

Djanogly City Academy – Girls Active

School context

Djanogly City Academy is a proudly diverse school with a mixture of cultures and backgrounds. As such, we serve a high proportion of young people who speak English as an additional language (71%). In addition to this 43.6% of our children are eligible for free school meals. Recently awarded 'Good' by Ofsted, we aim to maximise engagement and provide additional opportunities for our scholars.

Background and rationale

Initially we identified a lack of engagement within PE lessons and an extremely low attendance to enrichment clubs within girls PE. Some scholars, particularly girls, would refuse to take part in PE lessons and the majority of those taking part would be complying to instructions rather than showing any genuine interest or enthusiasm for PE. We wanted to create meaningful PE and make it relevant to those young people that had struggled to connect to our subject. We had a desire to increase the engagement in physical activity, particularly within girls PE and girls extra-curricular clubs.

Activities

- Girls Active Survey administered amongst girls within Key Stage 3. Findings from Girls Active Surveys have informed curriculum planning and enrichment offers.
- In 2022, we recruited the first Girls Active cohort. Girls were asked to 'apply' for a position within the cohort and produced letters to explain their reasons for wanting to take part. 12 Year 9 girls were selected as our Girls Active Leaders.
- Leaders delivered their own assembly to Year 8 girls to describe the need for Girl Leaders within PE. They created a survey to assess the needs and interests of girls within the school and as a result created a weekly dodgeball club.
- As a result of the findings from the Girls Active Survey, curriculum changes were also made for whole school PE lessons. Pathways were introduced to create more personalised learning for students, allowing them to choose which pathway they preferred.

In 2023 our approach to PE was recognised with DCA winning the Youth Sport Trust Outstanding Secondary Practice Award at the Annual Awards. This also led to an interview at Notts TV to discuss boosting engagement in PE and the impact of scholar voice.

- In 2023 a second cohort of Year 9 girls were selected by staff to continue the Girls Active programme. They delivered an assembly, created an 'opinion' box and ran a weekly Tchoukball club. In addition, they also designed a loyalty card and had an input in a rewards system which included designing hoodies for girls with high attendance in enrichment clubs.
- In 2024 our third cohort of Year 9 leaders were selected by staff. They have been involved in running a dance club and during a Girls Active day they led their dance to a number of other schools attending the event.
- In 2024 two of our Girls Active leaders contributed to the delivery of a workshop at Youth Sport Trust conference "Getting it right for Girls".
- As of February 2025, we have just recruited our fourth cohort of Girls Active Leaders. As in our initial year these leaders have applied for the opportunity to take part in the programme. Each student wrote a letter to explain why they wanted to be involved in the programme. They have just had their first Girls Active inspiration day and are excited to be working with our Girls Active ambassador and PE department to bring about lasting and sustainable changes within girls PE.

"Girls Active has been an incredible journey for our school by giving us the initial tools and inspiration to make the changes necessary to improve engagement within PE." **HEAD OF PE**

"Girls Active has been fantastic opportunity for our girls to flourish and be empowered through sport. It has allowed our girls to see sport in a different light." **PE TEACHER**

"Girls Active has given me confidence and aspired me to be the best i can be." **STUDENT – GIRLS ACTIVE LEADER**

Benefits

Benefits to young people

- Opportunity to act as leaders allows our girls to thrive in different environments and given challenges.
- Develops self-confidence as they discuss issues and potential barriers with other students and PE teachers.

- Students feel pride in the impact they are making within girls PE and this has a lasting impact and further engagement in physical activity.

Benefits to the school

- Improved engagement within PE lessons.
- Increased number of students accessing after school enrichment clubs.
- Changes to whole school PE curriculum have had a positive impact on engagement and positive PE experiences for all students.

Challenges

After an initially successful Girls Active cohort, staffing changes meant that there were some inconsistencies with some cohorts lacking focus and not meeting their intended outcome. Girls Active work culminates in the summer term, meaning there is a build up to improving engagement and this impact can be lost when returning in September of the following academic year.

Culture differences within school and home life mean that some students are unable to stay after school. There is a lack of role models within the family which may also contribute to this.

Future

- Create a girls only enrichment for 2025.
- Run a Girls Active day to inspire engagement across a wider year group.
- Monitor attendance to enrichment clubs.
- Work with the new Girls Active cohort to create sustainable change, which will include a whole year group Girls Active day.

Top Tips

- Select the right leaders – those that we have found to have the biggest impact are students that are not the typical ‘sporty girl’ and part of all school teams. Students that understand the value of having a say and being an advocate for girls PE have given us a wider insight into the potential barriers to physical activity and allowed us find alternative solutions.
- Consistency – keep regular meetings to check in with leaders.
- Roll out areas of improvement – find what is working within Girls Active and don’t be afraid to roll it out across bigger groups/whole school to see even more impact.