North Solihull's Girl Power Programme

With national data showing physical activity levels decreasing in children as young as 7 and 22% of girls not meeting physical activity guidelines, Hollie Williams implemented the Girl Power programme to inspire a life-long love of movement in girls.

Developed in 2018, the Girl Power programme was developed in North Solihull to tackle the inactivity of girls in Years 3/4 and support girls in Years 5/6 to develop confidence through programme design and delivery.

The programme spans a full academic year, starting with a training event for the participants in Years 5/6 is held to support them as young leaders, with these pupils then supporting a 12-week club for the Years 3/4 participants. A Girl Power inspire festival takes place, followed by a party for the programme's graduation and award ceremony. An alternative 8-week programme spanning one term was also offered to the schools involved.

Girl Power Programme

Objectives

- Create a process to identify and support inactive girls in primary schools
- Empower and support girls in Years 5-6 to lead and inspire as active role models
- Instill a love of being active in girls aged 7-9 with a view to improve physical and mental health.

Who was the target audience and how were they engaged?

A total of 22 primary schools across Birmingham, Coventry, Solihull, and Warwickshire were approached to take part in the Girl Power programme, with an aim to target 557 inactive and least confident girls in the targeted age range. As part of the programme, 25 members of school staff became Girl Power mentors to act as role models, encouraging resilience and positive attitudes towards sport.

Barriers to participation, such as lack of experience/confidence, poor resourcing in schools, and negative perceptions of sport, were identified with the help of previous years Girl Power mentors to create programme-specific resources to support the current cohort of mentors.

Why was the activity unique?

The programme, now in its third year, carefully collects participant and school feedback to ensure it is enhanced year-on-year to ensure it fully supports school staff and provides the best possible experience for the pupils. As a result of this, the programme was extended from 8 weeks to 12 to meet the needs of the schools.

This year, a participant journal was included into the programme to gain an insight on the personal, social, emotional and physical health of the pupils, as each week of the course is themed on these key areas.

What was the impact felt in schools and by CYP?

Whilst the programme is being run throughout the 2022/23 year, all participants in the programme will complete a baseline pupil impact survey which will be analysed in July. This survey captures feedback on activity levels, levels of enjoyment, whether they prefer participating in activity with friends/at home, emotional response to activity, and confidence.

Verbal feedback collected from both Girl Power mentors and participants indicates the programme has increased pupil interest to be part of a school/community team, as well as an increase in engagement in physical activity by the targeted inactive girls.

Why is this an example of School Games best practice?

The Girl Power programme was the result of local recognition that physical activity levels were steadily decreasing in young people, with a need to incentivise girls to increase their engagement and participation in physical activity.

Whilst run by SGOs, the programme successfully takes a dual approach of engaging girls who are preparing to transition to secondary school to mentor and coach younger girls who are starting their experience of school sport.

For more information please email Hollie at hwilliams@unitytrustsolihull.org.uk