



Special Olympics
Great Britain



Special Olympics *Unified Champion Schools* A whole school approach



What is the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools programme?

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools is a global programme that promotes social inclusion by bringing together pupils with and without special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to create accepting school environments. In England, Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools is managed by Special Olympics Great Britain and delivered through the Youth Sport Trust Lead Inclusion School network.

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools promotes social inclusion by changing attitudes and behaviours. By unifying pupils with and without SEND, schools aim to:

- reduce bullying and exclusion
- overturn stereotypes and negative attitudes
- eliminate hurtful language in school and elsewhere
- promote healthy activities and interactions
- engage young people as leaders of a positive, social movement.



How do we promote inclusion through Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools?

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools uses sport as the foundation. By playing and working together, pupils with and without SEND develop and promote more positive attitudes and behaviours. There are three core pillars:



- **Special Olympics Unified Sports** – teams of players with and without SEND take part in inclusive sports together.
- **Inclusive youth leadership** – pupils with and without SEND work together to lead awareness, advocacy and inclusive activities within school.
- **Whole school engagement** – awareness, advocacy and inclusive activities are embedded within the curriculum and promoted through wider school events.



Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools is based on the evidence that pupils who 'play unified' become better at helping others, standing up for each other and sharing responsibility.

Whole School Engagement

This guide explores how the whole school can engage with the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools principles. Typically, you may consider three areas of school life:



Every child should go to a school where they are free to be themselves, free to make friends, free to explore their talents. A happy, healthy child who knows, that deep down inside, they belong.

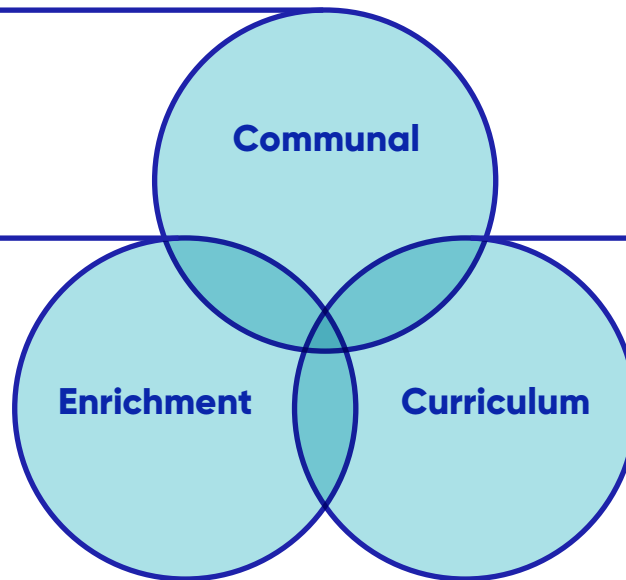
Secretary of State for Education (2024)!

For example:

- Assemblies
- Displays
- Policies

For example:

- Before or after-school activities
- House-based events
- Off-site visits



For example:

- Subject-specific
- Cross-curricular
- Form time

Embedding the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools principles in your curriculum

This guide focuses on the curriculum for relationships and sex education and health education (RSHE), which may be delivered in lessons, through other curriculum areas or as part of wider learning opportunities during form time.

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools supports your delivery of RSHE by:

- helping pupils to develop the knowledge and skills that will enable them to make decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships
- promoting their moral, social, mental and physical development
- cultivating their positive characteristics, such as self-worth, resilience, respect, courage and kindness.

The following pages highlight how Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools relates to the RSHE curriculum. They also offer three types of classroom tasks that you could use to explore relevant content with your pupils. Use these as catalysts to create your own curriculum activities.



Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (RSHE) curriculum

RSHE content

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools outcomes

Relationships and sex education: Respectful relationships

Pupils should...

1. treat others with kindness and respect
2. recognise that everyone is unique and equal
3. develop their own interests, hobbies, friendship groups and skills... understand what it means to be treated with respect
4. understand what tolerance requires
5. develop skills to support respectful and kind relationships, including communication skills
6. understand the impact of bullying
9. understand how stereotypes (including relating to disability) can cause damage... be equipped to recognise prejudice
10. understand how inequalities of power can affect behaviour and relationships.

Pupils can...

- treat each other with kindness, tolerance and respect
- cooperate with others
- develop more inclusive communication skills
- recognise each other's abilities and challenges
- gain new friendships
- gain and share new interests
- have a valued and equal voice
- promote equality and acceptance
- challenge and reduce prejudice and bullying.

Health and wellbeing: Mental wellbeing

Pupils should...

1. talk about their emotions accurately
2. understand the benefits of physical activity... community participation... and acts of kindness
3. recognise that happiness is linked to being connected to others
6. evaluate which activities contribute to their overall wellbeing
7. understand how to overcome anxiety or other barriers to participating in enjoyable activities... find the courage to participate.

Pupils can...

- be more active
- connect to others
- gain a sense of purpose and satisfaction
- feel less anxious or stressed
- gain self-belief, courage and resilience
- recognise what helps them to manage their wellbeing
- dismantle barriers and provide opportunities for others.

Health and wellbeing: Physical health and fitness

Pupils should...

1. understand the characteristics of a healthy lifestyle, including physical activity
3. understand that physical activity can promote wellbeing and combat stress.

Pupils can...

- increase their engagement in and enjoyment of physical activity, in and out of school.

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools classroom tasks

Physical task: Team Towers



Grouping

Groups of 4-5



Equipment

- 30 drinking straws per group
- Sticky tape (optional)
- Scissors (optional)



Time

- Minimum 25 minutes:
- 5 mins to set up
 - 10 mins for task
 - 10 mins for review



Pupils can identify the skills and attributes they need to work effectively with others.

Learning outcome



Delivery

- Sort pupils into teams so they work with people they may not have chosen to work with.
- Give each team a set of equipment.
- Share the challenge: which team can build the tallest free-standing tower, using only the given equipment, in the time?
- Set the timer. When time is up, teams must stop.
- Measure the unsupported towers.



Review

In their teams, ask pupils to discuss and identify:

- What helped them to feel part of the team?
- What helped them to succeed as a team?
- What stopped them from feeling part of the team?
- What hindered them from succeeding?

Optional: In the whole group, based on their discussions, ask each team to share three top tips for working together as a team.

Reinforce attributes and skills such as listening, sharing, helping, being patient, respecting people's different skills and contributions, and including everyone. Relate these to school and wider life.



Adaptations

Support: teams focus on building their free-standing tower without competing against other teams.

Stretch: ask teams to delegate a specific role to each team member, e.g.

- one architect: designs the tower
- one manufacturer: prepares the building materials
- two builders: build the tower
- one project leader: oversees the project and team.

Creative task: Walking in your shoes



Grouping

- Pairs for task
- 4s for review



Equipment

- 1 sheet of A4 paper per pupil
- Variety of coloured pens



Time

- Minimum 25 mins:
- 5 mins to set up
 - 15 mins for task
 - 5 mins for review



Pupils can define empathy and recognise how to develop empathy for others.

Learning outcome



Delivery

- Sort pupils into pairs so they work with someone they would not usually choose to work with (pair pupils with SEND with pupils without SEND).
- Ask each pupil to draw their own footprint on the paper.
- Ask pupils to swap papers and decorate their partner's footprint in a way that reflects the partner's personality and interests.
- Encourage them to find out as much as possible about their partner whilst creating a 'shoe' that will suit them.
- To finish, ask pupils to give each other their designed 'shoes'.



Review

- Group pairs into 4s and ask the groups to share how they discovered more about their partner:
 - o What did they need to do?
 - o What did they need to avoid doing?
- Take feedback from the groups.
- Reinforce methods such as observe, listen, ask questions, be curious, not make assumptions, not interrupt, clarify and check.
- Summarise that these are ways to build empathy with others and see things from their perspectives. Use the analogy that having empathy is like walking in someone else's shoes. Link it to school and wider life.



Adaptations

- **Support:** pupils take turns to design their partner's 'shoe' so they can concentrate on listening whilst not simultaneously sharing.
- **Stretch:** partners give each other feedback after designing the 'shoes': how well did the partner capture their sense of self? Focus on the content the partner captured, not their creative skills.

Visual task: Traffic lights



Grouping

- Individual or pairs for task
- Pairs or 4s for review



Equipment

- Pre-sourced 'imagery' (photo, video, text)
- Stickers (red, amber, green)



Time

- Minimum 25 mins:
- 5 mins to set up
 - 10 mins task
 - 10 mins review



Pupils can identify positive behaviours (and attributes) within real life contexts.

Learning outcome



Delivery

- Source a set of 'images' that depict a range of behaviours in topical or historical situations, e.g.
 - o sport – cheating, keeping going, volunteering
 - o politics – lying, owning up, making tough decisions
 - o conflict – being brave, being cruel, helping others
 - o social media posts – caring, sharing, being rude.
- Post the images around the classroom (provide an audio cue or buddy for any pupils who are visually impaired).
- Ask pupils to visit the images (individually or in pairs) and put red, amber or green stickers on each image to indicate whether the behaviours are negative, neutral or positive.



Review

- Pair individuals (or join pairs into 4s).
- Ask pupils to discuss their sticker allocations:
 - o Why did they allocate a red, amber or green sticker?
 - o What might have caused that behaviour?
 - o How might that behaviour affect others?
 - o What would turn a negative or neutral behaviour into a positive one in that situation?
- Ask each pair (or 4) to share an example in the whole group.
- Relate the examples to the pupils' school and wider life.



Adaptations

Support: Allocate one or two images to pairs to give them more time to reflect on and discuss the depicted behaviours.

Stretch: Provide pupils with a range of attributes written on sticky notes, e.g., respect, kindness, integrity, resilience, courage. Ask pupils to stick an attribute to an image to show when it is evident (green) or absent (red). During the review, pupils identify which attributes are needed to demonstrate positive or improve negative behaviours.

Next steps

To support your school to create a more inclusive environment for all young people, consider:

- What can you do within your own role?
- How can you involve your colleagues?
- How will you seek input from the young leaders?
- How might you reach out to pupils' families?

My next step will be...



To find out more about **Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools**, [click here](#) or scan the QR code



Together you can create meaningful social inclusion for every pupil in school.



You make new friends and new bonds and it's really good for your mental health.

Pupil



I think it's fun that everyone plays because you get introduced to new people and you're making more friends.

Pupil



With Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools, the benefits are clear. There's improved mental health and wellbeing. There are stronger friendships and a more inclusive society.



I've enjoyed it. It's built my sense of friendship and community and communication with people.

Pupil