

SCHOOL TO COMMUNITY CLUB LINK

WHYTRIG MIDDLE SCHOOL

Background & Identified Need

Whytrig Middle School, located in Seaton Delaval, Northumberland, was awarded Opening School Facilities (OSF) funding to enhance its sports provision and increase community access to school facilities. The school identified two key areas where the funding could make a significant impact:

- Expanding the use of its swimming pool to benefit both students and the wider community.
- Introducing skateboarding sessions to engage young people in a new, exciting physical activity.

The school's leadership recognised that underutilisation of the swimming pool and the need for more inclusive access were barriers preventing more children from participating. Additionally, they wanted to introduce alternative activities like skateboarding to encourage more young people to be active in a way that suited their interests.

Improving Pool Accessibility and Community Engagement

Whytrig Middle School already allowed community members to hire its swimming pool, offering lessons at a low-cost rate to keep them accessible. However, pool accessibility issues were limiting who could use the facility. The school saw OSF funding as an opportunity to address this challenge:

Infrastructure Improvements – The funding enabled key adaptations to the pool area, including:

- **A stairlift** – A specially designed external stairlift that could withstand the pool's humid environment.
- **A pool hoist** – Allowing individuals with limited mobility to enter the pool safely.

Without OSF funding, these adaptations would have been cost-prohibitive, making the pool inaccessible to many in the community.

Increased Pool Usage & Student Participation – With improved accessibility, students and families were encouraged to make greater use of the pool. One staff member shared the positive impact on pupils:

"They love it, they do enjoy it. My own son takes part, and having that accessibility without parents there has made a difference. They can leave school, go to the pool, have fun with their friends, get some exercise, and then go home."

Beyond physical activity, the sessions also supported social interaction, with staff noting:

"They're staying active while socialising. They're not sitting down and talking, they're swimming and chatting, moving around constantly in the water—every single one of them."

Expanding Activity Options: Skateboarding for Students and the Wider Community

To diversify physical activity opportunities, Whytrig Middle School introduced a 12-week skateboarding programme, delivered in partnership with an external skateboarding provider.

- Engaging a Wide Audience – Sessions were held on Sunday afternoons, with three one-hour sessions per week. The provider:
 - Supplied all equipment, including ramps and skateboards.
 - Advertised sessions widely, attracting participants beyond the school community.
 - Welcomed children from surrounding towns, including Gosforth, Whitley Bay, and Tynemouth, demonstrating strong demand for the activity.
- Sustaining the Programme – While the initial 12-week programme was funded by OSF, demand remained high. Staff shared their enthusiasm for finding ways to continue:

“We’re quite sad that it finished. The provider has surveyed parents to see whether they’d be able to pay for sessions, at what cost, and whether it would be feasible to continue.”

The school is actively exploring funding models to ensure the sessions remain accessible to as many young people as possible.

A Student- and Community-Led Approach

A key factor in the success of the pool and skateboarding initiatives has been the school’s strong commitment to listening to students and families. Staff explained how they regularly gather feedback through:

- **Pupil Voice & Student Council** – Students share their preferences and suggest new activities.
- **Form Groups & Assemblies** – Teachers and school leaders discuss ideas and gauge interest.
- **Parent Communication** – Using the ‘My Child at School’ (MCAS) app, parents are informed of opportunities and can register their children’s interest via Google Forms.

This collaborative approach ensures that activities are aligned with students’ interests, making participation more likely to be sustained.

Outcomes & Impact

- **Improved pool accessibility** – Adaptations now allow individuals with limited mobility to participate.
- **Increased student participation** – More young people using the school’s pool for exercise and social activity.
- **Expanded community engagement** – The skateboarding programme drew interest from families beyond the school’s immediate area.
- **Greater student choice in physical activity** – The school now offers more diverse options to cater to different interests.
- **Stronger school-family connections** – Regular communication with parents ensures activities align with student demand.

Looking Ahead

Whytrig Middle School has successfully used OSF funding to enhance facilities, engage more students in physical activity, and strengthen community connections. With ongoing demand for skateboarding and swimming activities, the school is now exploring ways to continue and expand these opportunities beyond the initial funding period.

By prioritising accessibility, student input, and community partnerships, Whytrig Middle School is creating a sustainable model for inclusive and engaging physical activity—one that will benefit students and families for years to come.