

Opening Schools Facilities Fund 2021



Phase 2 Evaluation

March 2022.



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Headlines.



Many schools have used the funding to offer new, non-traditional activities to encourage participation amongst the least engaged

- Most have bought new equipment either to offer their usual activities to more CYP or to enable them to offer completely new activities
- Some have funded external coaches or have trained existing staff to deliver activities or have used the funding in other ways, such as for PPE



Schools report a wide range of positive changes as a result of receiving the OSF funding

- Increased number of pupils engaging in physical activity
- Increased engagement from groups of disengaged and disadvantaged pupils
- Positive impact on pupils' behaviour and confidence (both confidence of physical abilities and self-belief)
- Pupils feeling empowered to take control of their own fitness
- A change in staff mindset on how best to engage the disengaged



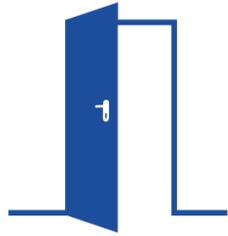
The pandemic has created new new challenges to engaging young people in physical activity

Schools have seen increased levels of disengagement amongst children and young people and a deterioration of young people's mental and physical health caused by prolonged absences from school. COVID also presented challenges due to staff and pupil self-isolation and fears over catching COVID. Existing issues, such as a transport and a lack of facilities/space continue to be barriers to engagement.



The majority of schools have managed to sustain the extracurricular activities once the funding has ended, although this is easier when the funding has been spent on new equipment and harder when it has funded staffing and external coaches.

Background.



What is Opening Schools Facilities?

In July 2019 the DfE, DCMS and DHSC published the School Sport and Activity Action Plan (the Action Plan). This Action Plan was a joint commitment to ongoing collaboration at national level to ensure that sport and physical activity are an integral part of both the school day and after-school activities. £10.1m of Department for Education funding was invested into the Active Partnership network to help develop extracurricular opportunities and community links for children and young people (CYP) and to support schools to open/reopen facilities to help the community get active. Phase 1 of the Opening School Facilities took more of a focus on opening facilities to the community, whereas the latest phase, Phase 2, has a particular focus on engaging more young people in physical activity.



What is Active Lancashire's role?

Active Lancashire are responsible for the delivery of this programme across Lancashire. Our role has been to provide support and investment to schools. An EOI form was created so all schools could apply for funding. We also approached schools with a high % of FSM and in areas of high deprivation.



Our Support and Investment

Active Lancashire's delivery budget for Phase 2 was £309,000. This investment was focused on supporting schools to develop after school clubs, schools with lettings previously managed by SLS and schools looking to develop community engagement/lettings.

You can learn more about the initial overview of the Active Lancashire Phase 2 investment [here](#).

You can learn more about the first phase of Opening Schools Facilities both locally and nationally [here](#).

Evaluation approach.



Overall, **35** participating schools provided feedback

Initial feedback

In October 2021, participating schools were asked to complete an evaluation form, providing information on:

- The number of young people who have engaged with activities delivered as part of OSF (incl. breakdown of gender, SEND and BAME pupils)
- Any changes/adjustments to the original project
- How the OSF programme has supported the school to help young people be active, work with young people most affected by the pandemic and support those young people least engaged in sport and physical activity
- Any barriers or challenges preventing young people engaging in activities since returning to school
- How the school plan to sustain this activity/engagement with young people once the funding has been fully utilised
- Local clubs and community groups schools have been signposting young people to or who have been part of the delivery for the after school clubs
- Any lightbulb moments (successes, fails and anything in between)

Further feedback

In February 2022, schools were asked to provide further/final feedback on:

- Whether they have managed to sustain the after school clubs beyond the investment
- What they feel they need to get more pupils active, especially those who are the least active and have barriers to engaging
- Any final thoughts on the investment and the impact it has made.

PS Research were commissioned to analyse all feedback from schools consenting to take part in the research evaluation and to produce this summary report.

The detail.

Approach of participating schools.

Funded projects vary; around half have made some adjustments to their original plans.

Examples of funded projects:



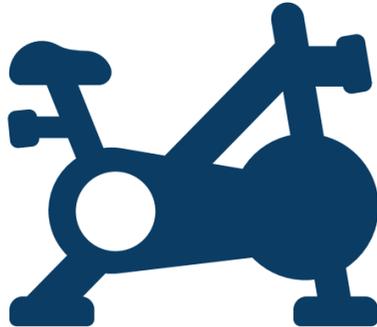
Trampolining
(White Ash Primary School)



Girls Football and Boxercise
(Haslingden High)



Orienteering, boxing club and cheerleading
(Holy Cross Catholic High School)



Spin sessions
(St Bede's RC High School)

Almost half made changes to the original project

15 of the 34 schools providing initial feedback made some adjustments to their original plan for the funding.



Projects were delayed

Several mention planned projects had to be delayed, either due to **delays in receiving equipment** or **staff shortages**.



Provision was increased

Some schools decided that the funding (particularly when used to purchase equipment) has meant that they have been able to provide more clubs than originally planned.

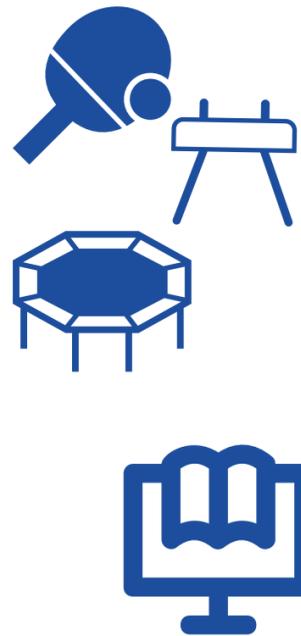


Change in focus of funding

A small number of schools changed the focus of their funding, either due to student demand for different activities, issues with external providers or due to lower than expected costs on PPE.

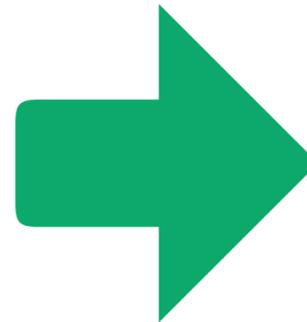
The funding has enabled schools to put on new and additional activities, often through funding the purchase of new equipment.

Most schools used the funding to upgrade existing equipment or buy equipment for new activities; some also used the money to pay for staff training, for external instructors and/or PPE and cleaning supplies.



Funding enabled schools to buy new equipment

Funding covered additional staff costs and enabled more staff to be trained to deliver sessions



Able to offer new activities



Able to put on more sessions

“ I think it was awesome that we could invest money into things which allow us to offer a wider variety of activities to students who do not usually participate as much in sport/physical activities. The amount of money we used would never have been taken out of our usual budget to buy these things as it is very limited so is spent more on mainstream sports. ”

Many schools focused on engaging with a wide range of pupils; others targeted smaller, specific groups of disengaged pupils.

Most schools offered the after school activities to either all pupils or pupils in particular year groups. Some took a more targeted approach and others used a combination of the two.

Schools took different approaches to widening participation:

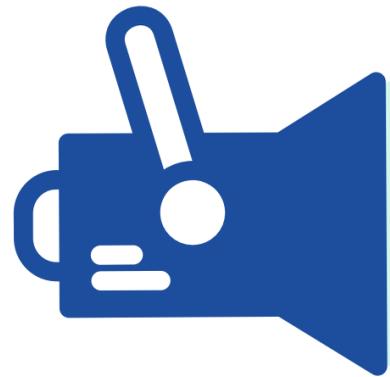
Opening participation to all pupils/pupils in particular year groups interested in taking part

Opening participation to all but with a focus on encouraging particular groups of CYP to participate

Targeting distinct groups of disadvantaged/disengaged pupils to participate in specific activities

Hybrid approach: some activities open to all; some activities open to specific groups

Example of a hybrid approach: Offering activities to all but with a focus on encouraging specific groups to participate.



Spotlight on: Hodgson Academy

Funding: Used funding to purchase fitness and boxing equipment and train more staff in delivering fitness/boxing sessions. This has enabled the school to run a club every night after school

Focus: promoted sessions to all pupils; focused on pupils most affected by COVID to work with learning mentors to promote activities; used boxing to engage PP/SEND pupils and pupils with behaviour concerns

Impact:

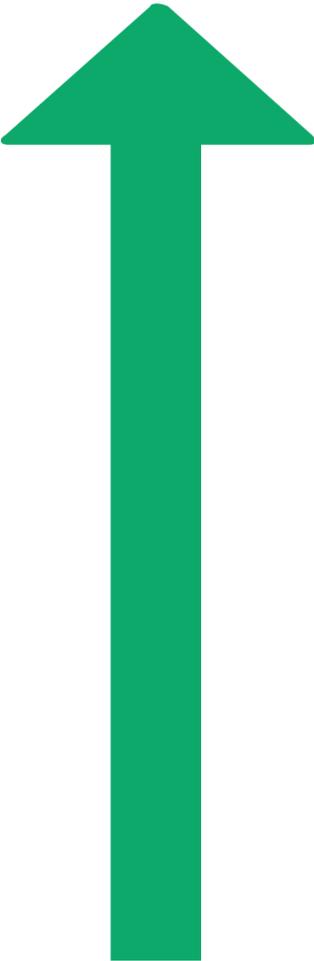
- Increased numbers of students attending fitness/boxing after school clubs
- Increase in participation from those pupils working with learning mentors
- PP/SEND pupils have increased in confidence and resilience
- Pupils are taking pride in using better equipment and becoming empowered to take control of own fitness

“ Students now take an active role in attending clubs and show enthusiasm for improving their own personal fitness levels. Students have access to high quality equipment and take pride in using this. The students are eager to develop their own fitness programmes and lead their own sessions...Boxing has worked well with the disadvantaged boys/girls. We have utilised the boxing within school time to engage PP/SEND and those with behaviour concerns around school. These sessions have increase confidence and resilience amongst the students. ”

Impact of the OSF programme.

Schools report the OSF programme has instigated a range of positive changes, most notably engaging more CYP in physical activity.

Schools have seen a range of positive consequences from being able to offer new and more activities to pupils as a result of the OSF funding:



Increased numbers of pupils engaging in physical activity

Increased engagement from groups of disengaged pupils

Positive impact on behaviour and confidence

Increased independence/empowerment over own fitness

Changed staff mindset on how to better engage the disengaged

“ The programme has really helped get our extracurricular clubs up and running post covid restrictions. The increase in additional and new equipment has also meant more clubs can run and cater for more pupils than previously. We have seen a rise in our pupil premium attendees to these clubs over the recent weeks. The purchase of boxercise equipment for example has offered another new activity which has been really appealing and a great hit for many of our younger pupils in the school who are always keen to use the new equipment within fitness and boxercise clubs. ”

Moving away from offering traditional and team-based sports has encouraged previously disengaged pupils to take part.

Several schools have seen participation from children and young people who were previously disengaged with physical activity



Cheerleading, boxing and orienteering at Holy Cross Catholic High School

Impact

- Cheerleading has been successful in involving disengaged girls
- Boxing has helped to re-motivate pupils disengaged on their return to school post-lockdowns
- Pupils have been more engaged in orienteering than expected



The funding has allowed us to redesign the curriculum to engage pupils in orienteering. This has enabled us to help pupils to establish fitness levels and was used as a "fitness for fun" lesson. Orienteering has been much more successful than we realised it would be.



New climbing equipment at Our Lady's Catholic College

Impact

- Allowed young people of all ages to access a climbing club on a weekly basis.
- Enabled a change in curriculum to engage a group of 'disengaged' high % SEN boys who have been given the opportunity to do climbing for a full term instead of 'conventional PE'.



The changing of the curriculum for the high %SEN and disengaged pupils was a great moment. Students were given the opportunity to participate in an activity which they would not usually participate in and it also meant they didn't have the added stress of taking part in team games such as rugby/football etc which usually cause them a lot of distress and can often disengage them from sport all together.

Increasing physical activity levels has helped particular students to be more confident physically.

Schools report that taking part in physical activities has increased the confidence of pupils in their physical abilities.



New fitness equipment at The Loyne Specialist School

Impact

- Increased physical activity levels amongst pupils of differing abilities
- Increased self-confidence and confidence in physical ability
- Increased physical confidence has allowed pupils to access more facilities in the community



New fitness equipment, posters and promotion of fitness app at Up Holland High School

Impact

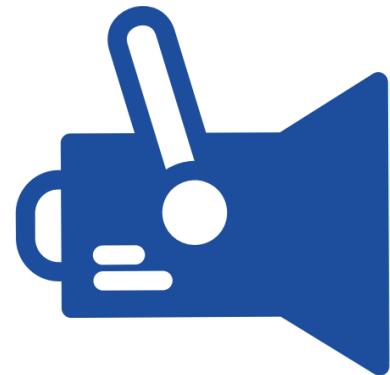
- Engaged with different young people to those usually attracted by traditional PE after school clubs, particularly girls
- Pupils are enjoying working independently and planning own workouts

“ The use of Plyo boxes in school have enabled some more able bodied students to access a different level. This practice of leaving the floor for a higher level has then been positively transferred into horse riding and their local community. Prior to accessing these boxes, some students have never had the confidence to leave the floor/step up. I have seen a big difference in how students move around their environment.

“ Low activity girls are enjoying the opportunity to work at their own pace in a non-competitive environment. A number of students struggling with weight management are enjoying the opportunity to work independently in a self-contained fitness setting to increase their activity levels with friends by planning their own workout intensities.

Being encouraged to offer new activities and focus on the least engaged has changed the mindset of some staff members.

Some schools have been surprised by the interest and engagement in the new activities they have been able to offer from previously disengaged pupils and say this will impact on their extracurricular offer in future.



Spotlight on:
The Valley
Leadership
Academy

Funding: Wide range, including funding a Glow Sports Reward Day and specialist gymnastics equipment

Focus: promoted sessions to all pupils; targeted some sessions towards least active students

Impact:

- Increased participation with least active students
- Helped change staff mindset on what to offer to engage more students

“ We have run a glow sport rewards day to help our least active pupils engage with the PE department as they were doing something a little different that was fun. This has helped the school to think differently about what our least active pupils would enjoy and we are now purchasing our own glow sports equipment....What surprised us the most is the range of pupils that have been interested in and taken part in the boxing club. It has engaged a group of girls that have never been interested in after school sports clubs before. **The type of activities we have offered through OSF have engaged pupils that we didn't expect and so it will help to shape out extracurricular offer in the future.** ”

Although not the focus of this evaluation, some schools provided feedback on the activities aimed at the local community.

Of those providing this feedback, some mention that COVID has had a negative impact on planned community sessions; others mention that improving school facilities has increased interest from the wider community.



Some planned community clubs have been unable to run due to COVID restrictions

“ Due to COVID community clubs have been unable to run thus far. This was trialled with a school dementia café. Unfortunately, no one attended. We assume the elderly community are being cautious with numbers on the rise.



Investing in improving facilities has led to increased interest from the wider community in using the facilities

“ Without the support from the OSF programme, the Academy could not have funded the extra equipment needed for exercise classes, enrichment and lettings. The income from lettings/gym memberships will be used to help cover staff costs going forward. The school are seeking further funds to continue to invest in the facility and help it to become the local community leisure hub.

Challenges/barriers encountered in engaging young people in physical activity.

Mental and physical health issues caused by prolonged periods spent at home has increased the number of disengaged young people.



Schools report a deterioration of young people's mental and physical health caused by missing school during the pandemic.

In particular, schools report facing challenges of engaging young people who:

- have become disconnected with school sport
- are out of the routine of attending after school clubs
- are struggling to get back into 'normal' school life
- have lost skills/are not at the expected level

“Pupils are out of the habit of attending OOHL and the take up of pupils attending extra-curricular clubs is lower than pre-pandemic levels although is now starting to rise.

“Some pupils are withdrawn and also become overwhelmed. They are also experiencing loss of learning time so some skills which we would usually see are not there.

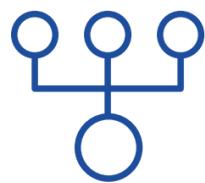
“We think that because they have been away for so long, the KS4 students seem a lot less engaged, and less likely to go out of their way at after school clubs. We have also seen there are some big gaps in learning and fitness within the KS3 students.

COVID-19 restrictions also presented logistical and other challenges.

The pandemic has created new barriers to participation in physical activity sessions in terms of delivering the sessions with staff shortages, restrictions on numbers and fears over taking part in group activities.



Having to self-isolate has caused staff shortages and prevented young people from being able to attend sessions.



Safety measures limited numbers

When restrictions were in place, having to deliver extra-curricular clubs in 'Covid bubbles' limited participation rates.



Continued fears over catching Covid-19

means some pupils and their parents have been unwilling for them to take part in additional group activities that could increase the risk of exposure to the virus. Schools have tried to reassure pupils and parents about safety measures in place.

“Barriers linked to COVID-19 and the ongoing pandemic are still prevalent. Staff and student absence as a result has made the consistent delivery of PE and School Sport based activities more challenging. There are still some internal restrictions in place across many schools (such as ongoing limited access to changing facilities etc.).”

“Some pupils/parents are still very cautious of COVID and as a result steering away from any activities which puts the risk of infection higher.”

Other key barriers to participation include transport issues, a lack of facilities and pupils lacking in confidence.



Transport is seen as a key barrier for many pupils

Several schools, particularly specialist schools and those in rural areas, say transport is an ongoing barrier.



Lack of facilities/space

Some schools say they could engage more pupils if they had more facilities/equipment.



Pupils lacking confidence and/or motivation

Some pupils lack confidence to take part in physical activity, others are not motivated to stay after school to take part and a couple of schools specifically mention the need to get changed at school is a barrier.



Poor weather

Poor weather has affected the provision of outside activities.

“ All students are given transport to and from school and if they stay after school they are unable to access the transport home. Therefore, if parents and carers do not have their own car/access to a vehicle then the students are unable to access the after school provision being offered by school. (Specialist School)

“ Our only issue is facility space. We are operating at max level. If we had more facilities we could fill them.

“ During the pandemic pupils arrived at school in kit. Now we are back to using changing rooms there are a larger number of pupils who feel uncomfortable doing this.

“ Our biggest barrier is an external one being the weather. We only have a small grass pitch for extracurricular football club and we are trying hard to maintain the pitch through the winter as it is the most popular activity we are offering at the moment.

Rugby League World Cup After School Investment: low interest in rugby and issues meant some schools had limited success.

Two of the schools providing feedback were part of the Rugby League After School project. Both schools found the extra-curricular rugby sessions had limited success and both found it difficult to maintain pupil engagement.



Bishop Rawstone CofE Academy

- Sessions specifically targeted girls
- Initially, resources and schemes of work provided were considered excellent and have been reused by PE teachers
- However, sessions became repetitive and the girls became disengaged

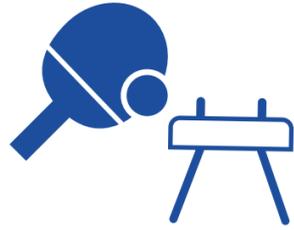


Lathom High School

- Funding paid for external coaches to deliver afterschool rugby sessions - offered to all years
- Low take-up by pupils: 10-12 students at first few sessions (other clubs usually attract at least 20-30 pupils); this dropped to 5 for the final few sessions
- Perceived reasons for low engagement:
 - low interest in rugby
 - sessions missed due to COVID
 - change in external coach mid-programme
 - transport a barrier (no public transport)

Sustainability of activities.

In the initial feedback in Autumn 2021, most schools felt hopeful that they would be able to continue providing the activities post-funding.



Purchasing new equipment and training more staff means schools are able to continue with their extended extracurricular activities



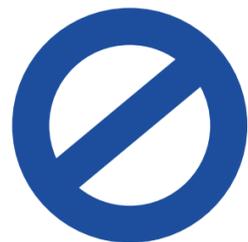
As we have spent some of the funding on equipment – such as table tennis tables – we are hoping to create a sporting legacy moving forwards.



Some schools have found their own funding to enable activities to continue after seeing the positive impact of delivering the sessions



We are going to use our PE budget/schools budget to keep the after schools running for rugby. We are also going to build on the resources that we have got from the funding. E.g. new fitness equipment - kettlebells.



A small minority of schools do not feel they will be able to sustain these activities unless they find new income streams



Once the funding has been fully utilised, we may have to return to larger groups for the extra-curricular club, or we may be only able to target those children who are the least active/engaged out of the group.

In the Feb/March 2022 feedback, three in five have managed to sustain the clubs beyond the investment; one in seven have not.



22 schools have managed to sustain the after school clubs beyond the investment

8 schools are still delivering

5 schools have not managed to sustain the clubs

Extra-curricular activities appear to be most sustainable when funding has been invested in new equipment.

Having improved facilities/new equipment often means that extra-curricular clubs can continue; where funding has been used for other purposes, such as to fund external coaching, this is often less sustainable.



The Valley Leadership Academy

“The investment has enabled us to improve our range of activities offered to a point. For example, girls football coaching has been maintained as has boxing; but for this to be further developed and lead to an increase in numbers, the lead staff would benefit from some additional CPD so they can push students further and making greater progress. The investment towards our gymnastics equipment has enabled our gymnasium to be transformed into a permanent gymnastics centre allowing over 100 young people to use the facility in the community as well as an after school club for our pupils and an additional space for gymnastics and movement activities within the curriculum.



Mount Carmel High School

“Most clubs will continue to run with the equipment that has been purchased. Some clubs, such as the dance club that is currently enabling many pupils the opportunity to participate in dance, needs further funding to pay for the dance coach. However, we are looking into alternative resources for this.

Better facilities, engaging with external coaches and offering non-traditional activities are seen as key enablers to get more pupils active.

Schools were asked what they would need in future to get more pupils active, especially those who are the least active and have barriers to engaging:



Better facilities/equipment or more space

Mentioned by two-fifths



More funding

Mentioned by just over a third



Offer a wider range of non-traditional activities

Mentioned by just over a quarter



Engage with more external coaches/agencies

Mentioned by a quarter



Staffing

Just over a fifth say they would need more trained staff

“ As a pupil referral unit, our biggest issue is having space to conduct a variety of sports. In order for us to engage the least active students we would need more space.

“ Variety of activities and sports. We are still very traditional in our offer (facility dependent) and need to offer these sports as they do get the largest uptake, but if we did have more space we could offer a wider range of sports / clubs with external providers to support those not interested in the traditional sports.

“ Access to a range of different coaches/ equipment to offer a wider range of activities to 'snag' the attention of pupils who are less interested in traditional options.

“ More specialist staff to deliver sessions would be useful; particularly in a school such as ours with limited staffing within the PE dept. This would allow us to enhance our range of activities on offer and therefore engage some more "hard to reach" students.

Next steps.

Key learnings.



What we have learnt from this project supporting schools to reduce inactivity, particularly amongst disengaged children and young people:

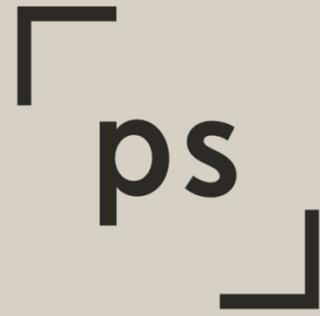
- The COVID-19 pandemic created its own particular challenges for schools tasked with engaging CYP to engage in physical activity, including delays in receiving equipment, staff shortages and fears over participating in group activities.
- Asking schools to focus on engaging the most disengaged groups appears to have encouraged schools to think differently about their physical activity offer and many have moved away from offering traditional sports. However, some schools still seemed to be focussed on increased mass participation.
- Schools are often limited in what extracurricular activities they can offer due to staff availability and facilities/space.
- Transport continues to be a key barrier for certain schools, in particular special schools and schools in rural areas.
- Activities appear to be most sustainable when schools used funding to purchase new equipment.

Next steps.



Active Lancashire's future plans to support schools to engage wider audiences and reduce inactivity include:

- Influencing school policy to encourage movement throughout the school day
- Developing the workforce to become more skilled in delivering a wide range of activities
- Working with less traditional school settings (alternative provision, special schools) to develop physical activity
- Ensuring schools are connected to local communities



ps research

Report by Emma Slater.

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It all starts with good research.