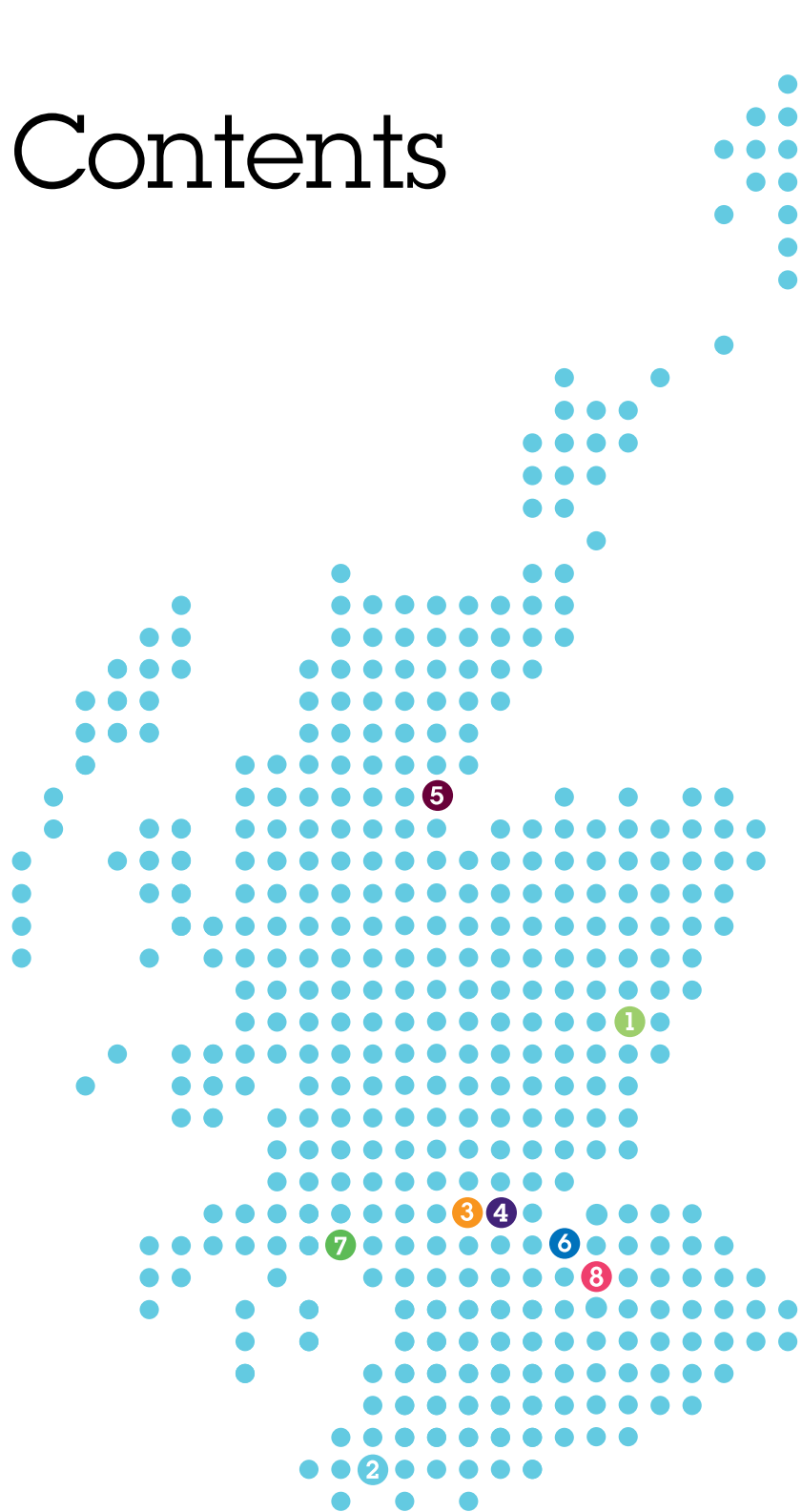


Fit for Girls case study pack

Increasing girls' participation
in PE, physical activity and sport



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Foreword



As women involved in sport, we appreciate the power it has to transform lives, and the importance of engaging with girls and young women to increase participation.

The Fit for Girls programme aims to increase physical education (PE), physical activity and sport participation in Scotland amongst girls aged 11 to 16 years. Funded through the Scottish Government, the programme is driven by **sportscotland** and the Youth Sport Trust, in partnership with local authorities and schools across the country.

In order to grow participation and engage with girls, we need to start early.

We need to connect with them and help them develop a long term interest in sport and physical activity. To date, the Fit for Girls programme has engaged 338 mainstream and 15 additional support needs secondary schools across the country. In addition, all 32 local partners across Scotland have supported the initiative.

A core focus of the programme is to bring about sustainable change in schools that builds a positive future for girls' participation in PE, physical activity and sport. From research we know that 69 per cent of PE staff and 73 per cent of Active Schools staff who attended Fit for Girls training reported that involvement

in the programme helped them to increase girls' participation in their schools.

With that in mind, we would like to extend a huge thank you to the Active Schools Network, and all the schools and individuals involved in creating these positive changes through Fit for Girls. The success of the programme is testament to their time and effort, and willingness to take on a challenge. These case studies provide an excellent example of the good work carried out by partners through the Fit for Girls programme.

Louise Martin CBE
Chair, **sportscotland**

Baroness Sue Campbell CBE
Chief Executive, Youth Sport Trust

Using research to increase participation

Brechin High School

Local authority
Angus Council



Key points:

- Local research can support the development of strategies that increase girls' participation levels in sport and physical activity
- Consultation with girls can provide access to a range of activities
- Girls-only activity increases participation and confidence
- Using participation incentives can increase activity rates.



The challenge

At Brechin High School there were many extra-curricular physical activities available for pupils. However, uptake from girls was relatively low and there was difficulty in engaging the least-active girls. The target, therefore, was to increase the participation rates of girls in PE and extra-curricular activities, as well as raise the profile of sport and physical activity within the school.

Staff decided that a new approach to engaging girls was required and the Fit for Girls programme provided the foundation for engagement methods to be developed.

Using research to increase participation

The Fit for Girls workshop and training resources identified a number of possible strategies to increase the participation of girls in sport and physical activity. The strategies had been successful within other schools and staff wanted to find out if some of these approaches would work within the

context of Brechin High School.

Alongside the development of the Fit for Girls programme, a member of the PE department was undertaking a Masters dissertation titled *'Increasing adolescent girls' participation in school-based extra-curricular sport and physical activity'*. The research for the dissertation provided the opportunity to identify and gain a better insight into the factors which influence participation of girls at Brechin High School in sport and physical activity.

The aim of the research was to find out whether targeted interventions, such as the Fit for Girls programme, could increase the number of adolescent girls participating in school-based extra-curricular activity. The overall aim was that the research would either confirm existing suggestions of how to successfully promote sport and physical activity to adolescent girls, or provide new evidence of other potential factors for non-participation or interventions.

The staff leading the clubs in the school then utilised the results to implement interventions that addressed some of the barriers identified by the girls.

Barriers and facilitators of sport and physical activity

The main intervention, developed through the Fit for Girls programme, has been a multi-activity club called 'Girls' Night In' (GNI). Through the research consultation, interviews and questionnaires, girls identified aspects which were important to them participating in sport and physical activity. These were:

- a girls-only environment
- a choice of multiple activities
- a club available for smaller year groups
- a reward scheme, such as a subsidised trip
- activities available after school as opposed to lunchtime.

The approach to GNI has been to emphasise the social aspect of the club and offer extended opportunities. The research found that there was no single factor for girls choosing to participate. The reasons differed across the year groups:

- S1 – placed more value on having fun

- S2 – being with friends featured highly
- S3 – having a choice was important.

GNI offers the girls a wide range of activities. Decisions on what will be available at the GNI are made through consultation and the girls continue to vary their choice of activities on a regular basis.

“Sometimes you have to vote on the activities available.”

The range of activities available and the girls-only environment have been key aspects in developing GNI with participants stating:

“Girls-only is good, you can have fun and there is no pressure from boys being around and taking over.”

When attending GNI club nights, girls receive an award in the form of participation points. The participation points go towards a trip. Trips are subsidised through girls trading in their participation points.

“The trips are great fun and the more you turn up, the cheaper the trips are.”

Staff have recognised that the trips are an important aspect of GNI and that interest in GNI can be maintained by using the trips as an incentive.

Development of transition sports clubs

In June 2009, the transition from primary to secondary was considered and P7 girls from the cluster primaries were invited to participate in GNI. To start with only one girl attended. It was felt that going to the high school may be daunting for pupils who have limited experience of the secondary school environment. Interviews with S1 girls revealed that attendance may have been higher if there had been support available, particularly at the first session.

Despite the lack of take-up by P7 girls in 2009, it was felt that transition work could still be a vital element at Brechin. In spring 2010, the Active Schools coordinator worked with two senior pupils, as part of their Community Sports Leaders award, to provide a transition sports club for P7 girls.

The award provides an excellent opportunity for senior girls to be role models for the younger girls. The transition sports club was attended by 12–15 girls who were then invited to join GNI. 10 girls attended regularly and most continued through into S1. This approach has provided the opportunity for younger girls to:

- participate in sport and physical activity in a girls-only environment in P7
- attend GNI at Brechin High School
- become accustomed to the secondary school environment.

“I was worried about going up to the high school and this helped me be more confident.”

Research findings

The research stated the importance of understanding the influences on girls' physical activity levels. In order to understand the influences, consultation is vital. It is something that should be done on a regular basis and is very much welcomed by the girls involved:

“You have more of a say and feel more involved as you are spoken to about what you want to be involved in.”

A continued dialogue with the girls has contributed to sustaining and developing the increase in girls' participation rates. It is also important as girls move through year groups and activity preferences change.

The author also believes that further research could be taken into ensuring positive physical activity destinations for girls in the community, after completing their higher education.

The outcome

The research carried out for the Masters dissertation and the Fit for Girls programme provided the opportunity and focus to find out about barriers and facilitators in relation to girls participation in sport and physical activity. Through consultation, a clear message was received about 'girls-only' and 'choice'. The staff at Brechin have taken this message on board and have responded in a way that works. This is evidenced by the increase in participation rates.



“Evidence-based interventions can increase adolescent girls' participation.”

Mothers and daughters taking part together

Dumfries Secondary Schools

Local authority
Dumfries and Galloway
Council



Key points:

- Mothers and daughters participating together
- Mothers as role models
- Unanticipated outcomes
- Providing a blueprint for development in other areas.



The challenge

National statistics show a drop in levels of physical activity by girls as they start secondary school. Schools and the Active Schools team in Dumfries decided to develop a programme of activities aimed at teenage daughters and their mother or female guardian. The programme would provide opportunities for girls and their mothers to participate in sport and physical activities together, enjoy exercise and lead more active and healthy lifestyles.

Mothers and daughters taking part together

During a Fit for Girls workshop, representatives from the four secondary schools in Dumfries originated the idea of starting an activity club for mothers and daughters. As a result the Fit MAD (Mothers and Daughters Active Together) club was launched in Dumfries.

The first Fit MAD club was promoted to S1/2 pupils in Dumfries. Staff thought there would be a large uptake, however, the

response was unexpectedly slow. Fit MAD was publicised through each of the four secondary schools and their associated primary schools, through Active Schools coordinators, the Dumfries High School website and on Facebook.

Fit MAD has since developed into an activity club aimed at all P7–S4 girls and their mothers or female guardian. Programmes of classes are run in blocks throughout the year and a £20 joining fee is required per person for each block. Over three years there have been approximately 150 participants; 25 to 30 per cent of those participating have been classed as low-active.

Addressing low participation

The Active Schools coordinator noted that despite the programme being promoted equally among the four schools in 2009/2010, the uptake from one school, Maxwelltown High, was always extremely low. This school is located in north west Dumfries: one of the most recognised areas of deprivation in the region. In an effort

to address the low uptake, funding from Active Schools was secured to provide the programme at no cost and almost all the activities were held at Maxwelltown High School for the January–March 2011 block.

However, despite these changes, take-up remained predominantly from families from other parts of Dumfries. Increasing the participation rates of mothers and daughters from north west Dumfries is a challenge that Fit MAD is looking to address through links with other developments in the area.

The Healthy Weight Community programme: 'We're a healthy community', coincided with the school's intention to make better use of the facilities in the evening. There were five different activities on offer during the week: yoga, boxercise/self defence, badminton, netball and golf. Development of a community sport hub, in partnership with the parent council and the Healthy Weight programme, provides local access to facilities and opportunities. It is also a way of increasing sport and physical activity in the local communities.

Funding and sustainability

Funding for Fit MAD has been secured from a number of sources including:

- 2012 Communities
- Active Schools
- Healthy Weight Community
- Domestic Abuse.

It has successfully secured funding throughout its development by showing the benefits of increasing physical activity amongst girls. Funding has helped to improve the issue of sustainability which is continually at the forefront of the schools' and Active School coordinators' thoughts.

Plans to sustain the Fit MAD programme have been developed. Approaches that have been identified in assisting the continuation of the programme include:

- developing connections with other clubs to ensure a variation of activities and maintain interest levels, such as mother and daughter sessions in netball and golf
- development of the **sportscotland** Community Sport hub at Maxwelltown High School which will hold Fit MAD sessions. The hub will be sustained by the hub committee which will include mother and daughter representation
- information provided to participants at the end of the programme, signposting them to further activities and involvement
- understanding that Fit MAD is an evolving programme: blocks have become smaller to make it more manageable and sustainable
- using mothers as positive role models to voluntarily deliver parts of the programme and continue activities after the Fit MAD programme.

In the programme there are a number of very active mothers who provide good role models to their own daughters, as well as to other mothers and daughters. Through Fit MAD, some mothers have organised to meet up outside of the programme to run together, and a group entry was made to Women's Run for Health.

Lessons to be learnt

Evaluation feedback showed that 71 per cent of Fit MAD participants had identified that the programme had 'a lot of' positive influence on their health.

“I have a lot more stamina than before. It has made me more confident about exercise and has helped me lose weight.”

The mothers also identified a positive influence on their health through the programme:

“I am a lot more active, I feel fitter and it has helped me stop smoking.”

As the programme has developed, staff have identified lessons to be learnt:

- the programme has thrived through the enthusiasm of the mothers
- it is best to promote the programme through schools and the community to ensure information gets into homes
- choice of venue can be important particularly during different seasons
- 'meet and greets' before sessions were important for participants new to the venue
- developing a database and using email has kept people engaged in the programme.

A Fit MAD project, based on the model in Dumfries, has been developed in Annan. The programme has been developed differently: the programme was free, consultation was built into the project and a range of activities such as archery, lacrosse and zumba were introduced.

The outcome

In developing Fit MAD, staff found the Fit for Girls programme, and the support of **sportscotland** and Youth Sport Trust to be invaluable. Its development has been a result of partnership-working between schools and Active Schools. Involving mothers is an innovative approach to engaging girls in sport and physical activity and has increased the physical activity levels of both. It also provides opportunities for families to improve their lifestyle, as evidenced by one family where the mother has stopped smoking, lost three stone and is taking part in regular physical activity with her daughters.



“Fit MAD has motivated my daughter and I to participate more in physical activity.”

Developing through consultation

Graeme High School

Local authority
Falkirk Council



Key points:

- Positive effect on girls' perceptions of PE following the introduction of dance to the curriculum
- Introduction of Dance Leadership awards
- Transition work with local primary schools
- Targeting girls with low self-esteem, poor self-confidence and low activity levels
- Positive impact on Curriculum for Excellence within the school.



The challenge

Graeme High School identified that participation rates of girls in PE and extra-curricular activities were disappointingly low. To address the issue the school took the approach of consulting with the girls and engaging them in a positive experience. Time, energy and commitment have been spent in making a change by the staff involved in PE, Active Schools and the Fit for Girls programme.

Developing through consultation

Consultation with the girls is a core element of the work at the school. The course outline for core PE, and the activities in the Fit for Girls club, are constantly reviewed with the girls. This allows the girls more ownership of the activities available and has improved their levels of participation. The school receives feedback from the girls, both verbally through discussion and through the use of questionnaires. Questionnaires are handed out at various points during the school term

to ensure that different groups are enjoying and taking part in activities.

Particular consultation points have taken place with:

- S1/2 girls before the start of the programme looking at extra-curricular participation
- S2/3 girls and the reasons for choosing/not choosing Standard Grade PE (SGPE)
- S2 girls and the offer of dance in S3 core PE.

The consultations provide the school with information on the reasons for girls not taking SGPE. This is supported by observations made by class teachers and the Fit for Girls club staff. Through consultations the school is also able to identify how the girls are progressing. It assesses how their attitude to physical activity has changed as a result of participation in extra-curricular activity through the Fit for Girls programme.

Staff have found that girls, particularly the Fit for Girls club dance leaders, have been very responsive to consultations. As a result:

- the S3 course is now more flexible and offers a wider range of activities with greater participation from girls
- the content and activities of the Fit for Girls club are decided by the girls.

The benefits of choice

There are benefits and challenges to using consultation. The main challenge is that action must be taken from the responses received. Time is then required to coordinate and alter programmes in accordance with the girls' responses.

Despite the challenge of consultation, allowing choice is very important in ensuring the involvement of girls in physical activity. At the Fit for Girls club the girls are asked every few weeks what activities they wish to do. If there is not a consensus, alternatives are offered to ensure participation continues.

The consultation process with S3/4 girls resulted in the PE department altering the curriculum after the first year of the Fit for Girls programme. Dance was introduced as an

option in S3 and through its introduction, the girls' perceptions of PE has changed along with their levels of enjoyment. Willingness to participate has increased with S3 girls saying:

“Yes, I have enjoyed dance as it is something different. Dance is one of the best activities I have done over the years.”

Developing leadership skills

In S4, girls are given the choice to gain a Level 1 Dance Leader award. Twelve S4 girls opted to do the award in the first year, increasing to eighteen in the second year. Certified dance leaders are able to run clubs independently and choose the style and content of the dances they deliver. Six of the girls are now actively leading a variety of dance activities within the school and cluster primary schools.

Girls are empowered by the idea of running extra-curricular clubs by girls, for girls. Completing the award has proven to be a very positive experience for the girls.

“It's fun. It gives you a chance to be creative, and try lots of different types of dance. I feel I am more confident when talking and communicating in front of others.”

Senior girls adopting leadership roles provides the opportunity to not only put into practice the skills they have learnt from the leadership courses, but to also build their self-confidence.

“I feel I have developed leadership and organisational skills which I can now use in my future career in sport.”

S1/2 girls' uptake of extra-curricular activities has been above the numbers predicted. This result may be due to the newly qualified pupil leaders. These leaders are encouraging participation in activities by creating a fun environment and the S1/2 pupils are responding to it.

Invitation-only approach

In order to target inactive girls perceived by staff to display low self-esteem and body image issues, there is a once a week

'invitation-only' Fit for Girls club. Pupil and learning support staff help to identify girls who would benefit. This invitation-only approach is in an attempt to provide an environment for those least engaged to have a more positive experience of physical activity.

The club provides the girls with the opportunity to participate in a wide range of activities in small groups. The girls can access activities that they would not normally experience:

- fit ball exercise sessions
- street dance
- trampolining.

When the staff asked the girls if the Fit for Girls club has changed their attitude towards PE, they responded:

“It makes me feel happier to be in PE. I used to think, “oh no, PE,” but now I enjoy it!”

The outcome

The introduction of regular and ongoing consultation with the girls has resulted in the rise of participation rates. Participation in core PE has exceeded 95 per cent and attendance rates at the Fit for Girls club are healthy. Furthermore, 38 girls and four staff signed up to participate in the local 'Race for Life' 5k.

Girls know that they have 'a voice', will be listened to and will be able to shape the sport and physical activity opportunities available at Graeme High School. To engage girls in sport and physical activity, Graeme High School has learnt that you must engage positively with the girls – listen – then act.



“Fit for Girls has been invaluable in building the confidence and self-esteem of the girls, as well as increasing participation.”

It's dance and more

Grangemouth High School

Local authority
Falkirk Council



Key points:

- Extensive consultation with girls
- Female Sports Council
- Female Health Council
- Senior girls leading dance groups
- Transition work
- Partnership working between PE staff and Active Schools coordinator
- Positive role models.



The challenge

At Grangemouth High School the challenge was to increase the participation of girls in physical activity. Fit for Girls has provided the opportunity to develop an action planning process. This sets specific targets for PE and extra-curricular physical activity with a particular focus on the least-active 13 to 14 year old girls. The targets, set to engage girls in PE, are complemented by additional targeting aimed at an increase in the participation of 8 to 14 year old girls in extra-curricular physical activity each week.

It's dance and more

Following a review of the activities available, particularly extra-curricular activities, it was recognised that the majority were mixed gender. Few girls participated as boys would often dominate the sessions and were more competitive. Girls-only activities were therefore introduced with some of the girls involved in leading the sessions. Through consultation, girls selected dance as an activity they wanted to start.

A partnership and joint project called 'empowerment' has linked dance and theory work. Developed with the Mac Roberts Arts Centre, the project laid the foundations for the school to engage with the Fit for Girls programme in 2008. Building on this partnership provided the opportunity to develop dance and empower girls to lead.

Pupils as dance leaders

The girls-only club transformed into a Fit for Girls club. P7, S1, S1-S3 and S4-S6 groups were developed and each of the sessions were led by senior pupils from S3-S6. Four girls who started in S2, and are now in S5, have been involved in leading dance groups throughout that time.

“I was not very interested in the other sports offered. But I do enjoy dancing, especially the chance to learn how to teach it.”

Girls also support the transition from primary to secondary by taking groups of pupils in P5-P7 from their cluster primary schools.

Involving senior pupils as dance leaders has benefited both the younger pupils and the dance leaders, and they add a different dimension to school life. The younger pupils have built confidence in talking to peers that they wouldn't normally talk to. They are better able to relate to the young dance leaders and they have positive role models and mentors in the older pupils. One younger pupil stated:

“The dance leaders make you feel good. They're not strict and you don't get into trouble if you make mistakes - they just help you and are patient.”

The dance leaders have developed teaching skills, learnt about choreography, increased their confidence, communication and organisation skills and enjoyed working with the younger pupils. One dance leader quoted:

“I used to be really shy and self-conscious and now I have grown in confidence and I've become more assertive as a result of being a dance leader.”

The role of dance leader provides a very good learning opportunity for pupils, especially through the challenges they face in running a dance group, such as the issue of dealing with pupils who feel they are failing.

The young leaders have enjoyed the respect they receive from both staff and pupils. All their hard work pays off when they see it come together in a performance.

“It's a great feeling when you see pupils you have been teaching performing in a show.”

Preparing for a show involves a range of tasks and activities including marketing, finance, choreography, sound, front of house, backstage, video editing, lighting, music, costumes, tickets and fundraising. Shows provide the opportunity for pupils to learn new skills and create a groundswell of excitement for the girls' energies. They are a focus for the club and also allow the whole school to become involved.

Impact of the dance club

The dance club offers 'come and try' dance sessions which have been very successful. In these sessions the pupils share fun experiences, encourage each other, and build confidence and self-esteem in a safe environment.

The impact of the club on the school, and its cluster primary schools, has been great. Approximately 75 dancers have been involved throughout P5-S6 in a showcase performance. Whilst the club has a particular focus on dance, activities such as girls' football, cheerleading, fitness and gymnastics are also available.

These developments have helped to encourage girls to participate in physical activity within the school. In doing so this has enabled Grangemouth to work towards achieving and maintaining their Fit for Girls action plan targets.

There is a very close and positive relationship between Grangemouth School and Active Schools which has been strengthened by the development of the dance club. This partnership has, in turn, enhanced the opportunities for physical activity available within the school.

“97 per cent of girls aged 11 to 15 years are now taking part in two hours of quality PE. An increase of 67 per cent from the 2008 baseline.”

The very positive relationship between the staff and the girls, developed as a result of the club, is also vital to its success. The girls are confident to speak to staff and discuss issues regarding school or personal matters.

Importance of engagement

The girls are continually consulted on the activities, which creates a sense of ownership in the club. The engagement of the girls has been very important, and through a sense of ownership, the girls are very proud to be part of the dance group. They feel that they are given a voice; they are valued and are being listened to.

Consultation is key to the school and a Female Sports Council has been established so that pupils in the school have a voice in regards to PE and after-school clubs.

An interesting development through the consultations in the Fit for Girls programme has been the development of a Female Health Council. Working with the girls, staff became aware of a number of issues, particularly weight and diets.

The Female Health Council's 'Size zero v Real Women Project' sees the girls researching into eating disorders, diets and healthy lifestyles. The purpose of the project was to create an environment where the girls felt able to speak openly about their feelings and to gain the support they needed. Building on this, the council have developed a mental health project.

The outcome

The key to the success of the Fit for Girls dance club at Grangemouth has been the drive and enthusiasm of positive role models such as PE teachers, the Active Schools coordinator, parents and young leaders. In particular, involving senior pupils as dance leaders has benefited both the younger pupils and the dance leaders. Adopting a fun approach in engaging the girls in physical activity has provided the opportunity for them to enjoy themselves. While actively addressing the associated issues that can transpire from physical activity, such as dietary issues.



“Fit for Girls provides health improvement opportunities that has triggered a change in the health culture of our communities.”

Engaging least-active girls

Invergordon Academy

Local authority
Highland Council



Key points:

- Engaging with the least-active girls
- Example of Curriculum for Excellence working across departments
- Health and Wellbeing working with a target group of disengaged, least-active girls
- Impact on girls' confidence and self-esteem
- Integrated approach through the Health Passport
- Buddy Scheme with senior pupils acting as positive role models.



The challenge

The health and wellbeing of pupils is important to Invergordon Academy, as is increasing the number of girls participating in physical activity as they get older. Fitness levels are a core part of the work within Highland Council, where fitness testing of pupils in P7 has been in place for some time. Data on the fitness levels of the pupils provides an average score for the council.

Fitness testing provides Invergordon Academy with information which identifies pupils moving from P7 to S1 who are falling below the average score for fitness levels in the Highlands. Invergordon, through the Fit for Girls programme, developed an approach of working with the least-active girls.

Engaging least-active girls

Due to the small number of pupils at Invergordon Academy, it is possible for strong relationships to be built between staff, pupils and parents. This means that pupils are well-known to the staff and are made to feel valued.

“The school is like an extended family.”

One part of that ‘extended family’ is a group of disengaged, least-active girls who were targeted for the Fit for Girls programme.

In the P7 fitness tests, scores are taken from across 6 fitness components to identify girls who are least-active and falling below the Highland average. These fitness components are:

- bleep test
- sit and reach
- standing jump
- hand grip
- speed bounce
- sit ups.

Through this identification process, as well as through other background factors such as low self-esteem and dietary issues identified through support managers, girls are

recommended for participation in the Fit for Girls Health Passport. The Health Passport is a project to promote health and wellbeing for S1 pupils. It is delivered by the PE department in partnership with the Active Schools coordinator, home economics (HE) department, personal and social education (PSE) and senior sports leaders.

Cross-curricular links

The cross-curricular links with PE, HE and PSE allows the Health Passport to provide the opportunity to record a pupil's progress through S1. With permission, girls who participate in the Fit for Girls programme are taken out of all timetabled classes with the full support of the senior management team (SMT), who view the project as vital to the girls development. The SMT keep an electronic log of all pupils and are aware of the progress or difficulties pupils are having. This has led to support mechanisms, such as the Health Passport and Buddy Scheme, being put into place.

An important aspect of the Health Passport is that it combines local authority and

national priorities including:

- health and wellbeing
- transition
- leadership – mentoring and role modelling
- partnerships
- cross-curricular links.

The key elements of the Health Passport are:

- physical activity, the benefits of regular exercise and opportunities to take part
- personal and social education, including mental, social wellbeing and self-esteem
- HE and understanding its link to fitness and a healthy lifestyle (Cook Fit, Eat Fit)

On her involvement in the Health Passport, one girl commented:

“I feel more confident in myself and I am now doing PE.”

Value of staff involvement

Each group in the Fit for Girls programme has been different. The most recent group has been particularly challenging. Staff have had to take time to work with the girls in building up their confidence and self-esteem.

It is important to recognise the time required to work with this group and that a slower pace was required. The value of this time and the support from SMT, in allowing the girls to come out of a timetabled class to take part, is a key element to the success of the Fit for Girls programme at Invergordon Academy.

Staff are fully involved with the girls in the programme and build up positive relationships with them. Positive relationships are a key part of the ethos of Invergordon Academy. Using this approach, the staff are able to give the girls the attention required to help them build their confidence. A lot of time is given to talking with the girls about a range of issues which affect them.

“By working closely with the girls you can see a massive change in them. You have time to build up relationships – it is enjoyable.”

Without this support from staff and the SMT, this programme would not be able to operate.

Additional support mechanisms

As an additional support mechanism, a Buddy Scheme has been developed. S6 pupils have supported S1 pupils by encouraging them to participate in physical activity and healthy eating. S1 pupils who have a ‘health buddy’ have found it to be a supportive system.

“I like having a health buddy because they help me feel more confident. They give me attention and that helps me.”

The S6 pupils stated that they felt the Buddy Scheme was good for the school. They found that as the S1 pupils grow in confidence, they start to speak to them throughout the school day, not just in PE. The S6 pupils also recognise that being a ‘buddy’ is good for them too as the approach provides the opportunity to develop communication and organisational skills.

The outcome

Invergordon Academy has been developing supportive ways to include least-active and hard to reach girls in physical activity. The Fit for Girls programme has provided the opportunity to address issues around girls' non-participation. It also encourages girls to focus and take responsibility for their health and wellbeing, with the support of staff and the SMT. The school has succeeded in doing this through targeted approaches such as the Health Passport and Buddy Scheme. Including and supporting pupils who lack in confidence and self-esteem is part of the ethos at the academy.



“If you invest quality time in the girls they will feel supported, valued and have more self-belief.”

Changing the emphasis

Leith Academy

Local authority

City of Edinburgh Council



Key points:

- Whole school ethos to encourage participation
- Girls' physical activity promoted through use of school's technology
- Extensive consultation process
- Use of role models
- Choice of activities in the extra-curricular programme
- Targeting black and minority ethnic (BME) girls in particular.



The challenge

Leith Academy identified that extra-curricular attendance rates were too low, particularly for girls. It was highlighted that PE and extra-curricular programmes were too games-based, too competitive and were likely to exclude girls.

The Fit for Girls action plan supported the school to address the situation by setting specific targets and actions:

- to increase the number of S2/3 girls selecting elective PE
- to ensure all S1–3 girls were participating in two hours of PE a week
- to increase the number of girls experiencing a water-based activity
- to increase the number of girls participating in extra-curricular sport and physical activity (with a particular focus on S1/2 girls and least-active girls)
- to increase the number of girls from BME backgrounds participating in swimming.

Changing the emphasis

The Fit for Girls workshop has been invaluable to staff at Leith Academy in exploring the issues of girls' participation in sport and physical activity, and in supporting the development of a Fit for Girls action plan. There is a relatively new staff group in place within the PE department and a very good working relationship with the Active Schools coordinator. They now offer a range of activities for girls, with evidence of increased participation by girls, including:

- the 'Just for Girls' club – encourages teenage girls to be more involved in physical exercise. It is run by two senior girls, and female teachers are also welcome to join
- gymnastics
- girls-only swimming for beginners and BME
- S1 dance
- opportunities in dance for senior girls
- girls' basketball team
- badminton
- volleyball.

A suggestion box has been introduced to encourage pupils to suggest activities and clubs that don't already exist.

Staff members are key in encouraging the girls to get involved, and many take part in the games and activities themselves.

Raising the profile of PE and sport

To raise the profile of girls' participation in sport and physical activity, Leith Academy has ensured that girls' achievements are recognised and celebrated in the same way as the boys' achievements and promoted through the school.

The girls' sporting achievement is now being recognised through the school newsletter and 'The Leith Links'. As well as this, the 'Wall of Achievement' is located in the PE department, along with a 'Celebrating Success board'. This enables staff to recognise pupils that have achieved a lot, as well as targeting unsuspecting pupils.

Encouraging participation

In developing the Fit for Girls programme, cooperation and engagement with school colleagues has been required. This includes discussions in providing facilities and methods to increase the participation rates of girls. For example:

- a new gym/dance studio has been developed, providing space for aerobics, boxercise, dance, floor work and gymnastics
- a sports clubhouse is now used for dance
- extra support is given to pupils who were regularly not bringing their PE kit.

In addition, girls-only inter-house games have been introduced, including football, hockey, badminton and dodgeball.

Attitudes from teachers towards non-participation have changed and a more sympathetic approach is taken.

“What can we do to help to get you involved?”

This has taken time and it is this positive approach to understanding the issues of girls' participation, the shift in teachers' attitudes and support from the senior management team which has resulted in an increase in girls' participation rates. PE discipline, activity choice and the environment have also contributed.

“The staff are very understanding. They show an interest in you and help you to use the equipment properly.”

Ongoing work has developed community links and partnerships to encourage girls' participation in extra-curricular activities, as well as in external activities. For example:

- a partnership developed with Black Diamonds Cheerleading Club, who are based at Leith Academy, has provided opportunities within extra-curricular activity and also has seen an increase in girls participating in the club externally
- the EAL (English as an Additional Language) support teacher helps with a BME swimming group
- a partnership with Leith RFC.
- pupils who are participating in the CSLA (Community Sports Leader Award) are undertaking placements at a local primary school and will then invite primary-age pupils to the PE department, helping transition work within the school.

Removing barriers

Part of understanding the girls' willingness to participate in sport and physical activity has been to address issues relating to self-image, self-esteem and other barriers to participation. Leith Academy has taken the following approach to make the experience of PE and sport a more positive one:

- girls may wear comfortable clothing when participating in PE, with only vest tops being discouraged
- PE t-shirts are available for anyone who wishes to wear one
- the dance studio is brightly decorated with colourful, illustrated notice boards
- hairdryers have been introduced into changing rooms and girls can also bring their own hair straighteners into school
- changing areas are clean and warm, with curtains in pool changing rooms and mirrors in each changing room
- a longer changing time after swimming has been introduced and, where possible, swimming times are scheduled before a break, lunch or end of the school day.
- girls are allowed to wear t-shirts in the swimming pool
- where possible, the school tries to match the girls' classes with female staff, particularly for swimming, gym and individual activities
- the focus from teachers is one of understanding, listening and encouraging, developing strategies to support pupils with low confidence.

The outcome

The staff at Leith Academy believe that the Fit for Girls programme came along at the right time for their school. They have successfully changed their emphasis to encourage more girls to participate in PE, sport and physical activity and believe the process used to explore and address the surrounding issues has been invaluable.



There are only girls so it's a more relaxed environment and there is nothing to be embarrassed about.



Sense of identity, belonging and ownership

Our Lady and St Patrick's High School

Local authority
West Dunbartonshire Council



Key points:

- Extensive consultation with the least-active girls
- Sense of identity and belonging created
- Girls choose and lead activities
- Positive effects within the Curriculum
- Staff and senior girls providing positive role models.



The challenge

The staff, through the Fit for Girls project, wished to address four issues within the school:

- the lack of girls participating in PE and extra-curricular physical activity
- participation rates of S2–4 girls
- poor condition of the girl's changing facilities
- the range of physically active opportunities for girls.

The Fit for Girls training workshop, attended by four staff members, provided the opportunity to develop an action plan to tackle these issues.

Sense of identity, belonging and ownership

Staff wanted to ensure that the girls involved in the project felt they were part of its

development. A consultation process was introduced and the first issue identified was the poor condition of the changing facilities. The girls believed that it was not conducive with wanting to participate in physical activity.

With some funding from the Fit for Girls programme, a group of S4 pupils volunteered to help decorate the changing rooms. The walls were painted pink and purple, and mirrors were fixed to the walls. It was seen as a big improvement: resulting in more girls wanting to use the facilities and take part in PE and extra-curricular activities.

“The improved changing facility has caused a great 'buzz' in the department amongst all of the girls using it.”

During 2008/09, the Fit for Girls after-school club was created and open to all S1–4 girls. The girls helped to design a Fit for Girls club hoodie, with their names printed on the back. This created a sense of club ownership from the girls.

“I like our hoodies, they represent our club and make us feel really part of it.”

Exercising choice

Pastoral guidance helped to promote the Fit for Girls club by identifying the least-active girls and encouraging them to participate. Over the course of the initial year, there was a core group of 16 S2/3 girls who regularly attended.

Through the consultation, the girls expressed a wish to experience activities which they did not normally get to try within core PE. Coaches were employed and paid for by the Active Schools team to deliver street dance, break dance and boxercise sessions. A motivating factor for the girls in attending the club is that they have a choice in the sports they participate in.

“I like having the choice. If I don't get my first choice this week I will probably get it next week. We all have a say and we have learnt how to compromise.”

In a further attempt to motivate girls into participating in the Fit for Girls club, incentive packs from leisure services were given to the girls who attended these sessions.

An initial review of the Fit for Girls club recognised it as a success due to the improvements made to the changing facilities and because more girls were taking part in extra-curricular activities out of their own choice. It had the additional effect of building confidence and increasing motivation, which was then evidenced in other areas of the school.

“It was great to see an increase in the confidence and motivation of the girls involved. This also transferred into curricular classes – superb!”

The feedback from girls at this stage showed:

- some girls thought that the activities were too dance-based
- the leisure service incentive packs were not particularly well-used.

Both of these facts were taken into account in the planning and development for the following year.

Girls-only focus

For the 2009/10 session a lot of effort was spent on promoting the girls-only focus of the Fit for Girls club. Staff spoke to S1/2 girls during their core PE lessons and the club was promoted through the school bulletin, as well as posters around the school. Several girls in S6 expressed an interest in helping: they used their dance leadership experience to deliver sessions for the club. The staff were delighted with this development. It not only lessened the workload for staff, but these S6 girls also provided good role models for the younger pupils.

The first week of the club in 2009/10 attracted 30 S1/2 girls, almost doubling the numbers from the first year. At the first session the staff consulted with the girls on the activities they wanted. Activities were organised and run by the female PE staff and Active Schools, with additional help from the S6 girls.

In core PE classes, staff continued to report an increase in the confidence of the girls who attended the club. Girls became more confident when participating in activities with boys. In addition, staff witnessed an increase in the girl's levels of attainment in practical PE.

Looking forward

To continue the development of the Fit for Girls club into 2011 and beyond, there were three key aims:

- retain the S1/2 girls as they move up a year
- recruit new S1 girls
- recruit more senior girls to help with the club.

Staffed by three female PE staff and the Active Schools coordinator, the Fit for Girls club reopened for the 2010/11 session in September 2010. The first session was attended by 55 girls, dropping slightly over the consecutive few weeks to an average of 35. However, these figures showed an increase from the previous year. The varied activities continued to be negotiated with the girls. Fun and enjoyment remained central to the approach.

“It is their club, choice of activity is a motivating factor.”

Staff encourage the girls to attend events as a group. A group of girls visited the Glasgow Gymnastics Grand Prix, creating the opportunity for the girls to have new experiences together. The club also offers a 'come and try' experience for P7 pupils, to engage girls and promote the opportunities of a 'girls-only' club at an early stage. The club is self-sustainable and will continue, so long as staff are committed and the girls continue to attend.

The outcome

The development of the Fit for Girls club at Our Lady and St Patrick's High School has been a real success. The close working relationship between Active Schools and the PE department has been a significant factor, as has the approach taken when working with the girls. Ensuring a sense of identity, belonging and ownership, providing a choice in the activities available and a focus on 'girls-only', have proven to be a successful approach in increasing girls' participation in physical activity.



“I enjoy exercising with the other girls in the club – I really feel part of something.**”**

Sports academies raising the profile

Newbattle Community High School

Local authority
Midlothian Council



Key points:

- Whole school ethos
- Sports academies contributing to building confidence and self-esteem
- Supportive headteacher and senior management team (SMT)
- PE a destination of choice, welcoming atmosphere and environment.



The challenge

Newbattle Community High School identified that participation rates of girls in PE and in extra-curricular programmes were low. To address this challenge innovative approaches in engaging girls in PE, sport and physical activity were needed. The solution at Newbattle has been to make sport and physical activity an exciting part of being at school: ensuring that it is 'cool' to participate, as well as providing an inclusive environment.

Sports academies raising the profile

The sports academies started five years ago when Newbattle High School became a 'School of Ambition'. Pupils have the choice to select three periods a week in which they can specialise in art, sport or music. The purpose was to increase pupil's enjoyment in education and school, and in turn their confidence and self-belief. The schools feedback has been encouraging:

“The sports academies have been a huge success. All the pupils wear corporate kit and feel very much part of the school. Exam results are up, girls' participation has significantly grown, and behaviour and attitudes are sky high.”

Academies have significantly raised the profile of sport and physical activity within the school. They provide pupils with a sense of belonging and build confidence. Academies offer their pupils more than improved fitness, their ethos is based on nurturing the physical, mental and emotional health of all their young people.

PE, sport and physical activity are very much supported by the school's headteacher and SMT. The school has excellent PE facilities and motivated staff who wish to support pupils in achieving their sporting potential, whether it be a gentle workout or playing for Scotland.

In S1, as part of the curriculum, pupils have two hours of PE per week. The activities on offer include:

- indoor sports – basketball, volleyball, badminton

- pool activities – swimming skills and water confidence
- outdoor sports – hockey, rugby, football
- creative – dance, trampoline.

Cross-curricular experience

From S2 all pupils have one hour of compulsory PE per week, plus one hour of Peak Performance (PP) – an innovative cross-curricular experience that focuses on developing the leadership and teamwork skills of S2, S5 and S6 pupils.

For one period a week (PP time) the PP programme allows S2 pupils to specialise in a subject. Staff present from several academies: art, sport, business, technical and drama, and the S2 pupils make their choice. S5/6 pupils receive the same presentation and choose a subject they want to become a leader of. They then tutor the S2 pupils during PP time.

“It has done wonders for leadership and allows young people to work with others of a similar age.”

Staff have reported a distinct improvement in pupils' subject-specific skills as a result of their involvement in the PP programme. The key success factors identified were the relevance of the work and the development of greater self-reliance within the pupils.

Pupils can choose to participate in a variety of sports academies:

- Basketball Academy - pupils receive a team kit, learn theory and skills, visit Basketball League teams and take part in competitions
- Dance Academy - pupils learn how to choreograph dance, explore dance styles and participate in festivals and workshops
- Football Academy – pupils receive a team strip, develop skills, improve fitness, compete and visit football academies
- Rugby Academy – Pupils receive a team strip, develop technique, improve fitness, compete and visit rugby academies

After participating in sport through PP, S2 pupils can then choose to continue their progress in the academies throughout S3 and S4. They can choose a three-period weekly option that leads to an Intermediate 1 or Intermediate 2 award.

Opportunities and barriers

Whilst the academies are a very important aspect of the opportunities at Newbattle, there is also a wide choice of lunchtime and after-school sports clubs available. The provision of sport and physical activity options which girls wish to participate in is clearly important and, as a result, dance and netball were introduced. These have been very successful and are now incorporated into the PE timetable as core sports.

Since the introduction of netball, the girls from Newbattle have successfully taken part in the Scottish Cup. Participation in competition has increased the girls' motivation. The introduction of dance has seen the development of dance shows, which the school now host twice a year. This has also provided opportunities that previously did not exist within the school. The school also recognised that for the younger and more vulnerable pupils living in outlying areas, travelling home after attending an after-school activity could be a potential problem. The school now provides a bus service to enable these pupils to participate throughout the year.

Benefits of participation

Being involved in the Fit for Girls programme has enabled the school to see how participation in school sport and physical activity can build a young person's confidence and self-esteem.

The school believes that over the last four years, the programme has helped the girls to develop life skills that will encourage them towards an ethos of life-long health and wellbeing, as well as being more physically active.

“Fit for Girls came along just at the right time and has helped us to increase the numbers of girls participating in PE, sport and physical activity.”

After increasing their involvement in sport and physical activity, girls who previously lacked confidence have begun to show a level of self-belief, which has resulted in them:

- playing a more active role in class
- making friends more easily
- becoming far more engaged in school life.

The school has also seen attendance levels rise, which has also had a positive effect on academic results.

With the Fit for Girls programme, and a focus on encouraging girls to participate in sport and physical activity, there has been an increase of 93 per cent in the number of girls attending after-school clubs during the four years. The biggest percentage increase in participation has been the number of S1/S2 girls.

The outcome

At Newbattle sport plays a vital role in the life of the school and in the lives of many of the pupils. Through the Fit for Girls programme, the whole experience of PE, sport and physical activity at Newbattle has become an exciting and enjoyable one. Sport is very much supported by the headteacher and the SMT. The energy and enthusiasm of the staff towards sport and physical activity is picked up by the girls who emulate this positive attitude in their own activities.



“PE is now the destination of choice.”

Action plan targets



Brechin High School

Using research to increase participation

Curriculum PE targets

- 1 Increase SGPE uptake to 40% girls by 2012 (from a 2008 baseline of 33%)
- 2 20% of S5/6 girls to take part in 2 hours of quality physical activity per week (from a 2008 baseline of 9%)
- 3 20% of girls aged 14–16 to adopt a leadership role by 2012 (from a 2008 baseline of 10%)

Extra-curricular sport and Physical Activity targets

- 1 50% of girls aged 11–16 to take part in at least one extra-curricular club per week by 2012 (from a 2008 baseline of 41%)
- 2 45% of the least-active S3/4 girls to take part in at least one hour of extra-curricular activity each week by 2012 (from a 2008 baseline of 34%)
- 3 Upgrade changing facilities through involvement and consultation with the girls



Dumfries Secondary Schools

Mothers and daughters taking part together

Curriculum PE targets

- 1 85% of girls aged 14–16 to take part in high quality PE each week by 2012 (from an estimated previous baseline of 70%)
- 2 Promote a more positive attitude towards PE, and increase self-esteem, amongst the 'unenthusiastic' S1–6 girls
- 3 12% of girls aged 14–18 to adopt a leadership role by 2012 (from a 2009 baseline of 2%)

Extra-curricular sport and Physical Activity targets

- 1 60% of girls aged 11–13 to take part in at least one hour of extra-curricular sport each week by 2012 (from an estimated 2009 baseline of 35%)
- 2 Increase girls' awareness of school and local opportunities available to them in sport



Graeme High School

Developing through consultation

Curriculum PE targets

- 1 95% of girls in S3/4 to participate in two PE lessons each week by 2012 (from a 2009 baseline of 80%)
- 2 Encourage S5/6 girls to participate in physical activity during the Health and Wellbeing programme
- 3 20% of girls in S4–6 to adopt a leadership role by 2012 (from a 2008 baseline of 1%)

Extra-curricular sport and Physical Activity targets

- 1 20% of girls in S1/2 to take part in at least one hour of extra-curricular activity each week by 2012 (from a 2009 baseline of 10%)
- 2 40% of primary girls aged 8–11 to take part in at least one hour extra-curricular activity each week by 2012 (from a 2008 baseline of 20%)
- 3 Identify inactive girls with low self-esteem to take part in at least one hour of extra-curricular physical activity each week by 2012



Grangemouth High School

It's dance and more

Curriculum PE targets

- 1 75% of girls aged 11–15 to take part in two hours of PE each week by 2012 (from a 2008 baseline of 30%)
- 2 85% of girls aged 11–15 to experience high quality PE each week by 2012 (from a 2008 baseline of 20%)
- 3 20% of girls aged 14–15 to adopt a leadership role by 2012 (from a 2008 baseline of 1%)

Extra-curricular sport and Physical Activity targets

- 1 60% of girls aged 11–13 to take part in at least one hour of extra-curricular physical activity each week by 2012 (from a 2008 baseline of 5%)
- 2 40% of girls aged 8–11 to take part in at least one hour of extra-curricular physical activity each week by 2012 (from a 2008 baseline of 0%)
- 3 Least-active girls aged 13–14 to take part in at least one hour of physical activity each week by 2012



Invergordon Academy

Engaging least-active girls

Curriculum PE targets

- 1 Identify girls in P7/S1 dropping below the Highland average. Encourage them to develop healthier lifestyles through PE, HE and PSE, with 50% scoring above Highland average and becoming more active by 2012
- 2 17% of S2/3 girls have been identified as in danger of becoming less active, having low self-esteem and dietary issues. Aim is for 100% of these girls to be more active by 2012

Extra-curricular sport and Physical Activity targets

- 1 40% of girls aged 11–14 and 30% of girls aged 15–16 to take part in extra-curricular activities by 2012
- 2 Establish 4 new activity clubs for girls
- 3 Attract more girls to act as role models through extra-curricular activities. 20% of girls aged 14–17 to adopt a leadership role by 2012 (from a 2009 baseline of 2%)



Leith Academy

Changing the emphasis

Curriculum PE targets

- 1 20% of girls to select elective PE in S2/3 by 2012 (from an average baseline of 12% in 2007–09)
- 2 All S1–2 girls to participate in two hours of PE a week by 2012 (S1/2 girls have participated in two hours a week and S3/4 in one hour from 2009)
- 3 80% of girls S1/2 to experience a water-based activity by 2012 (from a 2009 baseline of 70%)

Extra-curricular sport and Physical Activity targets

- 1 30% of S1/2 girls participating in one hour of extra-curricular sport a week by 2012 (from an estimated 2009 baseline of 10%)
- 2 Create a girls' club and sign up 15 least-active girls. Five of these girls to join an after-school club and a local physical activity club
- 3 Increase participation of girls from BME backgrounds in swimming to 40% (from a current baseline of 10%)



Our Lady and St Patrick's High School

Sense of identity, belonging and ownership

Curriculum PE targets

- 1 Through a focus group consult with girls to design renovation of changing facilities
- 2 Increase participation in core PE by 10%, by introducing S2 girls at an early stage and consulting S3 girls to determine activities
- 3 Increase girls' participation and motivation by designing a participation award/incentive scheme

Extra-curricular sport and Physical Activity targets

- 1 Establish a weekly multi-activity club for S1–4 girls through consultation and devise an incentive scheme linked with Meadow Leisure Centre
- 2 Raise awareness of sporting opportunities in the local area for girls
- 3 Increase extra-curricular club uptake by 10%, by developing more competitions with other PE departments in West Dunbartonshire



Newcastle Community High School

Sports academies raising the profile

Curriculum PE targets

- 1 Reduce the 21% of S2 girls who don't like PE by 6%, by the time they reach S4
- 2 Reduce the 19% of S2 girls who use excuses to avoid PE to 6% by S4
- 3 Address the issue of 44% of S2 girls believing they are not good at PE and 70% not knowing the daily recommended physical activity rate
- 4 Continue to grow belief that PE is an important subject (from a current baseline of 82%)
- 5 Continue to grow belief that health is important (from a current baseline of 86%)

Extra-curricular sport and Physical Activity targets

- 1 30% of girls in S3–5 taking part in regular extra-curricular sport by 2012 (from a 2009 baseline of 20%)
- 2 Increase P7/S1 girls' participation by 50% at after-school clubs
- 3 Deliver four transitional festivals with 90% of P7 girls attending by 2012





The Fit for Girls programme was launched in 2008, a joint initiative between **sportscotland** and the Youth Sport Trust, aimed at increasing physical activity participation among girls aged 11 to 16 years.

A core focus of the programme is to bring about sustainable change in schools that builds a positive future for girls' participation in PE, physical activity and sport.

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