

## Enhancing Engagement and Confidence Through Dance Within Specialised Secondary Schools

### Case Study 4: Wilson Stuart School

#### 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

In October 2024, Sport Birmingham and FABRIC hosted a secondary school CPD opportunity for teachers focusing on developing knowledge and understanding around delivering dance to pupils with SEND. A teacher from Wilson Stuart School attended the day which later led them on to apply for the free dance provision. The school's head of PE highlighted how dance sessions would massively benefit their young people's social, emotional and physical wellbeing. They wanted to utilise the sessions to introduce dance to the students and showcase the benefits that dance brings. Helping develop the students social skills whilst enabling them to express their feelings and emotions in a number of different ways.



## Programme Structure

Sport Birmingham and FABRIC hired two dance tutors, Ben Randall and Rosie Roberts, with the focus being on contemporary style sessions to taking place every Monday with two groups of 12-15 young people from varying age ranges and abilities. The provision was on-going for 6 weeks with the aim of introducing dance to their students as well as supporting the students with their wellbeing and self-esteem.

## Initial Challenges

In the first and second week, Ben and Rosie spent the first and second sessions establishing relationships with the students so they could understand their needs, likes and dislikes as well as finding activities and music that they engaged with more. This meant the first few sessions were based upon 'trial and error' but in the long run they were able to structure the lessons better to avoid any disruptions or disengagement.



## Progress and Development

Every week the students came in with a positive mindset, excited and ready for the session. Ben and Rosie found using equipment such as scarves made those students who were a bit reserved feel more at ease as the movement was more focused around the equipment rather than themselves. It was also an alternative way for those who were wheelchair users to express their movements and utilise the space in the room.

## Outcomes

Through this project, Sport Birmingham and FABRIC wanted to have a positive impact on the young people's overall physical activity levels as well providing opportunities for young people with SEND. The sessions at Wilson Stuart gave their students an accessible way to communicate, self-regulate and build physical skills. They also connected with their peers, and experienced the joy of self-expression in ways that support their individual abilities and needs.



### What is working well within your sessions?

Adaptability and open communication is a good approach as each of our groups have different needs and abilities. We are finding games that are appropriate to some students. Props are a great way of adding some versatility as well as a bonus of sensory play.

Rosie Roberts, dance tutor  
based at Wilson Stuart School

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