

Enhancing Engagement and Confidence Through Dance Within Specialised Secondary Schools

Case Study 1: Calthorpe Academy

Introduction

Children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) often experience limited access to inclusive physical activities whether it's in school or out in the community. Recognising this gap, Sport Birmingham partnered with FABRIC to deliver a targeted 6-week dance programme within 4 local specialised secondary schools. The initiative aimed to promote physical activity within their students, increase teacher confidence in delivering movement sessions and raise awareness of the role dance can play in specialised educational settings.

Background

A teacher from Calthorpe Academy that attended the CPD last year. This training led them to apply for the free 6-week dance programme. The young people from Calthorpe Academy had mixed dancing abilities. Some took part in dance in their own time and others were very new to the concept of dance. The school wanted to use the momentum of the sessions to signpost their learners to lunchtime dance clubs as well as overall engagement in PE lessons.



Programme Structure

Sport Birmingham and FABRIC hired two dance tutors, Shaq Shadare and Georgie Bache, with their focus being on Hip-Hop style sessions to take place every Friday afternoon with a group of 10-12 young people from varying age ranges and abilities. The provision was on-going for 6 weeks with the final week being a 'sharing with your peers' style session. This final session gave participants the opportunity to showcase their learning and dancing with their friends in a space they felt comfortable and confident in. We also utilised these sessions to provide Calthorpe teaching staff with the confidence and skills to integrate dance and movement activities into their own lessons with the aim of delivering more inclusive and adaptable dance lessons.

Initial Challenges

For the first few sessions, Shaq and Georgie found it challenging to engage those who were less experienced in dance. Also, with the varying needs of the young people in the session there were some distractions and other challenges such as noise level. They needed to spend more time with the group to understand their preferences and nurture a strong relationship.



Progress and Development

Once the young people had developed their relationship with Shaq and Georgie, they began to express themselves more; likes and dislikes, preferences of music etc. This progress allowed the tutors to deliver a more structured lesson which, impacted positively on the young people's confidence and engagement and increased their physical activity time. Due to their needs, there were new challenges every week but with Shaq and Georgie working together they were able to find new ways of overcoming these challenges to keep the entire group focused.

Outcomes

Through this project, Sport Birmingham and FABRIC wanted to increase the overall physical activity levels of the young people and to create opportunities for young people with SEND. Calthorpe Academy supported their young people to feel more confident and comfortable in attending a dance focused session as well as developing independence through creative expression. Another aim of the sessions was to upskill the teaching staff within the school. It helped identify gaps within teachers' knowledge. This insight will support FABRIC with the design of future CPD opportunities for teachers within this subject space. Overall, the project had a huge impact on everyone involved from the teaching staff, students as well as dance tutors. Going forward, Calthorpe are looking at dance having a more prominent space within their curriculum, setting up their own dance club to taking place during the school day as well as carrying on the engagement with FABRIC and the dance tutors.



Has this provision supported your students with becoming more active at school?

'Definitely, it really helped to develop self esteem in movement; it gave our pupils a space to become more active and helped others to work on a sense of creative independence'

Teacher at Calthorpe Academy

To find out more information of how you can get involved with FABRIC, please email Becky Bailey, Director of Engagement - becky@fabric.dance