Grade PE and several attend other clubs both within school and in the community. Attendance at PE is generally good and there are now improved relationships with various PE staff and older pupils.

Behaviour has not been an issue at the club as the girls are engaged in an activity they chose.

Attitudes towards each other were mature and helpful as they helped each other learn skills, build confidence and earn certificates.

"I like how you get badges for it. You get a sense of achievement."

S2 Pupil

"I am not very good at PE, but I am good at trampolining. My confidence has grown."

S2 Pupil

All pupils have achieved at least one award; some have achieved up to four awards.

PE staff acknowledged how the trampolining club has helped to create a positive feeling about the other extra-curricular clubs offered by the school.

It worked because:

The key to our success was in empowering the girls to decide what they wanted to do and how they wanted to do it. This gave them ownership of the project; we could then build on their feeling of being special by rewarding them for their participation.

Good planning and organisation, including successful marketing and advertising, contributed to the success of the club. For example, organising good resources ensured a rewarding and positive experience and including Junior Sports Leaders was very positive for both them and the participants.

Being able to purchase award scheme materials and rewards made a difference and ensured the girls wanted to achieve something and have goals to work towards.



Improving girls' changing facilities

From the Girls in Sport survey we found 17% of S2/3 girls believed the facilities for PE were not good. We discussed this with the girls and found out that they were in fact referring to their changing area.

"I hated getting changed ... it is dull and felt dirty ... horrible to get changed in ... never any toilet paper or paper towels at the sinks ... there were no mirrors ... didn't make me want to do PE."

S3 girls

The girls were definite that they would feel better about coming to PE and getting changed if the environment was improved.

What we did:

The girls were asked to compile a 'wish list'. We then negotiated and reached agreement on what would be realistically achievable and would make the biggest difference to them.

PE staff discussed the proposals with the Senior Management Team link at our departmental meeting and received a favourable response. The Headteacher gained the support of the Facilities Manager and the make-over was agreed, taking health and safety guidelines into account.

The makeover was financed through a combination of funding from Girls in Sport and an allocation from the School Facilities budget.

Ten S3 girls volunteered to stay after school on a Friday afternoon to make the changes; none of these girls had attended any extra-curricular clubs before. Graffiti was removed, canvases painted and walls brightened with positive images of women and girls involved in sport.

The after care and upkeep of the new changing facilities has been remarkable. There are no longer the same issues about mess and graffiti and lack of respect for this part of the school. The staff have not needed to remind the girls to look after this space and to date it is kept in a manner which is acceptable to all using it.

The difference it has made:

The impact has been positive and immediate. All of the girls who use this area love the changes and are taking much greater care of the room.

There is no graffiti and there has been no difficulty with toilets or sinks being blocked now that toilet paper and paper towels are readily available. Mirrors will soon be added to complete the project.

We have yet to do the follow up Girls in Sport questionnaire which would be able to produce evidence in the change of attitude to PE by girls. However, the class registers on a weekly basis have demonstrated that there are less girls not taking part than before the make over of the changing rooms and staff do not have the same issues in persuading girls to get changed to take part in class. This is a positive step forward for girls and staff in the department.

"It is brighter ... a lot more colourful ... nicer to get changed in ... feels much cleaner ... much better not asking teachers for toilet paper ... now we want to go to PE ... it is girly and bright and eye catching."

S3 Girls

"If was fantastic to see these girls getting involved ... working together, making their ideas a reality especially at 6pm on a Friday night!"

PE teacher

It worked because:

The project worked because the girls felt their concerns had been listened to, they contributed to the decision making process, they were given the chance to get involved to make the difference and those who were involved had great fun during the make-over (music, chat, hard work, pizza and lots of laughs!). They could see that their words had quickly turned into action; they definitely felt a sense of 'ownership' of their facility.



Extra-Curricular Girls in Sport Club

We wanted to increase girls' participation in extra-curricular sport and physical activity to help them achieve the national physical activity recommendations of one hour of moderate activity every day.

There were a small percentage of pupils attending extra-curricular clubs, those who did were not committed to attending regularly; some sport-specific clubs were forced to stop running due to a lack of pupils regularly attending. We recognised the need to raise the profile of extra-curricular clubs.

Very little joint working was taking place with primary and secondary schools; we also wanted to address this, ensuring that the planning of activities became more integrated and successful in tackling transition problems.

It worked because:

The girls in sport training and time out to plan the project was essential; although it takes time and there is a lot of hard work involved in setting up the girls club it really does work.

Enthusiastic and dedicated staff have been essential to the popularity of this club.

The multi-activity approach ensured that girls were able to experience a range of activities and helped keep them motivated to attend every week.

The use of car pools and incentives helped to ensure that girls were able to participate and wanted to continue.

What we did:

We set up an all girls extra-curricular multi-sport club designed so that the activities are changed regularly and that several activities are offered at the same time.

A logo was designed to provide a club identity, and leaflets were produced for distribution to all pupils in P7-S6. The girls were also sent a letter of invitation in the mail to raise the profile of the club and inform both the girls and their parents.

In order to raise awareness of the club, a power-point presentation was shown on the flat screen TV in the academy in the weeks leading up to the club, which displayed the logo and image of girls doing activity. We updated the school web pages and featured the activities on the pupil bulletin. Continued promotion of the club took place via additional notice boards.

Incentive schemes, which targeted girls specifically, were used to encourage regular attendance at the club. Incentives included hair, beauty and nutrition workshops on a termly basis and vouchers were provided to girls with high attendance rates.

Transport was an issue for some girls from the furthest away primary school so a car pool was arranged with their parents to enable the girls to take part.

The difference it has made:

"The girls club focuses on girls who would not otherwise participate in exercise by giving them opportunities to try out a range of sporting and healthy activities not normally on offer. The club is proving increasingly popular and is already making a difference to the health of those girls involved."

Headteacher, Meldrum Academy

The main girls club attracts 30-50 girls each week, and is helping to increase their physical activity levels. The girls are also developing their self-esteem and have a better understanding of health and exercise.

"Thanks so much, you rock!"

"Its been fun and exhausting."

"Thanks for bringing girls in sport here."

Pupils

Over 10 different activities have been offered through the club including hip hop dance, cheerleading, aerobics classes, spinning and girls' only swimming.

Additional activity-specific extra-curricular sports clubs have been set up for popular activities; these initially take place within the girls club but have resulted in some satellite clubs.

We now have started to engage in joint planning between the primary schools and the secondary school as a result of the success of the girls' project.

The Local Authority has submitted a bid to the Big Lottery for a Local Authority wide roll-out of the scheme which would enable every secondary school to have a girls club. The community club, who will take over the running of the club at Meldrum, have submitted a bid to extend the community club and begin activities with other groups, e.g. mums.



Hip Hop Dance Workshops

All of the extra-curricular clubs held at the school were mixed gender; we felt we needed to look at dedicating clubs and activities to girls only as boys often tended to dominate mixed sessions.

We recognised that girls are not as competitive as boys, and so we wanted to offer a non-competitive structured activity which would encourage girls to participate.

There was an overt attitude amongst the girls at Musselburgh that sport and activity were for 'thin people'. Girls often cited embarrassment over their body image and perceived weight as a barrier to participation. We wanted to challenge this perception and provide an activity which would help raise their self-esteem.



What we did:

Some senior pupils at the school loved dance and wanted to share this with other girls. We provided them with the opportunity of leadership training and as a result two young dance leaders were created.

Following their training the young leaders planned and organised an after school session in hip hop dance which was opened up to girls in S1 and S2. The session is ongoing, once a week for the duration of the academic year.

A dance instructor was sourced through Telford College to help support the young leaders as a mentor and provide verbal feedback which was further supported in detailed notes. The notes included issues such as class structure, warm-ups and cool-downs, and specific dance teaching methods such as teaching through counts v. set explanations.

The leaders were allowed to develop their own teaching styles and dance routines to be presented at each session.

The professional dance coach continued to visit the class throughout the term, building relationships with both the senior and junior pupils.

It worked because:

Having the young leaders who are senior pupils in the school lead the dance sessions added a new dimension to the school life of some of the younger pupils.

The young leaders have a fun and lively personality which is reflected in their dance sessions. The S1-S2 pupils respond well to this, which has resulted in a consistent level of attendance at the club.

The confidence, dedication and skills of the young leaders ensured they were able to deliver the session to a high standard.



The difference it has made:

The session is now attended by approximately 8-10 girls, including a visually impaired pupil who struggles to attend any other extra-curricular physical activity club. As word spreads about the sessions, the numbers attending are increasing.

The club has benefited both the young leaders and the girls participating in the club:

- The young leaders grew in confidence and became more accessible to the younger pupils. They began to accurately judge their level of competence and plan their lessons accordingly.
- The younger girls have been inspired by the older girls leading the sessions.

"We really enjoyed the classes, we had a lot of fun and learned new dance moves."

S2 Pupil

"As leaders we have been able to work with the girls and teach our dance due to the confidence and skills gained through the sports leadership course."

Young dance leader

The tiered structure of teaching has proved very effective. It has empowered the senior pupils, giving them an opportunity to lead with support from an experienced professional dance teacher.

The majority of the girls who attended this activity have also been involved in other sessions in particular football. Girls' attendance during curriculum time has also improved.

Improving girls' participation in sport and physical activity

The school catchment area is one of multiple deprivation which sometimes results in problems with, and attitudes towards, sport. As a 'School of Ambition' we are now involved in many new exciting initiatives which are changing our working area.

Our challenge is to continue to improve the level of females participating in PE and school sport, aspiring to a 100% record in core and extra-curricular PE and sport. This will then match that achieved in Standard Grade and Higher PE.

We wanted to:

- Increase participation to ensure healthier female pupils who are more confident, have higher levels of self-esteem and enhanced social skills.
- Help our female pupils develop a positive attitude to physical activity and a lifelong interest in healthy living.
- Aid understanding of health, fitness and well-being and develop links with Midlothian Education Healthy Respect programme.

It worked because:

Support from the headteacher and the whole school has ensured that everyone now recognises that it is important to improve girls' participation in sport and physical activities.

The training and support allowed us to take the time and the effort to know the area and the issues well resulting in successful change.

What we did:

In the past four years significant change has been achieved in curricular PE by having dynamic and forward looking management and staff in the department. The PE staff is now split equally between male and female which has created a demand for more girls to take PE at Standard Grade and Higher.

Kit rules have been adapted and there is now a supply of 'borrow kit' available that is washed regularly. New Nike bibs which do not 'figure hug' have also been purchased to encourage girls' participation in team sports.

The range of activities on offer for girls has been extended to include activities such as basketball, volleyball, dance, trampolining, swimming and football; the most popular being basketball, trampolining and dance. The PE department has also purchased kites and frisbees to encourage girls into sport through less traditional routes.

The PE department also introduced an Aesthetic Standard Grade course focused on dance, trampolining and swimming which has proved a tremendous success. There is now also a dance academy which runs as part of the Schools of Ambition project.

The 'Girls in Sport' programme will also allow changing rooms to be upgraded, large mirrors, hair dryers and hand dryers to be installed to further encourage girls to want to change, before and after sport.

The difference it has made:

The training and support for increasing girls' participation in sport and physical activity has rekindled efforts across the school to achieve change. The staff are enthusiastic and willing to try new things and the headteacher is now recognising our efforts and that physical activity and sport have an important role to play in creating change in the school and in the lives of the young people.

The Aesthetic Standard Grade course has made more girls interested in taking PE as an examination choice, thereby raising fitness levels.

The introduction of the Dance Academy has also brought a great number of girls to the department including those students not previously perceived as 'sporty girls'. This has had a dramatic effect on making the department more girl-friendly:

"Well it helps when you don't have to do the activity in front of the boys."

"There are more activities on offer now that we like doing."

Pupils

The changes in kit guidelines have improved participation rates in extra-curricular activities. We hope that better facilities and improvements to the changing areas will facilitate this further.

"Our staff are now more in tune with the changing expectation of today's teenagers and have made changes to our curriculum and facilities to reflect this. As a 'School of Ambition' we now put the health of children and active learning at the heart of everything we do."

Headteacher



P7 – S3 Girls Active Transition Club

Uptake in secondary school extra-curricular sport and physical activity was poor. In a rural area, transport is a key factor affecting participation as pupils need to be brought to and from the school by bus. Some clubs (e.g. netball and badminton) are successfully held in a good local sports centre where girls can walk to and from.

We wanted to run a club for P7-S3 non-participant girls that would:

- increase the numbers of girls participating in PE and physical activity and promote lifelong participation
- improve transition links from primary school to secondary
- promote positive attitudes towards physical activity and change perceptions
- deliver a wide and varied programme of activities, identified through pupil choice
- promote access to community clubs/facilities.



What we did:

The Active Schools Coordinator approached P7 pupils directly to gauge interest in the club and to establish a range of activities that girls would like to try.

50 P7 girls from two local feeder primary schools were invited to attend after-school activities at the high school.

Secondary pupils were targeted through the school bulletin and departmental posters. Face-to-face contact has been effective in engaging girls in other types of activities and was therefore adopted as a method of consultation in this project.

The PE teacher and Active Schools Coordinator established dates and times for the club to run and identified who would lead it.

A democratic voting process with all girls was undertaken to select the most popular activities to take forward in the three blocks (each block consisting of four weeks of one activity):

- roller-blading to music, with yoga for relaxation at the end of the session
- gymnastics – structured to include all ability levels and presented in an attractive way. Lots of equipment is used which primary girls had no access to before, e.g. wall bars, ropes, trampette, to make this fun and enjoyable
- dance and body combat, with a free choice for the last few weeks of term.

Almost all activities were led by members of the PE department, while a yoga instructor was brought in and paid for through Big Lottery funding and dance instruction was led by a senior pupil.

The difference it has made:

As many as 28 girls have been regularly attending the club from associated primary schools within the Perth city area. The biggest proportion of membership came from primary-aged girls (70%).

Primary pupils are now more confident and familiar with the secondary school setting and have met new people from the secondary school.

Trying new activities has taught lessons to the staff on how girls perceive themselves with others in a new environment and the need for girls to feel secure with new activities.

We intend to track the P7 girls through to secondary school to gain information on the impact this club has had on their long-term attitudes to PE and physical activity.

The next step will be to look at community club links and making an active transition between girls participating in schools and actively taking control of their own physical activity lifestyle by choosing to take part in local community sport and physical activity clubs.

It worked because:

Co-operation from parents who have taken a positive approach in terms of car-sharing has meant girls are able to regularly attend the club.

Activities for the first two terms were planned in advance so that girls were aware of the activities they will undertake.

This was important because girls would only commit if they knew what was on offer and was important in demonstrating that provision reflected consultation.



Getting girls into extra-curricular sports clubs

Although there is high participation in extra-curricular activities in the primary schools across the cluster, particularly in the lower age groups, there is very low participation in the high school. Existing clubs only catered for the young people who take part in everything and who were interested in sport; no clubs catered for non-participant girls.

There was neither an interest nor targeted approach to improving girls' participation in PE and sport; consequently a recent school survey found 56% of girls were not enjoying PE.

We wanted to increase participation in extra-curricular sport and physical activities, raising the profile of sport and the PE department across the school.



What we did:

An action plan was produced and communicated with PE teachers and the Headteacher of the secondary school, as well as the Active Schools Manager who was supportive of the changes. As a result, funding was secured to carry out the proposed changes.

Initial work has started and a trampolining club has been set up for girls from P6 through to S6, which is promoted through PE and a taster session during curriculum time. The trampolining activity featured as a holiday activity and has since been brought into the school as an after school club.

The schools also undertook a block of dance during curriculum PE and a dance club has been established. A more performance-based dance club has been set up for those girls enjoying dance and wanting to take part in a more competitive way. This ensures a progression and that the dance activity can cater for a variety of abilities and girls with different aims for their dance.

A parallel cheerleading club will be set up to complement the dance program. Curricular PE was used as a base for introducing the activity through a taster session. Taster sessions in curriculum time were used to promote the activities to those girls who currently do not take part in any after school club.

Other existing activities for girls are; football which will be integrated into the girls' program, the existing badminton club which has 50% of girls taking part and a girls' basketball club is planned as a result of a positive attitude to the activity.

Activities are promoted through a newsletter that goes to all pupils, in addition all the girls activities will also be promoted through a girls' only leaflet that will show the activities on offer and highlight the girls' only element.

A girls' council will be established which will inform the choice of activities to be offered and how they will be offered. It is expected that the girls' council will become more involved not only in the advising role but also in promotion of the activities, scheduling and developing of the activities.

The difference it has made:

There is now a greater understanding of the barriers facing girls in relation to their participation in PE and sport.

Changes have started to happen; there are now more activities on offer and the PE staff feel comfortable delivering girls' only activities. PE staff have also started to separate curricular classes and do more single sex activities. This is appreciated by the girls who are now more enthusiastic about taking part.

The dance club will continue to develop and jazzercise, street and hip-hop sessions will be added to widen the variety and to attract more pupils to take part.

As a result of this work a Girls' Council has been developed and will meet during the school year to discuss issues around girls' participation in sport.

It worked because:

Building relationships with headteachers and PE staff has been key; they fully understand the necessity of the targeted programme and support the programmes in encouraging girls to take part in PE and school sport.



Girls Health and Activity Club

We wanted to tackle the lack of girls participating in PE and physical activity and to encourage girls who do not normally participate in extra curricular clubs by offering a variety of non-competitive aesthetic activities. The Health Club was targeting girls in S2 and S3.



What we did:

The Health Club began with good planning from which the first step was to get the local leisure centre involved in order to get 'new' people to deliver the classes and to make the leisure centre more familiar to the girls. Questionnaires were completed by the girls and these suggested they wanted more choice and to try new activities not currently offered so we had to find out what activities and instructors the leisure centre could provide. Timing was important too and we chose to keep the length of the blocks of activity short in order to maintain the girls' interest.

We offered taster sessions for the girls in a wide range of activities that included cardio kick, hip hop, aqua aerobics, fit ball and circuits, from which the girls could choose which they would like to become clubs. We also offered clubs in netball and football for girls who enjoyed competitive sport.

As PE teachers were already heavily committed with extra-curricular activities and to introduce 'new faces', we sourced NOPES funding through the Active Schools Coordinator in order to use external instructors.

As a further way of capturing and maintaining interest, the Health Club also had an incentive scheme that offered beauty demonstrations and £10 vouchers for some products.

The difference it has made:

Girls who do not normally attend clubs are now participating and we hope to use this to encourage more girls to come along. This can be achieved by 'word of mouth' from the girls themselves.

The clubs achieve consistent numbers in all activities rather than the usual 'tail off' at the end of term.

The girls' attitudes have changed as they feel they are getting more choice and that their opinions are valued. Girls in S4 asked "why can't we have a club like that?". The girls themselves have been really positive and really enjoyed the range of activities and the choice on offer. They have commented that they appreciate the incentives and felt they had worked hard to achieve them.

"We've never had a club like this before."

"I've really enjoyed having the choice of activities within one club."

Pupils

The clubs have helped to build links for the girls with the local leisure centre. The involvement of the leisure centre has had a huge impact on the girls. They are now used to using the centre and have got to know the staff there and they feel much more relaxed going to the centre.

The school staff and management are much more aware of the barriers affecting girls' participation and are becoming more supportive in finding solutions.

It worked because:

- having a supportive Head of PE and department
- having an enthusiastic teacher to lead the programme and to identify and work around the barriers that could have jeopardised the club, e.g. having to book staff eight weeks ahead etc.
- having the local leisure centre on side; they reduced booking rules and welcomed the girls. They also provided some instructors at a reduced rate
- having access to NOPES funding from Active Schools Manager
- voluntary demonstrations from a local beautician.



Primary Girls in Sport

We wanted to address problems of inactivity with girls before they went to secondary school. We also wanted to introduce girls to activities not normally available in primary schools and activities that were available in the community. Our target group therefore was P7 girls.

It worked because:

This was a great project for PE Specialists and Active Schools Coordinator to work on together. Planning and working together was key to identifying creative solutions and where best use could be made of resources.

By raising the issues around girls' participation school staff and management are now more aware of the barriers effecting girls' participation and have become more supportive in finding solutions.

The main problems were in transporting pupils in this rural area and to find venues during the school day, which were both overcome by working together at a cluster level making use of joint resources.

What we did:

Two primary specialists (one for Stranraer and one for Annan) were given time on their timetable for one afternoon per week all year to concentrate on girls only activities. Both were given planning time to contact feeder primary schools to see if they wished to take part in the project.

A timetable was created that gave each of the larger schools 4-5 sessions each. The smaller schools also had 4-5 sessions and were grouped together so giving these pupils the chance to work with girls from other schools. It was hoped this would also ease transition into secondary as in some of the smaller schools there are only 2-3 P7 girls in the school.

Planning time was important and was built into the project for the specialist and Active Schools Coordinator to meet regularly. The PE Development Officer met with Head Teachers at local cluster meetings to give them preliminary information on what we were trying to achieve.

We constructed a questionnaire suitable for the age group which asked the pupils which activities they would like to try. The activities on offer in Stranraer were limited to kick boxing, dance and netball as these activities were available in the local community. After the sessions the girls were given the chance to go along to the local clubs and continue with the sport. In Annan the activities were more varied as there was more on offer in the community. The pupils in Annan schools were offered incentives as it was felt that the girls in this area were not as active. These included jewellery making and spinning sessions at a local leisure centre.

Sessions were delivered by the specialist and the Active Schools Coordinator, all in curricular time. The girls were encouraged to continue with their chosen activities in local clubs and after school clubs.

In both areas transporting pupils to venues proved the biggest expense as the range of venues included primary schools, the local secondary and leisure centres. To overcome this we used the local 'Ride For Free' scheme, the PE budget and Active Schools budget.

The difference it has made:

This approach has meant that the sustainability of the sessions can be ensured, with planning time being built into the work of the specialists and with activity sessions being built into timetables.

Attendance for the girls was optional yet only a few girls in some schools did not attend the first session. They did then come along to future sessions when they heard from the girls how much they enjoyed the sessions.

Headteachers have been very supportive, feeling that it is good for transition issues especially in the smaller schools. Other headteachers appreciated the range of activities that could be offered and the sustainability of pupils being able to continue with activities in local clubs.

"It was great fun and I wish we could do more things like this."

"It got me fit."

Pupils

The Kick Boxing Club in Stranraer has increased numbers attending and has added extra classes to accommodate this.



Tackling girls' dropping out of PE

We wanted to address the problem of S3 and S4 girls who were dropping out of core PE, making excuses and not bringing their kit. This was a problem for our small department as when girls did not bring kit there was no space to accommodate them. The school policy was to give non participants written work to do instead and as more girls dropped out this became disruptive to the class, with time being lost each lesson while PE staff set the writing tasks to the non participants causing the participants in PE to lose out.

It worked because:

- The girls felt valued and their opinions were taken seriously and listened to.
- There were specific opportunities created for the girls.

What we did:

We asked the girls why they were refusing to participate and asked them what could be done to encourage them to take part in core PE lessons. We asked them to write down four activities that they would like to do over the year. They told us they wanted more individual activities such as trampolining and aerobics/fitness equipment and non-competitive activities. The girls felt that there was less pressure if activities were non-competitive and if there was a more recreational feel to activities. This would encouraged a more social atmosphere which they would prefer.

The department purchased rebounders, swiss balls, boxercise equipment, more traditional fitness equipment, i.e. dumbbells and skipping ropes. Circuit class training was set up with a variety of exercise posters for guidance and motivation and more freedom and choice was given to the girls.

Outside fitness instructors from the local leisure centres were brought in to give one-off taster sessions and to give the girls different ideas and routines, eg Boxercise Class.

Gymnastics was another form of exercise which was introduced but in a much more alternative form which allowed the girls freedom of movement around equipment and not in such a structured form with more freedom to find their own way of moving and being involved as a group. Sports Acro as a gymnastics discipline allowed less talented and weaker gymnastics to be involved as support helpers and be part of the choreography of routines for this group.

To further encourage awareness about a healthy lifestyle the girls were rewarded for participating in physical activity in core PE and extra curricular activities by being offered personal grooming by the beauty and hair department at the local further education college. This has had an impact on lifestyle awareness through looking good, feeling good and physical activity is playing a part in this.

At the same time, new after school activities for girls were developed to help support the core activities. These are dance, gymnastics and more traditional activities such as football and netball, for girls only as well as a mixed running club led by a female coach. A girls' information board was created in the PE department to keep them informed of what was on.

The difference it has made:

On average out of a class of 31 girls, there could be up to 12 girls not participating. After the introduction of the above activities this fell to three or four girls not participating. This has made core PE much more enjoyable as there is no major battle at the beginning of the PE lessons and makes the planning process much easier to manage.

The self-esteem and confidence in the girls has increased and they are now enjoying activities such dance, and fitness and wanting to participate as they are being given a choice. For example they could choose 'the bleep test' (which they hated!) or shuttle runs as a part of a fitness circuit, or choose between a cross country run or an aerobics session.

Giving girls the choice of activities has encouraged more girls to participate, has reduced peer pressure not to participate and the girls are more motivated as a result.

There has always been after school activities but not as wide a range of activities as there is now. Participation in after school activities has increased, e.g. before the introduction of these changes in core PE there were only around six girls attending gymnastics on a regular basis; now we have a regular attendance of 14.

Dance would take place on an ad-hoc basis in preparation for performances. However this now takes place three times each week (once at lunch time and twice after school) and offers a variety of dance experiences from cheerleading, hip hop, street dance and pantomime dance. There is a regular attendance of 14 and 24 at every session. All these sessions are run by senior girls and Leisure Development Coaches. This is supported through various external funding such as Awards for All and Active Schools budget; however the senior girls are volunteers and are offered other training opportunities to develop their skills and experience.



From planning to implementation: Getting girls active

The uptake of extra-curricular sport and physical activities has been low among girls; the changing facilities are poor, there are cultural barriers present which deter girls from taking part in sport and physical activity and there is a lack of understanding in relation to health and fitness.

We wanted to widen the scope of activities available and to introduce girls to less traditional forms of exercise which are easily accessible out of school hours. By providing more appealing activities we aimed to target those girls not currently engaged in extra-curricular sport and physical activities and those deemed 'hard to reach'.

What we did:

The 'Girls in Sport' training provided staff with the knowledge and a toolkit to start making changes. After the training a planning process took place where staff identified any issues and problems and put together an action plan to address them.

Our first step was to consult with girls on what activities they would like to do; we then held constant discussion with the girls about the forthcoming activities. This allowed us to prepare the girls for the new activities and create a sense of expectation and excitement.

We designed a leaflet and put up notice boards to display information and pictures of the activities which girls could take part in. The leaflet will be going out in the mail to targeted girls to help raise the profile of the new extra-curricular clubs and inform the parents that these activities will be taking place.

The girls and PE staff identified the changing facilities as a problem. Janitors have now taken time to clean the changing area, painting and updating the changing rooms providing mirrors and generally making it a more welcoming area.

The school has also changed their kit guidelines to allow for a fresher more contemporary kit in an attempt to reduce the number of girls 'forgetting' their kit.

The difference it has made:

The planning process has been really helpful and has enabled the staff to make use of their new knowledge. It has focused the work and aided the joint working and planning process between PE and extra-curricular activity. We now have set targets and clear objectives which have enabled staff to focus on a target area.

Through the consultation process and the staff regularly updating them on progress, the girls feel involved in the changes taking place. The work that has been done to prepare the girls and promote the new activities has been time well spent as the girls are eagerly awaiting the new activities.

The change in kit guidelines has made a huge difference and there are now no girls 'forgetting' their kit – as a result participation in curricular activities has increased.

The preparation and updating of the changing rooms have been crucial; it not only makes the changing facility more inviting but more importantly it shows the girls that staff are willing to listen, take their ideas on board and invest time and effort for their benefit.

"This is a really great opportunity for us to address the participation issues amongst girls in our school. It allows us to provide an environment where they feel comfortable getting active and hopefully get them engaged in some activities they will want to do in school PE and outside school hours."

PE teacher

It worked because:

The action plan process provided staff with the necessary time and focus to develop a programme of interventions which was coherent and covered all areas, from the marketing and consultation with the girls, to the actual implementation of new activities.

The support and money from the Girls in Sport project have made the changes become a reality. We have been able to focus on getting inactive girls active through intensively targeting a smaller number of girls rather than focusing on the majority.



Energize: A referral scheme for young people concerned about their lifestyle

Through one-to-one discussions with the school nurse and guidance staff we recognised that a number of pupils were presenting low self-esteem and self-motivation due to their body weight. Some of these young people had withdrawn from PE, had poor rates of school attendance and their general health has been worrying.

The aim of this course was to involve the young people in a course of physical activity for 10 weeks combined with additional group work that would address issues around adopting positive healthy lifestyles and building self-esteem.



What we did:

The programme was an Integrated Children And Young Peoples Support Team (ICYPST) initiative which also engaged the school nurse and guidance team. Young people were targeted for involvement through discussions between the school nurse and guidance team.

The course was held in the school and in local outdoor education centres. The course ran for two hours per week for 10 weeks. Group tasks included how to make a healthy lunch box and healthy heart sessions informed the young people of how food affects their bones and brains etc. Social skills were developed every week through group discussions.

The school nurse was involved in health checks for the young people before, during and after the programme. An Educational Psychologist was engaged to give a talk on self-esteem and sports coaches were involved in delivering the various sports and activity sessions. A variety of activities were offered and included new age curling, karate, archery, rock climbing, walking and skating. The karate programme culminated in a grading for the young people involved. Guest speakers were also engaged to talk to the girls about a variety of healthy lifestyle related issues.

Parents were involved from the beginning to increase awareness about the programme and about health issues surrounding their child. They were also encouraged to support their child and the programme's messages at home.

Four sessions were held which were attended by parents. During these sessions parents kept and discussed food diaries and participated in the healthy heart session.

The difference it has made:

Pupils are fully involved in the activities and speak very freely about the group and why they are there; they have even asked whether the programme will be running next year.

"The group dynamics are fantastic and the support they are showing to one another is superb."

Teacher

The targeted nature of the group formed a source of social support for the young people. They were all very supportive of one another as they all had similar feelings about their size and never felt threatened by failure.

Activities will be continuing over summer holidays in order to maintain contact and to keep the young people motivated in relation to the programme's aims.

To help ensure the programme is sustainable we are hoping to run the programme again using this year's group as mentors for the new participants. We aim to introduce the use of pedometers in order to engage the young people in continuing their physical activity and to enable the programme to run at a reduced input after the formal element, so enabling sustainability of the programme to the young people.

As a result of this pilot we are now engaged in discussions around rolling the programme out to local primary schools.

It worked because:

The multi-agency approach ensured a range of expertise and skill sets were involved in the programme.

As the programme was conducted out-of-school hours the young people could enjoy the activities and learn new and different skills without the pressures of feeling inadequate amongst their more gifted/talented peers.



Getting girls more active

A survey of girls identified a lack of non-competitive sport and physical activity options available in and outside of the PE curriculum.

Parental attitudes towards girls being active were poor; parents frequently gave their daughters notes to be excused from PE and lacked commitment to any after-school activities. We felt that parents and their daughters did not understand the importance of physical activity in contributing to a healthy lifestyle.

We wanted to develop a better ethos in school and develop girls' self-confidence, self-esteem and self-worth in an attempt to increase their participation in sport and physical activities.



What we did:

A notice board was installed in the dance studio to display photos and posters, and promote a positive image of girls and women participating in sport and physical activities. We also used the board to help advertise school clubs, competitions and leisure activities within the community.

Plasma screens and DVD players have been purchased, with one in the main school foyer and one in the PE department. The screens are used to show activities in which the girls are participating and raise the profile of PE and school activities.

Mirrors, hairdryers and straighteners have been bought for the changing facilities which girls will be able to access in their own time. PE kit will also be purchased to avoid 'forgotten kit' excuses for non-participation. A 'No Excuses' policy operates where all young people play some part in the lessons, e.g. keeping score, helping set-up.

Outside agencies were involved to bring fresh ideas and a fresh approach to PE lessons. For example, West Lothian Leisure come in and run some body attack and body jam sessions during PE time. PE staff sit in on the sessions viewing it as in-service training. Y Dance have also been brought in to run an after-school dance class.

We also operate an extra curricular lunchtime class when the whole PE dept is opened up to girls only.

It worked because:

A multi-agency approach has ensured pupils see interesting new faces; the instructors have also been able to gain a sense of rapport and confidence with pupils who may not like or get along with the PE staff.

Dance activities worked because it was a new activity with a new young enthusiastic member of staff. Pupils had a focus as they were performing in a show at the end of the term and the girls were keen to perform in front of their peers.

The difference it has made:

"Developing dance at Whitburn has been very successful. It was encouraging to see the girls take a lead role in what they were doing and I could see that their self-esteem and self-worth were growing as they learned and performed the dances."

PE Teacher

Dance activities have been a huge success. Over 100 girls participated in a dance show which was performed to the rest of the school during the day and to an adult audience at night. The after-school dance class, run by Y Dance, has been a huge success and a number of girls performed their dances during the end of term school assemblies.

"The dance classes have been good; we enjoy the music and learning some new moves."

S2 pupil

Whitburn now regularly take part in the Dance categories of the West Lothian Sports Competitions. Eleven schools perform prepared dances to each other and then take part in a dance workshop working with girls from the other schools.

Relations with West Lothian Leisure have improved; as a result of their sessions in school there is now a demand for piloting body jam sessions for young people aged 12–16 years at the local leisure centre.

"I liked the body jam class it was good to get a different teacher."

S3 pupil



Bollywood Dance

We wanted to engage girls who were largely inactive within the curricular PE programme and extra-curricular activities.

The target audience of girls were from an ethnic minority background where sport was not seen as a priority by them or their families. These girls did the minimum of work in class and although never disruptive, were not getting anything out of the programmes that were on offer. The majority of these girls rarely interacted with any of the teaching staff.

What we did:

We consulted with the target group of girls and asked them what sport and physical activity they would like to do; the girls had no idea of what was possible or what they wanted to do. One of the feeder primary schools held an end of year talent competition where one of the acts was Bollywood dance. This gave Woodfarm the idea to try out this activity.

Following interest from the target group the PE department sourced funding, gaining support from external agencies such as dance development.

The girls spoke to their parents in an attempt to establish a contact for choreography. The girls were forthcoming with ideas and sourced music, dresses and jewellery.

An after-school club was established led by the girls attending with a member of female PE staff as support.

We have now had an opportunity to link primary and secondary girls together in this activity. Active Schools Primary and Secondary Coordinators met to look at options for how Bollywood dance could be rolled out in the cluster primary schools and the secondary Bollywood dance girls are delivering sessions to primary school pupils.

The high school girls have since led a weekly one-hour session with each of the four neighbouring primary schools for a period of eight-weeks. This culminated in a Festival of Bollywood Art at the high school. All the primaries showcased to one another the dances they had been working on with the high school dance leaders. The festival also included henna artists and food tasting of traditional Indian cuisine.

The difference it has made:

“The introduction of Bollywood dance as part of the extra-curricular programme has proved to be a resounding success. The participation levels of the girls have increased and there is evidence of improved self-esteem as they demonstrate a skilled performance to their peer group with a confidence rarely seen in PE activities.”

PE Teacher

Thirty girls have been attending the initial after-school Bollywood dance club; 95% of these girls are from an ethnic minority background.

The girls have now grown in confidence and choreography is self-led within the group.

The girls have performed at the National PE Conference in Stirling. The girls were delighted with this invitation and were very enthusiastic about performing to other people something which was very important within their own culture and community; they welcomed this opportunity to share and display this to many others. The girls took great pride at getting ready for their performance in costumes and jewellery.

Four schools, including 150 primary aged girls and boys attended and performed at the Festival of Bollywood Art at the high school.

PE is now seen as a place where these girls have relationships with the teachers, as a consequence their self-esteem has increased and they have found an environment in which they can feel confident about physical activity. The girls now feel they are contributing to the PE department and to the ethos of the school by bringing their culture and experiences into school life.

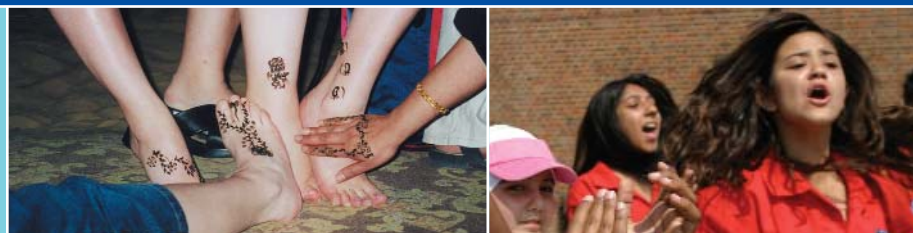
“We like the chance to show others the different kinds of things we do outside of school. Sometimes people don’t know what our lives are like.”

Pupil

It worked because:

The programme worked because we consulted with these girls and then put in place a programme of classes at times when it was possible for them to participate.

The girls were given opportunities to display their work; they loved the performances and the attention it gave them. The performance element was perhaps the most significant factor in the project being sustained.







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