

## Physical education, school sport and physical activity

### Girls Active case study

#### Background of school

The Heathland School is an outstanding educational, community comprehensive school for 11-18 year olds in the London Borough of Hounslow. It is a larger-averagesized school where the proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than the national average. The largest groups are of Indian or Pakistani origin with around 20 per cent of students being of Somali origin. A large proportion of students are Muslim and the number of students who speak English as an additional language is higher than the national average. The Heathland School specialises in maths and science.

#### Background of girls' participation in PE, physical activity and sport

As the school provides free after-school sports clubs, students in years 7 and 8 were keen attendees as they have usually had to pay for extra-curricular opportunities in their primary schools. However, from the end of year 8 onwards, girls' participation dropped rapidly, with only those who were members of the school teams continuing to participate in extracurricular sessions.

Through involvement in parents' evenings, the PE staff were aware that, generally, parents did not see physical activity as being important for their daughters. They tended to underestimate how much activity the girls should be doing in terms of the benefits to their health and prioritised attendance at clubs for academic subjects rather than for sport and physical activity. This was exacerbated for Muslim girls where there were additional cultural expectations in terms of their dress and leisure time. Generally, parents too were less active than they should be.

#### What were the intended outcomes of the intervention?

The school wanted to raise parents' awareness of the need for young people to lead active lifestyles and create greater family support for girls to be active. It also wanted to offer a greater range of activities to encourage girls to participate beyond curriculum PE. As dads, rather than mums, tend to be the main influencers and decision makers in the students' homes, the school recognised the need to engage the adult males in the household.

#### What took place and who was involved?

The PE department implemented the Girls Active intervention survey during PE lessons. While one teacher supported students to complete the online questionnaire, another teacher played some of the videos shown at the Girls Active training and opened up discussions

with the girls. This highlighted the fact that some of the girls' perceptions of PE and school sport differed from staff assumptions and provided the department with a real insight into the girls'



What impact did this have on the whole school?