

# 12. Promoting Mental Wellbeing through Co-curricular Sport

*Durham Trinity Sports College – a special school educating pupils 2–19 years of age, with autism or profound, moderate, severe or complex learning difficulties. (North / SLIDACI: 10 / PLIDACI: 3)*

*Biddenham International Sports College – a secondary school based in Bedfordshire. (South / SLIDACI: 9 / PLIDACI: 5)*

## What?

As previously identified within these case studies children and young people are not engaging with the 60 minutes of physical activity a day. This has impacted the mental health of children and young people with 1 in 4 suffering with poor mental health, (NHS, 2022). With a high percentage of young people suffering with this internal trauma, it is the duty of schools to identify methods to reduce the stress on pupils, of which providing additional co-curricular activities can play a key role.

## So what?

Durham Trinity Sports College have identified a yoga co-curricular activity club as a supportive option for both developing physical literacy of young people but also supporting their mental wellbeing. Through focusing on breathing exercises and calming down, this club educates pupils in managing their behaviour and controlling emotions alongside becoming physically active. Since implementing yoga into the programme, the school has noted a shift in pupil behaviour and their ability to reflect on their emotions.

An alternative co-curricular option identified by Biddenham International School and Sports College was a mindfulness club. This creative idea supports pupils to engage in physical activity through mindful walks and creative drawing in outside spaces. This low impact activity provides an alternative option for pupils, building healthy habits into their daily routine whilst supporting their

ability to manage their emotions. This co-curricular activity also encourages pupils to connect with each other building a sense of belonging through a school community. To build these activities into pupil's weeks, the Academy outlines an expectation that pupils must attend two co-curricular activities a week to encourage an appetite for further attendance.

## Now what?

From acknowledging both activities adopted by each school, it is clear to observe that co-curricular clubs can be structured in a variety of ways with a range of levels of intensity. Key considerations that can be applied into wider secondary schools are:

1. Identifying a lead for these activities outside of the Physical Education department: this lead may be already connected with supporting the mental wellbeing of pupils.
2. Providing a club which opens a safe space for pupils to be active and reflective, sharing thoughts and feelings with fellow pupils.
3. Consider the outdoor spaces that can be occupied with physical activity that do not require specialist resources.

[NHS \(2022\) 'Mental health of children and young people in England 2022 – wave 3 follow up to the 2017 survey'.](#) [Accessed 14.08.23]