

## Beacon Academy – Girls Active



### School context

Beacon Academy has just under 600 students aged 11-16. We are in a fairly deprived area in a seaside town in Lincolnshire. All students have access to PE and extra-curricular clubs and there are some mixed opinions on this subject, particularly from the girls. A lot of our female students love PE and really look forward to their lessons but there are some who don't enjoy the subject, so we wanted to do something to engage these girls and signed up to Girls Active and appointed 10 of our year 9 girls as GLAMS. We wanted to get involved in this amazing project due to us receiving an increased amount of notes excusing girls from PE and we wanted to understand why so we could increase engagement and enjoyment. We also found that girls who really enjoy PE were unsure of how to support others to enjoy PE and wanted to give these students the leadership skills to benefit them.

### Activities

Through being involved in the GLAMS we have been able to gain a deeper understanding of the opinions of our students and the barriers they face. Some of the most common barriers were:

- Feeling uncomfortable/other people (boys) watching them
- Periods
- None of their friends enjoying sports
- Boys not involving them in games
- PE kit

Our students were able to speak to the GLAMS about the barriers they face and this has enabled us as a team to help. The main barrier we thought we could overcome was the PE kit being an issue. The girls didn't like the fit of the kit or the choices on offer which included: navy hoody, navy polo top, navy shorts and navy football socks. Due to the girls not feeling comfortable in their PE kit they would sometimes try to avoid PE or modify the uniform themselves through wearing black leggings to make themselves feel more comfortable. This was sometimes problematic due to some students wearing leggings which were see through so we told students they could wear leggings as long as they wore their shorts over the top to maintain their dignity. Some girls were okay with this but others claimed they looked "stupid" and questioned "why can't we just wear sports leggings? It looks so much better". So we decided to look into having some school leggings which could be added to the PE kit options.

Our GLAMS helped us to create a questionnaire so we could further understand the students' views and opinions of our current PE kit and how it could be improved. This allowed students to anonymously tell us what they think and provided us with some conclusive evidence that the PE kit needs updating.

One of the main things students said they liked about our PE kit was that the spare kit is washed so they don't mind borrowing this when it is needed. One of the main things students said they didn't like is the fitting of the clothes wasn't very flattering with many students saying they didn't like the hoody because it would ride up and look weird; many girls also didn't want to wear the shorts.

When asked what they would want to include in the PE kit the most common suggestions were leggings, a skort and a quarter zip top. The GLAMS then did some research and found that our uniform supplier, Uniform Direct, would be able to provide these items for us so we started the process of changing our policy. We then discussed our findings with the headteacher who was extremely supportive of the changes we proposed. We then had a meeting with Uniform Direct who showed us some samples which we shared with a group of students who were all very excited about the new options.

## **Future**

The new PE kit is going to be available for all students starting in September and this now consists of many more options including leggings, slim fit jogging bottoms, skort, quarter zip top as well as all of the previous options. Students are very excited about this and have all said that they are grateful for all of the work the GLAMS have done and are pleased that the school has listened to them and their opinions. We have some of the new PE kit options in our spare kit and students who have worn this have said how comfortable it is, how much more confident they feel and how much better they look.

Through being involved in the Girls Active programme we have learnt a lot as a department and we are excited to continue to utilise the GLAMS to encourage participation and enjoyment in PE from all girls in the academy. We will continue to ask students for their opinions and act on their feedback where possible. Looking to the future of the GLAMS programme at Beacon Academy we will be continuing to listen to the feedback from our students and try to increase the attendance of girls in extra-curricular activities.