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& 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 Woolgrove School

School Context

Woolgrove School is a special educational needs academy for primary aged pupils, situated in Letchworth Garden City. All pupils have a statement of SEN for moderate learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders or speech, language and communication needs. The majority of pupils have additional needs such as complex syndromes, specific learning difficulties and ADHD, while a large proportion of pupils have been identified with varying levels of autism.

The school offer a number of extracurricular clubs, such as soft archery, dance and karate. A large proportion of pupils do not live locally and are transported to the school at specific times; as a result it is difficult for many children to participate in extracurricular clubs.

Reasons for Engagement

As a dedicated special educational needs academy, Woolgrove is focused on delivering inclusive activities, however Richard Pritchard (PE subject lead) hoped that Active Kids Paralympic Challenge would raise awareness of disability sport and the Paralympic games: *“Hopefully make them more aware. Just giving them access to different activities, access to something they can see on TV, a worldwide sporting event”* (Richard Pritchard, PE subject lead). Richard felt that the Paralympic link could engage the children, and raise aspirations:

It'll help them see what options might be available to them and help them understand that they could take it further if they wanted... I think it will get them to understand there are opportunities in sport outside of school.

(Richard Pritchard, PE subject lead)

The provision of alternative activities also presented an opportunity to develop cooperation outside of the traditional sports environment:

The issue in terms of team sports is trying to support the children in transferring individual core skills into team game situations. For a lot of them it is a massive ask so we usually do individual based skills... these activities give a bit of an individual focus to team sports like goalball.

(Richard Pritchard, PE subject lead)

Snapshot of Activities

Richard hopes to build Active Kids Paralympic Challenge into the PE curriculum: *“We want it to be part of their weekly lessons... run 3 or 4 weeks' worth of Paralympic themed lessons”* (Richard Pritchard, PE subject lead).



Active Kids Paralympic Challenge:
Activities circuit



School sport notice board

Woolgrove have chosen to start the activities later in the school year to maintain momentum going into the Paralympic games:

Due to the learning needs of our pupils we'd look to run paralympic linked activities later on in the year or ideally run them alongside the paralympics. This would better support their understanding and link to the actual event at the time.

(Richard Pritchard, PE subject lead).

On the day of the visit, Richard delivered Active Kids Paralympic Challenge during a Year 3 PE lesson. The class were mixed ability and possessed a range of different impairments. The session started with a short presentation on Paralympic sport and Paralympic values.

The children were split into four groups and led around a circuit of four different activities; goalball, hand cycling, soft archery and wheelchair fencing. Richard placed an emphasis on making the activities quick, simple and fun, aiming to ensure all children remained engaged throughout each activity.

At the goalball station, the HLTA talked to the children about vision impairments and discussed how other senses can be used to compensate. The children were blindfolded and asked to complete a 'guided walking' activity. The children were then asked to sit on the floor and roll the ball to their partner while they were both blindfolded.

The different activity stations within the circuit allowed children to experience a 'taster' of some of the Paralympic sports discussed earlier in the lesson. For the wheelchair fencing, children used 'foam noodles' to imitate some fencing moves demonstrated during the Paralympic presentation.

The session ended with a presentation recapping the Paralympic sports discussed at the start of the lesson, followed by the children being awarded stickers for taking part.



Guided walking
(click picture to play video)



Goalball activity
(click picture to play video)



Soft archery
(click picture to play video)

Perceptions of Resources

Richard finds the challenge cards to be a useful tool during the planning of Paralympic themed lessons: *"They have definitely helped give us ideas and helped us focus in a bit more"* (Richard Pritchard, PE subject lead). Woolgrove have only used elements of the online resources so far, finding some crossover with their current disability sport offer: *"A lot of it is quite similar to what we already do, so we kind of use bits and take ideas but we don't use the whole thing"* (Richard Pritchard, PE subject lead).

The equipment itself is important in expanding the school's offer for disability sport, however due to class sizes, the impact of the resources has been limited:

The equipment is great but it is a bit difficult to involve everyone if you only have four or five blindfolds... I understand they can't send 30 of each item but to sustain the programme I think we will need to purchase more equipment.

(Richard Pritchard, PE subject lead)

Impact of Active Kids Paralympic Challenge at Woolgrove

Woolgrove has only recently started Active Kids Paralympic Challenge but Richard has already noticed an increased interest and awareness in Paralympic sport: *"I think they are much more aware (of the Paralympics) and they are talking and asking questions about it... a lot of them would never see it or know anything about it otherwise"* (Richard Pritchard, PE subject lead). The provision of alternative activities encourages children to engage in physical activity and challenge themselves to try new games or learn new skills: *"I think just doing something different will be a really good learning experience... they seem to really enjoy it and they want to do the activities"* (Richard Pritchard, PE subject lead).

Richard has also seen improved empathy and understanding of disability sport through the sitting volleyball challenge:

We initially did standing volleyball so when the kids did sitting volleyball they couldn't understand why anyone would do it sitting down because it was so much harder. After using the Paralympic theme, they began to understand that some people can't physically do it, so they started to think about disability sport and realised how difficult it can be for some disabled people.

(Richard Pritchard, PE subject lead)

Early indications suggest that Active Kids Paralympic Challenge could have a positive impact on children's social skills: *"I think that improved social skills will come with time; what we do in the curriculum throughout the rest of the year is where the impact will come from"* (Richard Pritchard, PE subject lead).

Richard is confident in his ability to deliver disability sport, but the challenge cards have provided new ideas for himself and some other members of staff: *"Although we already do a lot of it, it has given some new ideas.... some of the support staff might not be so familiar so it is useful to be able to see it all laid out clearly"* (Richard Pritchard, PE subject lead).

Sustaining and Embedding

Woolgrove is looking to build upon their disability sport offer, and Richard hopes to deliver Active Kids Paralympic Challenge well beyond the end of the 2016 Paralympic games: *"All the stuff is good; regardless of the Paralympics. I am going to try to find parts of the PE curriculum that I can work it into"* (Richard Pritchard, PE subject lead).

The school understand that it will take time to see an impact on the children, and a strong emphasis has been placed on sustaining and embedding Active Kids Paralympic Challenge within the school: *"I am keen to make sure it isn't a one off. The impact comes with time... one of the main things we look for is building it in to the curriculum and focus on the long term sustainability of the activities"* (Richard Pritchard, PE subject lead).



Active kids Paralympic Challenge assembly



Using your other senses: Touch



Using your other senses: Hearing