

Penryn College

Healthy Schools Plus case study

Background

Just over 1,000 students aged 11-16 attend Penryn College. The college's motto "Achieving through challenge" encourages all pupils—who are challenged in numerous ways—to achieve their full potential. The college became a Sports College in 1998 and has been recognised as an Outstanding school in its last two Ofsted reports.

Priority areas

In order to combat obesity and inactivity and to promote healthier lifestyles the college chose to work on increasing physical activity through Change4Life across the community of Penryn. Alongside this they also chose to work on students' leadership skills through the provision of First Aid and linked this to supporting pupils' emotional health and wellbeing.

The work

The college created a Change4Life strategy across the community of Penryn and by opening its sports facilities to the community it increased opportunities for physical activity for people of all ages and abilities. Demand was high, with the sports facilities being fully booked almost every week and at the weekends for special events. Community clubs included badminton, tennis, ladies netball, taekwondo, table tennis, cheerleading and acrobatics. "Pay and Play" opportunities were established and a Saturday Club was set up for children who take part in street dance, gymnastics, tennis and football.

Initially, twelve students (identified as having the potential to lead others) did a ten-week First Aid course and all were successful in attaining the First Aid trainer qualification. The students went on to teach First Aid skills to younger children at the college then also outside the college with a group from Truro High Prep school and with a year 5&6 group at Penryn Junior School. A further twenty students were trained as First Aid leaders. The programme recommences in September 2010.

The children in challenging circumstances were a group of Year 9 girls seen as "cultural architects" because they were influencing their peers. Carefully chosen adult mentors worked with these girls on topics including how to treat others, behaviour, acceptable dress codes and the traits of good leadership. This group of girls also did cheerleading with the School Sports Partnership Dance Coach, entered the SSP cheerleading competition (representing the school for the first time) and won. The group is now 40 strong, has its own cheerleading uniform, demonstrates at school events, the older members of the group support the

younger children and have become Cheerleading Leaders working with primary children who have a community club.

What difference has the work made?

Children and families have engaged more in physical activity through increased use of the sports facilities at the college, with 3691 community members actively taking part. The Saturday Club attracted 80 children. Those involved in the First Aid group demonstrated improved leadership skills, raised self-esteem, raised aspirations, increased confidence and improved ability to collaborate. The Rosenberg Self Esteem test, used with the "cultural architects" both before and after the work, showed improved self-esteem among the girls as a result of the work. Staff observed changes in their attitudes and behaviour. The collection of data over the past year now demonstrates that those actively involved in the cheerleading have made more progress with their academic school work

The words of those who took part

"I really enjoy cheerleading and being able to help the younger children, it has made me more confident." - Jenny

"I want to become a Doctor so learning first aid has helped me, it was hard trying to teach first aid to the younger children I really had to know the skills myself." - Tom

"The community recognises Penryn College as a place where they can be active through joining sports clubs, playing recreational sport and where their children can take part in coached activities. It's a great pleasure to see how many people use the sports facilities." – Ros Bastian

Where next?

The college is strengthening its ties with the Health Centre in order to discuss the possibility of referrals when the fitness suite is available, or to provide a Saturday morning activity-session for health. Staff are targeting Year 8 girls who may be developing "cultural architect" characteristics and are also looking to work with targeted groups of KS 3 boys. The sports facilities are continuing to be well used and the sports development programme ensures that consideration is given to new activities. Particular emphasis is given to linking with the student body at the University of Cornwall to enable them to become active members of the local community through the joining of local sports clubs who use the facility.