

Penrice Community College

Healthy Schools Plus case study

Background

Penrice Community College is a large secondary school in the Charlestown area of St. Austell with around 1325 pupils aged 11-16.

Priority Areas

The school chose to work on increasing exercise which in turn would help towards achieving a 'healthy weight' and assist with certain pupils' physical, mental and social skills. Members of the school community already had an awareness and concern that numbers of pupils who were overweight or obese rates were high in the Restormel area. As well as this The Head of Year 9 and the Healthy Schools Coordinator also had concerns about a group of girls who did not engage or access certain aspects of school life. The school decided to address these concerns by providing greater opportunities for out-of-classroom experiences and by engaging directly with the disaffected girls.

The work

The two target groups were identified and the project was named Penrice's Children Matter (PCM). The five disaffected girls (some in challenging circumstances) met every Wednesday for a programme that included team-building activities/games, first aid, bowling, swimming, walks, a healthy eating session and ICT. To give them ownership of the project, the five disaffected girls were also given peer-mentoring training and asked to mentor younger pupils who might need a "sister" figure in their lives. The five girls were responsible for choosing the project name (PCM), their name (Pink Ladies) and purpose of the project. They chose their kit (Pink Hooded Jumpers) and the polo shirts for the year 7s. They made a huge impact and soon became recognised in and around school. The Pink Ladies mentored approximately 16 students from Year 7 who had issues around personal wellbeing and health. During these mentoring sessions they led team-building activities, team games, healthy refreshments and mug designing. Following from their first aid work each Pink Lady also had the responsibility of teaching CPR to other pupils and encouraged the students to teach their families.

What difference has the work made?

Behavioural issues among the five disaffected girls decreased as their attitudes changed as they became more integrated and accepted into school life. Their mentoring work as "Pink Ladies" raised their status within the school and they demonstrated raised self-esteem, raised aspirations and improved achievement. The school also recorded improvements in numbers of pupils taking part in after-school activities and numbers of pupils reporting greater awareness of healthier lifestyles.

The words of those who took part

"It was fun, we got to do lots of fun things. It will be good to do it to the new Year 7s and help them with their personal wellbeing."

"It was really fun and I'd like to do it again. It made me think. It also made me think about my behaviour."

"It was brilliant and I'd like to do it again. I gained self-confidence and self-esteem."

Where next? The work is continuing. The Year 7s who were mentored by the Pink Ladies have become Year 8 Team Leaders and are, in turn, mentoring new Year 7 pupils with the Pink Ladies as overall peer mentors. This project is hopefully here to last as it has become embedded.