



Changing the Game, for Girls

A toolkit to help teachers get more girls involved in PE and school sport



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Today, **only 12% of girls aged 14 meet the official guidelines for physical activity** – roughly half the number of boys at the same age¹

Changing the Game, for Girls

This toolkit has been designed to help PE teachers get more girls involved in PE and school sport (PESS). Published by the Women's Sport & Fitness Foundation, the toolkit is based on new research carried out by the Institute of Youth Sport at Loughborough, involving over 1,500 primary and secondary age girls and boys, as well as their parents and teachers. It examines the reasons why so few girls are active and, importantly, seeks to understand what would help them to become more active. For the first time, research has looked not just at school but also the influence of family, friends and the wider community.

Overall, this research finds that although families are the most powerful influence on a child's activity levels, schools are seen as the most important sites for change. While it is difficult to influence family life positively for all children, schools have a unique opportunity, not just to deliver PE and school sport well, but also to create a culture in which being active is valued and admired. This is evidenced, in part, by the fact that this has already been achieved by some schools. It requires buy-in from leadership across the school, led and championed by the PE Department and PE staff.

This toolkit is for you. As a Head of PE and/or PE teacher, you hold the keys to helping more girls become active. You may be uncertain of the best steps to take or you may have already achieved much within your school and welcome a refresh and some new ideas. Either way, we hope you find the research, tips and examples provided in this toolkit helpful and effective.

Recognising that this isn't easy, we'd really love to hear from you to find out what you think is working and what isn't. As a charity, we're committed to listening to girls, and their teachers and parents, to understand what can be done to achieve a shared goal – Changing the Game, for Girls – so that every girl is active. So please do let us know what you think.

You can get in touch through:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/wsffuk

Twitter: www.twitter.com/wsff_uk #changingthegame

Email: info@wsff.org.uk

Review and consultation

Where are you now?

To begin with, it's important to reflect on where your school is currently, in terms of girls' physical activity, and where you'd like it to be.

What do the girls want?

When students feel they have been listened to, their motivation increases. The research suggests that girls may respond more positively to all aspects of PESS if they feel they have been part of the consultation process.

Making active attractive

School curriculum and ethos

Creating the right physical and cultural environment where activity is seen as integral to school life can help girls want to become more active.

Bringing the best out of girls

As well as considering the culture in which girls' physical activity is to take place, it's crucial to ensure that the provision of PESS is tailored to meet their wants and needs.

Improving provision for girls

Creating extra-curriculum opportunities

Help girls to understand that being active is not just for PESS lessons; there's a wealth of opportunity in their daily lives.

Promoting opportunities outside school

Develop a whole-school approach to exploring partnerships with outside agencies, using the girls, their parents and the wider school community.

Use female role models to inspire

Everybody needs somebody to look up to. Experiences we have at school, and the role models we meet during that time, become influential memories we carry throughout our lives.

"If you learn to do sport in school and you enjoy it, then you might want to carry it on out of school" Year 10 girl

National programmes and resources

Creating Fitness Ambassadors

Leadership programmes are a natural progression from successful role modelling. Leadership creates a sense of direction and harnesses team effort.

Monitoring and evaluation

"I think we should have more PE lessons than just two, but that's just me. Like, we always have the important lessons 3 times a week, but I think we should have PE too because they are always saying how unfit we are and stuff" Year 10 girl



Research summary

In terms of participation levels, our research revealed that there is no single turning point in girls' lives leading to a fall in activity levels. Rather, participation levels are affected by a number of small changes over a period of time that ultimately result in disengagement.

Contrary to common assumptions, the drop in girls' participation levels begins to occur before the transition to secondary school. Our research showed a drop in participation levels between Years 4 and 6 at primary school, with this decline becoming more pronounced in Years 8 and 9. The same pattern is not true for boys, meaning that by Year 9 there is a significant gender gap in the proportion of girls and boys meeting the recommended levels of physical activity.

However, the good news is that most girls want to be more active! Three quarters (76%) of 15-year-old girls say they want to do more physical activity.²

**51% of secondary girls say that
“girls are put off sport and physical
activity because of their experiences
of school sport and PE”**

So, what's stopping girls being more active?

46% of the least active girls agreed that they “don't like the activities we get to do in PE” compared to just one in four – 26% – of the most active

The first point to note is that not all girls are the same, and there are some girls who are really enjoying PESS and wish to do more of it! Not surprisingly, our research shows that these are the most active girls – the ones who enthusiastically get involved, who want to make the team or be the best, commit to training and achieve their potential.

Interestingly, these girls are more likely than most to have active mothers and supportive families; they are less influenced by what their friends do, and they are less likely to agree that getting sweaty is unfeminine or that girls are self-conscious about their bodies.

However, there are many other girls who just don't feel the same way. For a whole host of reasons, many girls are not currently enjoying PESS and, as our numbers show, are likely to drop out in school, and do very little physical activity out of school.

A comparison of the attitudes of the most and least active girls in our research is revealing. The least active girls were twice as likely to agree that “*girls are put off sport and physical activity because of their experiences of school sport and PE*” and the reasons for this were numerous. The least active girls were more likely to say they didn't like the activities they get to do in PE, that they felt like their bodies were on show in PE, which made them like PE less, and that they felt their PE teacher only paid attention to the kids who are good at sport. Meanwhile, they were less likely to think that PE was fun or that it was an important subject for them to be good at.

In broad terms, PE and school sport is working for some girls – chiefly the active and ‘sporty’ – but not for the majority, and particularly the least active and most at risk.

This toolkit has been designed to help PE staff understand how to really cherish and make the most of their sporty and active girls, but also to try and widen the net so that more girls want to get involved and develop a sport and fitness bug that will keep them involved throughout their school lives and beyond.

Many of the tips and ideas in this toolkit – some taken from schools already doing a brilliant job – concern the way PESS is actually designed and delivered. However, no matter how brilliant the provision, girls still need to want to do it. ‘Making active attractive’ in school is not always straightforward when many of the barriers stem from outside school, but these barriers are significant and need to be more proactively addressed. The research clearly indicates some key things girls say would encourage them to get more active, e.g. more choice of activities, girl-only access to facilities and equipment, and opportunities to be active with friends.

One of the most telling findings from the research concerns what it means to be sporty as a girl. While sporty boys are admired by their peers (influenced by society and the media), sporty girls are not. In fact, they can be viewed negatively, for not paying enough attention to their appearance, and can be seen as unfeminine. As girls grow, they begin to place greater emphasis on appearance over health, and feel it is more important to be thin than fit.

While social influences are deeply entrenched, schools have a fantastic opportunity to ‘buck the trend’. Whichever ideas and practices you employ to encourage girls to be active in your school, remember that girls say they want to be active – and they do recognise the benefits. Tapping into this enthusiasm can be tricky but, once achieved, the effect can snowball, creating a school-wide culture of fit, healthy young women, who retain their love of fitness and activity throughout their lives.

Note: The full policy report ‘Changing The Game, For Girls’ can be found at <http://wsff.org.uk/publications/reports/changing-the-game-for-girls>



Nearly half of all girls agreed that “girls don't take sport as seriously as boys”

Review and consultation

Where are you now?

To begin with, it's important to reflect on where your school is currently, in terms of girls' physical activity, and where you'd like it to be. In this section, we outline three phases to help you to reflect on your current provision. On the basis of this reflection, your school will have a better understanding of what girls want and what needs to be done differently.



A whole-school approach

School as a whole is responsible for providing students with the knowledge, skills and understanding to be able to lead safe, healthy and fulfilling lives. The school's senior leadership team should be encouraged and enabled to assess aspects of the whole-school ethos and policies to make sure these encourage activity in all students, especially girls.

Physical activity should be seen as integral to school life (as well as students' overall well-being and personal development), with opportunities for all members of the school community to include it in their daily lives and school routines. Collaboratively, set long-term targets of 100% participation in regular and frequent activity at sufficient intensities for it to benefit health. You could reflect on the following:

- Are you making full use of all the resources available to you (human resources, equipment and facilities within the school and in the local community) to model, encourage and support regular activity for all students?
.....
- Are there clear expectations that every student participates in every lesson? Is this communicated to students consistently?
.....
- Are newsletters, displays, posters, websites, blogs, social media platforms, assemblies and tutor group activities used to celebrate active women and girls from the school and community?
.....
- Do your Head Teacher and Board of Governors champion health and fitness as a priority for all, including sport as part of that? Is this clearly reported to and shared with parents, and their support encouraged?
.....
- Are female staff members encouraged to be actively involved in activities? Does the school celebrate a wide range of involvement in physical activity, e.g. taking part in sponsored walks/runs for charities, leadership students engaging younger children in fun activities, or mums and girls participating in physical activities together?
.....
- What, if anything, needs to be done about the school facilities to encourage girls to participate more? Are all sports facilities used equally by boys and girls?
.....
- Do your clubs address the needs and interests of the whole student population? Where are the gaps?
.....
- Are there opportunities for social activity clubs as well as competitive clubs?

Within your department

There are a number of ways that schools can help Change the Game, for Girls.

Some teachers said that PE was not overall a priority in school or particularly valued against the more academic parts of the curriculum. That meant that the abilities and qualities of the person teaching sport and PE had crucial impact.

The research shows that the way PESS is delivered is key to girls' wider enjoyment of sport and physical activity, both during school and when they grow up. In addition, individual teachers have a huge opportunity, as role models, to influence girls' attitudes to and enjoyment of PESS.

All students have an entitlement to a PE programme that helps them achieve physical competence and enables them to make informed choices about their involvement in physical activity as part of their healthy, active lifestyle (National Curriculum, 2008). But remember that experiences, interests and tastes differ and so students can be motivated to access the curriculum in different ways.

At the start of the academic year or term, consider how girls' friendship groups, and perception of themselves, have changed. Are they still willing to participate in activities that have previously been offered to them? Review participation rates for different student groups and think about appropriate strategies to boost them.

Review the attitudes and practices within the PE department on a regular basis too, especially as staff change. Reflect on the following:

- Do you understand what girls want?
.....
- Do you welcome everyone to the PE department in the same way?
.....
- Do you behave differently to different groups of students, or members of school teams and clubs? (The research indicates that many girls feel that PE teachers give their time and attention to the talented. It's important that all students are encouraged and made to feel they can achieve, irrespective of their level.)
.....
- Do you deal differently with girls of different ages?
.....
- What is your approach with your classes?
.....
- What messages are you as an individual teacher, or collectively within your department, sending out about the benefits of PESS? Will these resonate with all girls?
.....
- Do the department priorities reflect the priorities of the students?
.....
- Do you offer as many recreational/social opportunities as you do competitive clubs?
.....
- Are students praised for effort and achieving personal goals, as well as winning and sporting success?
.....
- What are the strengths of your colleagues when working with female students?
.....
- Are there any weaknesses within the provision that should be addressed?
.....

Find out what girls want

When students feel they have been listened to, their motivation increases. The research suggests that girls may respond more positively to all aspects of PESS if they feel they have been part of the consultation process.

Set up a questionnaire on paper - you can use the example overleaf, create your own, or set one up online (using free survey software like Google Forms or Survey Monkey). Why not involve the girls in developing the questions, or run an informal session with girls to discuss their thoughts on the following issues:

- Choice of activities** – What are the activities that put girls off participating? What different activities could motivate girls, while meeting National Curriculum requirements?
.....
- Groupings** – How would the girls like to be grouped for PE lessons, e.g. in friendship or ability groups? How do they feel about taking part alongside boys?
.....
- Opportunities for participation** – What opportunities do girls want available to them before or after school, or at lunch times? What clubs would they join? Are there differences in the way they want to participate in PESS compared to out-of-school opportunities?
.....
- Teaching** – What are the girls' attitudes towards being taught by male/female PE teachers? What teacher attitudes do girls find discouraging or inspiring? How do girls like to take part in sport? What aspects of participation do they want emphasised, e.g. competition, fun, social?
.....
- Use of space** – Do the girls feel that the spaces and equipment within the school are dominated by the boys? What could teachers do to help and encourage girls to use them? Could girl-only times be introduced during and outside of PESS?

Take note of what girls – the sporty as well as the non-sporty – say in the consultation and encourage them all to share their opinions. Let them know that you have listened to them and are addressing their concerns. Where it is not possible to meet their requests, seek alternative solutions and ensure students understand the rationale behind the decisions.

Based on the understanding you gain from this process about what needs to be done differently in your school, set out a clear plan of the things you wish to change and the milestones you wish to achieve.

The next sections of this toolkit offer practical advice on how to make positive changes in your school.

“They just force us to do the same thing every year when you are asked and they are not listening to what people actually want to do” Year 10 girl



Case study

A school in Devon conducted a survey of girls aged 11 to 16 who had low extra-curricular participation rates. The survey resulted in four new activities being introduced, both as breakfast time and lunchtime sessions. Aerobics, self-defence, Bollywood dance and girls-only sessions in the fitness suite were all over-subscribed and have now been extended as after-school clubs.

Case study

One school decided to recruit other staff to help with running after-school clubs. Staff sporting sessions were organised in various sports, within which some previously unknown talents and enthusiasm amongst the staff were revealed! Staff have since been involved in running recreational after-school sessions for students, and have commented on the positive relationships they have built with students – benefiting curriculum delivery and discipline throughout the school.

A newly qualified teacher joining a traditional PE department managed to get Fit for Girls on the agenda at each faculty meeting. Male colleagues were particularly concerned at the data collected over one term, which highlighted the problem around 'non-doers' in girls' PE. This information, although readily available, had not been collated before.

The Head of Department encouraged colleagues to review their teaching styles with particular 'problem' classes and agreed to pilot the introduction of girls' football and aerobics for one term. Participation rates increased dramatically and the new activities are being extended.

Case study

Help us make PE and school sports better!

We want your opinion and ideas! Answer the following questions to let us know how you think PE and sports at our school could be improved.

1 What PE, school sports and other physical activities do you enjoy doing? Are there activities not currently available that you'd like to try?

2 How would you like to be grouped for PE (e.g. with your friends or with students of similar ability, with girls only or with boys as well)?

3 How do you like to take part? Do you like competitive games or do you prefer it when the lessons aren't competitive?

4 What do you like about the way your PE teacher delivers PE? What could he or she be doing differently that would make you want to participate more?

5 What out-of-school (before/after school or lunchtime) clubs or activities would interest you? (Remember, there are lots of ways to be a little more active, not just doing sports!)

6 What, if anything, currently stops you doing more physical activity?

7 What would encourage you to do more? Any other thoughts or suggestions?

'Making active attractive'

48% of girls said that "getting sweaty is unfeminine"

75% of girls agree that "girls are self-conscious about their bodies"

This section looks at increasing motivation to participate in PESS amongst girls. Creating the right cultural environment across the school can help girls want to become more active.

Help girls understand what's in it for them if they engage fully in the activity being offered. Be explicit about the outcomes and benefits, e.g. almost all school-based team games and sports directly benefit cardio-vascular, muscle and/or bone health if they are undertaken with sufficient intensity, as well as having wider benefits to self-esteem, confidence, well-being and enjoyment of life. You could work in partnership with PSHE teachers to help girls understand this, thereby encouraging their engagement and cooperation. Stress that being thin is not the same as being healthy.

Inactive girls identify lack of confidence, concerns about physical appearance and 'a lack of skill' as barriers to participation, all of which can reinforce low self-esteem. It's vital that inactive girls have the opportunity to develop the skills, ability and confidence to feel good about participating in physical activity. They should be able to make informed choices about the activities they pursue as part of their healthy lifestyles and be willing to undertake them regularly.

A relaxation of kit rules at one rural school had a major impact on participation rates. This involved the girls in deciding on a new PE kit. Because they'd chosen it they like it, enjoyed wearing it and were proud of their trendy, corporate image.

Case study

School curriculum and ethos

- As with achievement in all curricular areas, set challenging targets for PESS and encourage students to meet them.
- Don't just reward winning, but also other forms of achievement – effort; increases in participation; regular attendance at a club; demonstration of values, attributes and positive attitudes; meeting personal goals etc. Share successes with other teachers/form tutors and encourage them to congratulate these achievements.
- Create opportunities for girls to participate in activities 'with a purpose', such as mentoring of younger children or fundraising walks for charities or causes that girls care about.
- Create a culture of participation within the PE department (and the wider school) and discourage the use of excuse notes. Expect everyone to change for every PE lesson and provide opportunities for everyone to learn, whether as performer, leader, coach or official.
- Use friends, family and other role models to encourage girls to participate (see page 18).
- Set up or contribute to teacher/student-facing newsletters, communities or forums, and share individual and team successes through these media.
- Why not consider setting up student Fitness Ambassadors (see page 20). You could also set up a dedicated team within the school, made up of a selection of sporty and non-sporty girls, a PE teacher, a non-PE teacher, a member of the Parent Teacher Association, a governor and a member of the Senior Leadership Team. They would be responsible for discussing and implementing a positive whole-school approach to physical activity and PESS for girls.

"At the competitions... if I set a personal best or something it just makes me feel happier... I get really quite happy and proud of myself." Year 8 girl

27% of girls think that "being sporty is cool for boys but not for girls" compared to 32% of boys

Improving provision for girls

Bring the best out of girls, in PESS

45% of girls said that “sport is too competitive”

As well as considering the culture in which girls' physical activity is to take place, it's crucial to ensure that the provision of PESS is tailored to meet their wants and needs. Here are some suggestions you might like to try:

- **Broad choice** – The National Curriculum is broad enough to allow teachers, in consultation with girls, to choose activities that will be engaging and motivating to female students – take advantage of this. Regularly review your curriculum, with the girls, to see what is and isn't working for them. Consider curriculum models that have a greater focus on the health and social benefits of activity, rather than sticking to the more traditional, games-led curriculum models. Tune in to girls' ever-changing interests and trends, looking for potential 'hooks' to motivate students (such as less orthodox choices like aerobics, Zumba or martial arts). Think about which activities are 'hot' (and which are not). How could you help students access these activities? Who else might be able to help? Are you capitalising on girls' increased use of new technologies by making use of Wii, Xboxes, Dance Mats, mobile phone apps etc. (these can be suggested as fun additional physical activities)? You could also provide opportunities for girls to create their own activities – challenge them to create the next fitness craze!
- **Positive competition** – Contrary to popular perceptions, girls do like competitive sport when delivered well. They enjoy the clear rules and the chance to take part and play with others. However, the negative behaviours associated with it, e.g. aggressiveness, gloating or being over-competitive, can be off-putting to girls and these need to be addressed in order to motivate girls to participate and enjoy.
- **Friendship groups** – Friendship groups are significantly influential on girls' desire to be active. Allowing girls to participate with their friends and creating outcomes that will benefit them all is likely to lead to greater participation. But remember that friendship groups are fluid and it may be beneficial to re-group girls regularly.

- **Girls-only sessions** – Many girls are uncomfortable about participating in physical activity under the gaze of boys and mixed-sex activities can leave them feeling exposed and humiliated. Create opportunities for girls-only activities or access to the facilities and equipment.
- **Changing attitudes** – Hold discussions and debates with girls on issues around appearance, social norms, media influences and body image. Many girls feel that some aspects of sport – getting dirty, sweaty and messy – are unfeminine. What can be done to combat these perceptions and make physical activity more appealing? You could work with PSHE teachers to help build self-esteem and encourage girls to view themselves positively, regardless of shape and size.
- **Personal goals** – Provide opportunities for girls to be the best they can be, or want to be. Use the first lesson of the year to identify personal fitness targets (which might be around regular participation, increasing time spent doing activity, maintaining a healthy weight etc. or specifically targeted at excellence). Help them understand what it means to be active and how they are, and can be, active in and out of school. Make them aware of the types of activities that will help them meet their specific targets and signpost to opportunities, both in and out of curriculum time. Help them to be innovative and creative in their activity solutions. Keep students focused on their targets throughout the year, regularly review them and support girls to meet or exceed them. Remember to share outcomes sensitively, focusing on the extent to which individuals have met their own targets, and avoid drawing comparisons with others.
- **Leadership skills** – You could try a Sport Education approach to develop leadership skills through PESS, empowering students and engaging them in curriculum planning and delivery. Girls can take on different roles during lessons and lead others through practices and activities. You could provide opportunities for girls to officiate boys' games, for example as referees, in order to get more gender balance in traditional sports.

A third of girls agree that “My PE teacher only pays attention to the kids who are good at sport”

The least active are four times more likely than the most active to agree that “I feel like my body is on show in PE and this makes me like PE less”

58% of girls agreed that “girls drop out of sport because their friends do”

Create extra-curricular opportunities

Help girls to understand that being active is not just for PESS lessons; there's a wealth of opportunity in their daily lives! As a department, you could consider:

- encouraging the school to begin the day with warm-up exercise to invigorate students and help them feel awake and ready to learn
- setting up 'lifestyle' clubs, which could include a range of topics and practical activities that support girls' wider understanding of healthy lifestyles (clubs could even be for families, or for mothers and daughters)
- highlighting girl-friendly activities as part of Comic Relief, Sport Relief, breast cancer awareness etc. and providing opportunities for girls to work towards participating in them
- creating safe walking routes around the school grounds for students to walk and talk during lunch or break times
- ensuring that there are suitable spaces available, both inside and outside, for girls to enjoy physical activity for its own sake without being seen to be 'on show'.

Why not set up a girls' council, which meets regularly to organise and publicise an extra-curricular timetable of activities. Ensure this is representative of the whole school and not dominated by sporty girls. Many schools have started to set up such councils as a result of the School Games, or already have existing school councils. If this is the case, think about how the work of the council could be extended to have more of a focus on girls' participation.

You could also try multi-activity clubs designed for girls with younger siblings, allowing them to collect their sibling and then participate in an activity while their sibling participates in a suitable activity for their age.

Case study

Supported by the Head Teacher, Willowfield School have run Girls Active Days specifically targeting Year 9 girls in which taster sessions for current and new extra-curricular activities were launched, with an athlete mentor present to provide inspiration and encouragement. The days were hugely successful in increasing girls' participation – 95% were taking part in 3 hours of PESS compared to the national average of 44%. Attending extra-curricular clubs and participation in leadership opportunities also increased.

Link to the wider community

Develop a whole-school approach to exploring partnerships with outside agencies, using the girls, their parents and the wider school community. There will be a huge range of activities to call on. Try to engage girls in less common activities, such as climbing, Tai Chi and yoga. Seek local experts willing to organise activities alongside more traditional PESS lessons and clubs.

- Seek girls' views of what kinds of clubs they would attend within their local community.
- Engage with local sports clubs, sports centres, fitness gyms, dance groups, and other organisations that offer physical activity and sport. Help them to think about how their clubs cater for and welcome girls and young people. Use female Fitness Ambassadors (see page 20), advocates and/or Sports Leaders to promote clubs and accompany hesitant girls to sessions.
- Hold club open days when club officials are able to share the focus and ethos of their club and undertake taster sessions.
- Encourage girls to support local charities through sponsored physical activities.
- Keep notice board and online information up to date and regularly signpost girls to up-and-coming activities and events, e.g. Race for Life. Make use of TV screens to publicise such events and show images of girls involved.
- Canvas support from local councillors and MPs to provide opportunities and for girls to have access to social spaces where they can meet and be physically active.

Over half of girls agree that “There are more opportunities for boys to succeed in sport/physical activity than girls”

Role models and leadership

Use female role models to inspire

42% of girls say there aren't many positive sporting role models for girls

Everybody needs somebody to look up to. Experiences we have at school, and the role models we meet during that time, become influential memories we carry throughout our lives.

Researching and discussing high-profile, successful women can be an antidote to the female perception that high achievers, especially in sport and business, are usually men, and could help motivate girls to increase their physical activity levels.

Ask girls which women they admire – sporting and non-sporting. You could display images of the following and talk about their responsibility, commitment and perseverance:

- **Helen Skelton**, the Blue Peter presenter who has completed some phenomenal Sport Relief challenges
- **Karren Brady**, as a high profile business woman
- **Paula Radcliffe**, as an Olympic athlete, someone with huge determination and also a mother
- **Eleanor Simmonds**, the youngest Paralympic athlete to compete for GB in the Beijing 2008 Games
- **Jessica Ennis** and **Shanaze Reade**, for their sporting success and courage
- **Dame Kelly Holmes** and **Baroness Tanni Grey Thompson**, for their sporting achievements and charity work
- **Cheryl Cole** and the Sport Relief Kilimanjaro expedition

Case study

A rural school introduced street dance and aerobics into the dance programme. Girls asked for an after-school street dance club and the evening aerobics class, run on the school site, was marketed to mothers and daughters. Participation rates within the curriculum have improved.

Remember that although celebrities can inspire girls, role models can come from any walk of life – family, friends, coaches, young leaders and teachers. In fact, in many cases it is the people with whom girls have a direct relationship that can be the most influential.

You may like to try these ideas for using role models to make a difference in your school:

- **Using friends** – Provide opportunities for girls to participate in activities with friends and encourage them to 'network', spreading the word to wider friendship groups. You could create cards for girls to give to friends to encourage participation in clubs/activity sessions.
- **Local success stories** – Contact local women to come into school to deliver talks, pitches, presentations or assemblies. They can reinforce the notions of being fit, active and healthy, and inspire girls in how to be successful in the workplace as well.
- **Parental/family involvement** – Parents, especially mothers, are hugely influential on their children's activity levels. They can sometimes be actively complicit in girls' non-participation, for example placing stricter restraints on where daughters can play, compared with sons. Develop strategies to engage parents in their daughters' activity. Hold talks for family members or send home literature to inform them about the importance of healthy and active lives. Set up family fun sessions, e.g. for mums or dads and daughters.
- **Ex-students** – Invite former students back to school to help in girls PE lessons or to support extra-curricular clubs.
- **Inspiring younger students** – Younger students look up to older ones and can be powerfully influenced by their behaviours. Encourage older students to be fitness role models for the younger age groups. They could even be involved in organising games and activities for them. Girls in Years 7 or 8, for example, could visit local primary schools to help with sports and fitness clubs; or girls in Years 9 and 10 could organise playground activities for those in Year 7.

37% of girls agree that "I am motivated to be active because my mother/stepmother is active"

In Years 2 to 11, girls are more likely than boys to be involved in sports volunteering and leadership. However, this pattern is reversed in Years 12 and 13 (PESS Survey, 2009/10). It's important to retain girls' motivation to lead in the later years.

Fitness Ambassadors

Leadership programmes are a natural progression from successful role modelling. Leadership creates a sense of direction and harnesses team effort. It can influence people to do something significant that they might not otherwise achieve. It drives people towards a goal and empowers them to take responsibility.

As part of your efforts to improve and sustain participation rates, why not offer girls the opportunity to become young Fitness Ambassadors? Leadership programmes often work well as a way of motivating non-sporty or disengaged young people and there are several examples of excellent leadership programmes and qualifications that the girls could be encouraged to find out about. Examples:

- The Youth Sport Trust supports schools to grow, develop and deploy young people in meaningful volunteering roles. It's Step into Sport Volunteer Passport is an online system, which gives young people (aged 14 to 19) the opportunity to log and record their volunteering hours and experiences and receive mentor support. In addition, the Young Ambassador movement uses the power of the Olympic and Paralympic Games to inspire millions of young people to become involved in sport and spread the Olympic and Paralympic Values – respect, friendship, excellence, courage, determination, inspiration and equality.
- Sports Leaders UK qualifications include Women, Get Set, Go, a personal development programme that has been specifically designed for women. It encourages women to enter into community leisure leadership positions, and to develop their involvement to benefit themselves and their community. It aims to give women the skills and confidence in a female-only environment to become involved in leading, which can be a spring board to further opportunity.

In its capacity as a Girls Active regional centre, Waltham Forest SSP has accessed funding to further develop opportunities for girls in volunteering, leadership and coaching throughout North London. The project works because it recognises that for girls' attitudes to sport and physical activity to change, girls must be inspired and supported to lead the way themselves.

Case
study



Getting started with Fitness Ambassadors

Leadership opportunities are an important way of maintaining girls engagement with sport whilst also developing other positive skills.

Existing leadership programmes provide lots of support resources and guidance to help teachers and young people to take part. You might find the following suggestions useful, whether or not you are taking part in an existing programme.

- **Nominate** one or two influential girls to chair a **Fit Team Academy**, or have two girls from each year group form a committee. You could encourage the Senior Leadership Team and other influential school staff to help identify influential young women within the school, who may be ideal for the role.
- **Consult** with girls through questionnaires, focus groups, online forums, suggestion boxes or interviews to find out what activities they want to do then start to plan how these can take place.
- **Create a challenge** – Ask girls to research and decide on a challenge, which may be for the whole school or different for each year group, e.g. girls to train for and run the Race for Life or to complete a fundraising charity event.
- **Set up clubs** – Start up some fitness activity sessions either before or after school, or during lunchtimes. Girls can be in charge, from planning to organising and leading sessions. They may wish to get instructors in to do Zumba, body combat, yoga or other alternative activities.
- **Promote** – Get the Fit Team Academy to spread the ‘fitness word’, using social networks and word of mouth, among friends and family so they join too. Give out ‘Bring a Buddy’ cards to encourage participation to clubs or activity sessions.
- **Arrange kit** – This is really important for a sense of identity, belonging and pride. Get the girls to organise, design and order T-shirts for every Academy member.
- **Supply training** – Put on leadership courses or run some leadership training yourself. Give students the skills, knowledge and opportunity to lead during lessons or with extra-curricular activities.
- **Set up a notice board** – Get the girls to be in charge of a notice board, which displays an activity programme and related posters, promotes local clubs, and shows achievements and local news. Make sure it clearly shows all the forthcoming events or training. Provide updates for the school website and intranet.
- **Develop a reward system** – Girls can create their own reward system with certificates and prizes, e.g. rewards for attending three sessions in a row.
- **Create partnerships** – Contact local clubs, sports facilities, coaches and fitness instructors for support in achieving your aims.
- **Encourage links with feeder schools** – Organise festivals or host events by contacting local feeder schools. Get girls to lead activities for younger students or to help out in other schools. Consider asking the girls to take fitness and participation as a focus for a transition project for feeder primary schools.
- **Use a log book** to monitor volunteering or leadership hours. Girls can get this signed off to attain certificates and rewards at different stages, e.g. bronze (20 hours), silver (50 hours), gold (100 hours), platinum (200 hours). Rewards could be T-shirts, lanyards, whistles, water bottles etc.
- **Organise funding** – Search for local or national funding sources to help support with costs of instructors or transport, or to sponsor kit. This is a chance to link with local businesses and use them for support.

“My teachers are funny and it makes me want to take part. Like when PE’s over we think we can’t wait until next week because you know the teachers are going to do something funny and make it fun.” Year 7 girl

Monitoring

Monitoring participation

Monitoring girls' physical activity levels in your school is important for two reasons:

- It's important to monitor the impact of your efforts to address barriers to girls' PESS participation and to use this information to improve provision. Positive steps will encourage and support you in your work, as well as providing valuable evidence to present to your Senior Leadership Team.
- With the PESS survey having been abolished, there is now no national monitor of girls' physical activity levels. It's crucial that schools keep abreast of the levels of activity in which their students are engaged.

Routine monitoring should include quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. It might include:

- absence rates for PE lessons
- non-participation rates
- uptake of clubs and after school activities
- data gathered from discussions with girls, either through your own consultations, or through discussions led by other girls
- data on the amount of physical activity young people are achieving, e.g. number of hours per week, as well as the intensity of this exercise.

Investigate any developing patterns and act quickly to address these:

- Where there are concerns about an individual's participation rates, discuss these with the individual and, if necessary, involve parents/carers to seek their support in getting and keeping their daughters involved.
- Analyse times of the year against activity/curriculum scheduling to determine whether particular activities, facilities and weather are influential.

The data you gather through monitoring should then be used to feed back into the review and reflection process. If your students are not achieving the recommended levels of physical activity, you can reflect on why this is, and consult them as to what would encourage them to do more.

Useful resources and programmes

There is a wealth of excellent existing PESS and physical activity programmes with which you may wish to engage or use as inspiration, to motivate girls to become more active in your school. Please see overleaf for just a few examples of these.

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Dove Self-Esteem Project:

Dove collaborates with BEAT, the UK's leading charity helping those affected by eating disorders. Together they have created a series of workshops/training sessions to help educate young people on the importance of body confidence and building self-esteem.

www.facebook.com/dove/self-esteem

Change4Life Sports Clubs:

Designed to increase physical activity levels in less active children in schools through the development of a new type of sports club. These sports clubs create an exciting and inspirational environment to engage these young people in school sport, particularly by focusing on Olympic and Paralympic sports and drawing on the inspiration of the Olympic and Paralympic Values. The Youth Sport Trust has set up over 7,500 clubs, and schools around the country are following suit.

www.nhs.uk/Change4Life/Pages/change-for-life.aspx

School Games:

A unique opportunity to motivate and inspire millions of young people across the country to take part in more competitive school sport. The Games are made up of four levels of activity: competition in schools, between schools, at county/area level and a national finals event. The Games are designed to build on the magic of 2012 to enable every school and child to participate in competitive sport, including meaningful opportunities for disabled youngsters.

www.yourschoolgames.com/about-the-games

Fit for Girls:

A programme run by the Youth Sport Trust and sportscotland. It aims to increase participation in physical activity among girls aged 11 to 16 and to create a positive future for girls' participation in PESS and physical activity. See the Youth Sport Trust website for more information.

www.youthsporttrust.org/how-we-can-help/programmes/fit-for-girls.aspx

Nike Training Club:

An initiative designed to motivate women and girls to exercise, get excited about sport and increase their confidence. The clubs run free women-only fitness classes across the UK. The clubs were initially trialled in 14 schools and are now being rolled out to 64 schools across London.

www.nike.com/nikeos/p/nikewomen/en_GB/training_club

Sport England:

Sport England are working with 34 national governing bodies to increase the number of 5 to 19 year olds taking part in club sport or taking on leadership and volunteering roles within sport. They are investing £4.1m per year across the 34 sports to deliver an extra half million junior club participants or volunteers by 2012-2013, activated through the Youth Sport Trust and County Sport Partnership network.

www.sportengland.org



We'd like to hear from you!

Participate in on-going debate and discussion, share good practice and learn from the positive experiences of other PESS practitioners and schools.

You can get in touch through:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/wsffuk

Twitter: www.twitter.com/wsff_uk

#changingthegame

Email: info@wsff.org.uk

You can download further copies of this Toolkit at:

**[http://wsff.org.uk/publications/fact-sheets/
changing-the-game-for-girls](http://wsff.org.uk/publications/fact-sheets/changing-the-game-for-girls)**

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