



## Teign School – Girls Active

### School context

Teign School is a comprehensive school in Kingsteignton in the South West of Devon. The school has 1046 pupils from the ages of 11-18.

Student leadership has really started to build at Teign and our KS4 and 5 students have been wanting to step up and make a difference to others. We survey our students annually to track what activities they are participating in. We also monitor our club attendance data. In recent years we have noticed an increase in the number of KS3 girls in particular whose only activity is their PE lessons. Correspondingly our number of KS3 girls at clubs is dropping off. Using a combination of student voice and working alongside our PE ambassadors we decided to set up girls only clubs and launch the Girls Active initiative.

### Activities

To launch the Girls Active programme, we first identified student leaders that were going to be inspirational role models and younger leaders to the other students within the school. We put the role out to students within students' recruitment week and then asked them to come to PE to find out more and discuss why they wanted to be a Girls Active leader. From here, we spent half a term completing sessions using the Girls Active resources with the leaders, where they learnt what made a good leader and how to support girls within sport. As part of this, the girls researched and identified barriers within PE for girls. They then came up with solutions for each of the barriers. For example, some of our students identified that they didn't like when they felt watched. Therefore, the leaders decided to plan a glow in the dark just dance disco where the lights were off eliminating the worry of being watched. The leaders then made invitations that were sent out to the students during tutor time. In the first week students met with the leaders and completed an introduction session where they suggested some ideas, did some team building and if they felt comfortable highlighted some of the barriers they faced. Since then the Girls Active programme has gone from strength to strength with sessions on seated volleyball, step aerobics, mat rounders, dance, badminton and kinball.

“I have enjoyed trying new sports that we didn't do in primary school. I really like badminton now.” Year 7

“I like being able to come up at lunch time and take part in a place where I don't feel judged because in my PE lessons some people aren't very nice.”



“I enjoy being able to come inside at lunch time especially when it’s cold and take part in sports that I enjoy with my friends.” **STUDENT - YEAR 9**

“I have made 3 new friends at Girls Active that I now sit with during break.” **STUDENT - YEAR 8**

“I have enjoyed seeing the girls get to know each other as well as see their confidence grow.” **STUDENT - YEAR 10 LEADER**

## **Benefits**

### **Benefits to young people**

- Students feel more confident both within sport and physical activity as well as around school and in wider life. For example, we have seen students who were lacking in confidence within PE and around school now take part in a dance show with an audience of parents, teachers and students.
- Students have begun to form new friendships with other students from different classes as well as different year groups.
- Students who didn’t used to enjoy PE have now found a safe space within PE and come up for help if they feel they need it.
- Leaders are now more empathetic and understanding of other students’ feelings. This was important as our leaders normally love PE and find it an enjoyable subject and it has been beneficial for them to learn from other students and develop their understanding of other people’s opinions around PE.
- Students are now more motivated within PE - they often ask when the next Girls Active session is and what they will be doing. They have also asked if it is possible for the session to move to an after-school club so that they have more time.

### **Benefits to the school**

- Students have more confidence not just in PE but across the entire school day. For example, some of the students I teach out of PE now put their hand up and answer questions in lessons more. Students have also joined other clubs such as science club and they have taken on extra opportunities such as the dance show.
- Some students’ attendance has improved as a result of building friendships and developing a feeling of belonging.
- Students across the school are beginning to become more educated on the barriers people may face when it comes to physical activity as well as the positive impact physical activity can have. This is something as a school we still need to work on.



## Challenges

The main challenge we have faced has been encouraging the girls that will benefit most from Girls Active to attend. Lots of the students we have highlighted have many barriers to PE and therefore asking them to give up their lunch time to come and take part in PE has been challenging. However, I feel as the Girls Active programme has grown, more of these students have seen the different activities that happen during Girls Active and have started to buy into the programme. Students have also started to attend who were not originally selected as they have been encouraged to come along through our "bring a friend" sessions. This is still however a challenge we are working towards as some of our key girls are struggling to overcome their barriers and join in. However, I believe that to overcome this challenge as a school we need to continue to educate students on the barriers to physical activity as well as how we can overcome these and why it is important that we overcome these.

## Future

The student leaders would like to implement punch cards for the students. Their idea is that every time the students attend a session, they punch their card and when they have 10 punches they will receive a prize. Some of their suggested prizes have been sweets, sports equipment and stationery. I believe this will help to extrinsically motivate some of the students to continue coming.

As we move into the summer term, we need to continue to promote Girls Active through different methods such as our class charts and Instagram. We also need to use the Instagram to educate students, parents and other teachers on the barriers that girls face in PE and how we can overcome them. From this we can then also educate students on why sport is going to be beneficial for them. For example, a frequent barrier amongst girls is their periods and period pain however if they were educated on the benefits sport has during the period they would be more inclined to take part.

Our final aim as we approach the end of this year is we would like to conduct a survey for the girls that have completed the Girls Active programme on how they feel it has impacted them as well as what they have enjoyed to allow the school to develop the program next year. I feel that next year a survey at the start of the year also needs to be taken so that we can monitor the change throughout the programme. For example, confidence, barriers, participation in other clubs, participation out of school.

## Top Tips

- Allow older positive students leaders to take control of the initiative. We have found that younger students find it easier to relate to the older students than a teacher. They are also more willing to share their worries or concerns with some of the students compared to their PE teachers. I have also found that students are now supporting each other outside of Girls Active and have friends across the school in different year groups.
- Use lots of student voice to gain ideas from the students and ensure that the programme is created around their likes.
- Educate both the students and staff on why you are taking part in this programme and the importance of it.
- Celebrate all of the successes across the school community via newsletters, postcards home and social media – parents love to see their children engaging in a positive way and teachers and other school staff like seeing what they're up to so they can build their conversation topics and get to develop their relationships.