



Rushbrook Primary Academy – Changing the Mindset

School context

Rushbrook Primary Academy is located in Gorton, a small area in south-east Manchester, Greater Manchester. We are extremely proud of being a diverse school, welcoming children from different parts of the world, creating a vibrant and exciting place to be. With a higher percentage of children receiving free school meals and identified as Pupil Premium, this means that Rushbrook Primary Academy plays a vital role in the development of each and every one of our pupils.

Background and Rationale

Initially, the engagement and excitement around PE and sports simply did not exist. Yes, there was a football team (boys only) and occasionally, the children went to cross-county events and hockey or Dodgeball, but across the board, children just didn't seem enthused and want to take part in physical activities – either during PE lessons or sporting opportunities.

However, in Spring term of 2022-2023, we introduced football training for the girls, and this was hugely successful. As interest grew, the numbers grew and soon enough, children (especially the girls) wanted to take part. No one was turned away. Training was never full as there was no limit. It was all about having fun and being physically active.

This growing enthusiasm slowly trickled down into PE lessons where children were more engaged and focused, and this had a ripple effect on all of the other children in the classes. Enthusiasm soon evolved into confidence, and it was with this newfound confidence from the girls that we signed up to the Youth Sport Trust Girls Active programme.

Activities

- Girls Active Leaders attended the Inspiration Day at Salford Community Stadium.
- Girls Active Leaders planned and delivered activities for their peers in school.
- Girls Active Leaders helped to lead groups and activities during National School Sports Week 2025.

“My daughter has really enjoyed the opportunity to help other children.”

PARENT

“It has been inspiring to see how our young children – girls especially – can help each other to become the best that they can be. Our younger girls have been inspired by the Girls’ Active Leaders!”

TEACHER

“We always knew that our children had the ability to lead and to encourage others around them.”

HEADTEACHER/ GOVERNOR

“The best bit of being a Girls’ Active Leader is the hoodie and helping the children at school be physically active.”

STUDENT

Benefits

Our Girls’ Active Leaders, made up of a combination of year 4, 5 and 6 girls, have shown their leadership skills during PE lessons where they demonstrate and lead groups, a group actively supports EYFS during the Daily Mile and they played an integral part during National School Sports Week 2025, where they led groups and activities throughout the entire week for all the sports day events!

Furthermore, due to the surge in girls wanting to play football and the commitment we have shown to girls’ football, we were recognised by Team MCR, a leading Greater Manchester charity and the FA. We were the only primary school selected in the whole country to host the ‘Biggest Ever Football Session’. We were treated to a visit by Steph Houghton MBE, Lia Lewis (Football Freestyle World Champion 2021) and Emma Sanders, a senior women’s football news reporter for the BBC. This recognition was amazing, and it has only encouraged and inspired more girls to take part in physical activities at Rushbrook. 74% of girls in years 5 and 6 (85) have actually represented Rushbrook at an interschool sporting event this year.

Benefits to young people

- Children enjoy and engage in PE and display a love for being physically active.
- Younger children in the school are being inspired by the current group of Girls’ Active Leaders to be physically active – some even want to be Girls’ Active Leaders next year!
- Girls in our school have grown in stature and now have the confidence to learn, play and lead alongside the boys during PE, clubs and other sporting opportunities.

Benefits to school

- Improvement in engagement and enthusiasm in PE lessons.
- More girls are eager to participate in events at an intra and inter school level.
- Girls' Active Leaders inspiring other girls to become Girls' Active Leaders next year.

Challenges

Overall, the Girls Active Programme has been excellent and a real eye-opener. Our girls have gone from strength to strength, demonstrating inspiring leadership skills, displaying empathy and tact when working with children with varying needs and the confidence that is now oozing from these girls is amazing to see.

However, one of the biggest challenges that we have faced is to be consistent in being able to run play sessions for our target year groups. Due to cover issues and the possible lack of adult supervision, the girls have not always been able to run sessions. To try and reduce this inconsistency, a robust timetable needs to be created to ensure that an adult, not necessarily the PE lead, is able to supervise the girls when leading their activities.

Future

- We will be continuing with the Girls Active Programme with the existing Girls' Active Leaders and recruiting more Girls' Active Leaders. The current group will help in the recruitment process in the next academic year.
- A robust timetable to ensure that other adults are available to help and support/supervise the girls when running their activities.

Top Tips

- Choice of language used is vitally important. Use language that is not limiting, language that inspires as we are the best example of leaders for our young children.
- Don't just look for the sporty children. Sporty children may not be the best leaders and teachers. Instead, look for children who are enthusiastic and want to inspire others as they were once inspired by others.
- Give the girls a voice and give them a platform and, with a little encouragement they will change the world around them.