

# spear

centre for sport, physical education  
& activity research



## Active Kids Paralympic Challenge: School Journeys



June 2016

# About SPEAR

The Centre for Sport, Physical Education and Activity Research (SPEAR) is located within Canterbury Christ Church University. SPEAR undertakes a range of theoretically-informed analyses, from critical commentaries and reflections on current policy and practice, to commissioned research, evaluation and consultancy.

SPEAR's research guides and informs public policy to increase physical activity and sport participation. It contributes to the wider evidence-base used by policy-makers, provides a rationale for government and commercial investment, and steers programme improvements to enhance the experience of practitioners and participants.

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# Active Kids Paralympic Challenge Journey Bushey Meads

## School Context

Bushey Meads is a secondary academy situated in Hertfordshire. The school has around 1200 students on roll and offers a special unit designated for integrating students with physical and neurological impairments. The students have access to an indoor sports hall and a multi-sport AstroTurf field for both PE and extra-curricular clubs.

The school offers a variety of sports clubs, including basketball, football, rugby, Zumba and boxercise. There are also opportunities for students to get involved in disability sport, with the school competing annually in the National Disabled Games.

## Reasons for Engagement

Sarah Cooper, PE teacher at Bushey Meads, has been keen to provide disability sport opportunities at the school: *“Our mainstream students all have the opportunity to participate in some kind of disability activity during their time here”* (Sarah Cooper, PE teacher). Disabled students are fully integrated into PE lessons, while extra provisions are made if necessary: *“If it’s something they can’t do then they will be fully supported by a teaching assistant to do something related”* (Sarah Cooper, PE teacher).

Sarah hoped that Active Kids Paralympic Challenge would expand student’s awareness of different opportunities available within sport: *“We do a lot of different activities but it is good for the students to go beyond the traditional sports”* (Sarah Cooper, PE teacher). Due to the school’s emphasis on integrating students with physical and neurological impairments, students are familiar with disabilities and disability sport:

*We have a unique school in that they are accepting. They see disability around them all the time... it may be that they have a disabled child in their lessons or they may have worked with a disabled student in the past.*

(Sarah Cooper, PE teacher)

The school still saw Active Kids Paralympic Challenge an opportunity to enhance student’s understanding: *“hopefully make them more aware of what we need to do to support disabled students, appreciate the obstacles and to make sport inclusive”* (Sarah Cooper, PE teacher).

The Active Kids Paralympic Challenge equipment was another reason for Bushey Mead’s registration: *“we do have some of the equipment but more resources allow us to involve even more students... so it is worthwhile for that alone”* (Sarah Cooper, PE teacher).



Active Kids Paralympic Challenge:  
Activities circuit



Disability sport notice board



Disability sport notice board

## Snapshot of Activities

Active Kids Paralympic Challenge is embedded within a leadership module of the Year 9 PE curriculum. Lessons are focused around introducing the students to different Paralympic sports by explaining rules and strategies, participating in game based activities and delivering sessions to disabled students: *“They have done work with the school next door, which is a special needs primary school... it’s great for them to really have an understanding”* (Sarah Cooper, PE teacher).

On the day of the visit, Sarah delivered Active Kids Paralympic Challenge in a Year 9 girls PE lesson. Students were split into four groups and were asked to complete a circuit of activities, including boccia, blind football, sitting volleyball and standing volleyball.

A handful of the students had encountered these activities before, so Sarah encouraged these students to explain the activities to those who were not so familiar. Students were enthusiastic to get involved, and an element of competition was evident between groups.

Boccia was one of the more popular activities, as students were eager to have several attempts. Students who had not played boccia before were able to pick up the rules quickly: *“It is actually really fun; you can learn how to play straight away”* (Year 9 participant).

While playing sitting volleyball, the students remained very static and struggled to keep the ball in the air. Sarah asked them to look at the standing volleyball and think about what they needed to do to compensate for not being able to use their legs. As the session went on, students used their arms to shuffle across the court and were communicating with teammates to fill empty spaces on the floor.

The students were excited to try blind football but struggled early on, unable to make contact with the ball and regularly running into teammates. As time went on, they began to communicate with each other and eventually decided to use a guide to lead the blindfolded student in the right direction. Students put forward ideas about how they could modify the activity: *“You could have one sighted person off, and they could direct you...”* (Year 9 participant).

The lesson finished with a discussion of what the students found difficult and how disabled athletes overcome these obstacles: *“It’s a lot harder when you can’t move freely... they must be really tactical to be in the right place”* (Year 9 participant).

## Perceptions of Resources

The Active Kids Paralympic Challenge equipment is used as a supplementary resource at Bushey Meads, and has allowed the school to expand their disability sport offer: *“We have started an additional club for our disabled students, and the equipment has really helped to facilitate that”* (Sarah Cooper, PE Teacher).



Boccia  
(click picture to play video)



Sitting Volleyball  
(click picture to play video)



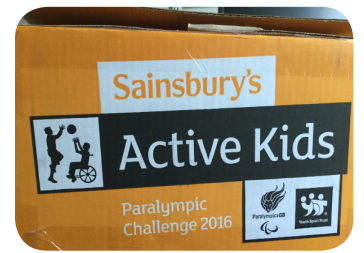
Blind Football  
(click picture to play video)

The new equipment also allows the school to involve more students in disability sport: *“Now, we aren’t limited to just a small group so can have a whole class doing goalball, because we now have more balls”* (Sarah Cooper, PE teacher).

Sarah has decided not to use the online resources in the planning and delivery of her sessions. The school has been delivering disability sport for a number of years and find the activities on the challenge cards to be similar to their current offer:

*“I haven’t really used them to be honest... we already have a good understanding of disabled sport and how to integrate the students, we have been doing these type of activities for a while now”*

(Sarah Cooper, PE teacher)



Active Kids Paralympic Challenge equipment pack

## Impact of Active Kids Paralympic Challenge at Bushey Meads

Active Kids Paralympic Challenge provides students with an insight into the different opportunities available through disability sport: *“I thought it was just modified versions of sport, but boccia and goalball are specially designed for disabled people”* (Year 9 participant).

Using Active Kids Paralympic Challenge to facilitate leadership training is seen to provide students with the necessary tools to deliver inclusive activities: *“It helps to understand what might be difficult for them, and what you can do to make it easier”* (Year 9 participant). Students have demonstrated increased interest in Paralympic sport and are keen to engage in further discussion: *“I was looking at the other sports they do in the Paralympics; it would be really good to try more... we were talking about all the different disabilities the swimmers have”* (Year 9 Participant).

Increased empathy has been fostered by an improved understanding of disability sport and the challenges disabled athletes face: *“I didn’t think sitting volleyball would be that difficult, but without your legs everything is a lot more difficult”* (Year 9 participant).



What have you learnt?  
(click picture to play video)

## Sustaining and Embedding

Bushey Meads intend to use the equipment to supplement their current disability sport offer, and also to create more opportunities for disability sport going forward: *“We have actually started some additional clubs and hopefully we can get more going now that we have some extra equipment”* (Sarah Cooper, PE Teacher). Sarah also hopes to continue using Active Kids Paralympic Challenge as a key part of the Year 9 leadership module, ensuring inclusive activity is taken into consideration along their leadership pathway: *“It has worked pretty well, and I think we will look to keep getting disability sport involved in the Year 9 module”* (Sarah Cooper, PE Teacher).