

ASPIRING TO BE ACTIVE

Chloe Fletcher

Our Lady & St Anne's Primary School is a Catholic school at the heart of a diverse community in Newcastle upon Tyne. During autumn term 2015, the school became involved in a Youth Sport Trust pilot programme called 'Aspire'. The aim of the programme was to inspire and encourage children to take part in regular physical activity during Key Stage 2 in the hope that when they made the transition to Key Stage 3 they would continue their involvement in sport and physical activity.

Around the time of setting up the Aspire programme, a report¹ had been published by Women in Sport and the Youth Sport Trust that outlined the attitudes of seven- and eight-year-olds in relation to sport. The report stated that at the age of seven and eight children already have clear ideas about gender stereotypes, and rank highly the importance of "looking good". Our Lady & St Anne's decided to use these findings to tackle some of the issues surrounding body confidence, low self-esteem and stereotyping. The main aim was to inspire the girls to take part in regular physical activity. A girls-only after-school club was set up which enabled the girls to be physically active without the fear of being judged or having to compete against the boys. There was also a focus on developing the girls' personal and social skills in line with whole school priorities. Our Lady & St Anne's whole school priority is to enable every child to reach their potential and contribute to society. It was hoped that the Aspire club would encourage the girls to reach their potential by boosting their confidence and enabling them to feel valued.

Following initial staff training and support from the Newcastle PE & School Sport Service for the first 12 weeks of the programme, the school has continued to develop the girls' club with great success. The girls have been involved in a range of fun and exciting activities, including Zumba, glow sports, team games, outdoor adventure and martial arts. As well as weekly sessions at the school the girls have also been on trips to their local playing fields and the nearby trampoline park. By showing the girls sporting facilities in their community, it is hoped they will continue healthy behaviours outside of school. The successful sustainment of the girls' club over the past two years has been for two main reasons. Firstly, there has been a huge commitment from the teaching assistant, Miss Compton. She has worked passionately to sustain the club, ensuring it runs every week with new and exciting activities. She has run the club for two years with over 25 girls attending every week – a fantastic achievement. The second reason is that ownership of the club has been handed to the girls. Involving the girls in deciding what activities they would like to do has given them a voice and made each of them feel a valued member of the group. It has also encouraged them to attend regularly as they know they will be doing activities they enjoy.

The club has had a significant positive impact on those involved. The girls have all grown in confidence and developed into well-rounded, ambitious individuals. They are aware of the positive impact that taking part in regular physical activity has on both their bodies and minds, and have the passion and ability to continue their participation in lifelong physical activity.

Chloe Fletcher led an Aspire after-school club in my school where she engaged girls aged 7-9 and developed my staff's CPD by

demonstrating and encouraging adult involvement. The sessions Chloe led were amazing. Some of our children, who can be hard to reach, were so motivated and totally engrossed in the sessions. As the sessions involved skills not always taught in the curriculum, e.g. Samba or using "glow sticks" in the dark, the girls showed a level of enjoyment I have rarely seen for such long periods. After Chloe had completed her demo lessons, my own staff have continued to deliver high quality, fun after-school sessions for which I am really grateful.

Michael O'Brien, Head Teacher, Our Lady & St Anne's

The Aspire Club has been a great success. It has been one of the most popular clubs that has run this year. It was so popular that it has continued over all three terms while at the same time growing in numbers. It has involved the girls from Year 3 up to Year 6. The variety of activities demonstrated by Chloe and since continued by Miss Compton have been amazing. Walking through the hall on a Thursday, it is a pleasure to watch the animated enthusiastic children. It is definitely a club we wish to continue next year.

Sue Hodgson, Year 3 Class Teacher, Our Lady & St Anne's

Read about the Our Lady & St Anne's Aspire club at: www.olsa.org.uk or by following the school's Twitter account: @OLSAnewcastle or by reading the club's blog at: <https://clubs2olsa.wordpress.com/>

Chloe Fletcher is a member of the Newcastle PE & School Sport Service.

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417766/TOPLINE_findings_of_Y3_sports_research_FINAL.pdf