



Most innovative special needs intervention Pool Academy, Redruth

Judge comments:

Well evidenced and made it obvious how the school go above and beyond, there was clear rigour and structure. It was clear from the start that they have a broad base of meeting different needs and are driven by a leader who understand and shows clear direction.

Entry:

We have chosen to put forward our Academy's Unique Disability Sport Intervention programme. Due to our locality and limited local resources we have found that sporting opportunities for SEN and Disability students is very limited. We also felt that the sporting programme within our own Academy was geared more towards able bodied students and this needed to adapt due to the current cohort of SEN students.

When taking part in competitions we have had to travel vast distances to facilitate our students being able to fulfill their potential. We strongly felt that the students with SEN would benefit from the ethos of competition, social inclusion and self-confidence building.

Disability/SEN Football

This intervention was started in January 2009 after a discussion with one of our students who had a diagnosis of ADHD. He told us that he was having problems settling in class and was really struggling with concentration. The idea of having students taking part in physical activity before start of class was born. One of our male teaching

assistants (Mark Fuller) was very interested in setting up a small group. Mark himself has ADHD and was able to empathise with the students.

ADHD students are normally categorised by two sets of behavioural problems, inattentiveness and hyperactivity and can underachieve at school due to poor social interaction with peers and adults they can also have problems with discipline. We found that our students had improved their concentration in lessons. Use of sanctions for behaviour showed a vast improvement.

The first session involved 6 students, each with their own individual SEN difficulties ranging from ADHD, physical difficulty, Autism and behavioural issues. Sessions started at 8.00am. Students were offered breakfast and then took part in football skills until the start of lessons at 8.50am.

The numbers quickly grew with more SEN students joining the group. Lunch time sessions were added due to the popularity of the morning sessions. This meant that students would be able to access further physical activity.

The group had strict rules for behaviour and group interaction. Many of the students had been isolating themselves during free time. The group started to bond, spending free time together, this had a very positive effect on their social and emotional wellbeing. Parents reported that students were calmer at home and their home life had changed for the better.

We soon had enough students to enter the Cornwall Ability Counts School League. Students would compete once a month at our local College. I have never seen such excitement as they made their way to the first game.

Pool Academy has gone on to win for the last three years both in the league and Championship levels. We also compete in the Cornwall School Games and have won that for the past two years.

One of our ADHD students has been very successful in competing in the under 18 English 'LD' trials and represents our College at mainstream level.

Another of our hearing impaired students has just been accepted on to Plymouth Argyle 'futsal' programme for next year.

Disability/SEN Basketball

Disability Basketball was started as we felt we needed to offer a competitive sport for wheelchair bound and physical difficulties students. Again Mr Fuller stepped in to run a newly formed team. He applied for the lease of 15 basketball wheelchairs from Cornwall Sports partnership and was successful.

We completed in the first ever South West Inclusive Zone basketball competition. This type of format of the game allows for able-bodied students to assist wheelchair users in a game that is played across three zones. Each team must consist of one wheelchair user. One of our students had osteogenesis imperfecta (brittle bone) and curvature of the spine. He was wheelchair bound but was very keen to participate in the game. The whole team was based around him and he was a big part of the team which then won a Bronze medal at regional level. Based on the success of the team he was selected to attend a Sainsbury's school games talent identification weekend. He has since joined Cornwall Cougars.

Disability/SEN Boccia

Disability Boccia was a sport that one of our wheelchair bound students had seen at the Paralympics and felt that he would like to try. We set up an extra curriculum timetable within the PE department to enable him to partake in this sport. The student had full support after school and practised regularly. Within a year he and three other disabled students were entered into the County competition. The students came second and qualified for the South West Championship, quite an achievement in such a short time.

Last year the students achieved first place in the County finals.

Our thoughts

We are very proud of our SEN students accomplishments both team and individual.

They have been a credit to our Academy by the way they have conducted themselves and in the way they have supported each other. They have left or are ready to leave our Academy as young adults who have developed the life skills needed to succeed in our Community.