

TAKING A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO GENDER EQUALITY IN SPORT AND ACTIVITY

Tackling Gender Stereotypes



Gender stereotypes are embedded in us all. They lead to biases and inequalities with wide-reaching consequences for children. In sport we know that girls are limited by stereotypes which stifle their joy, prevent them from learning skills, and steal their self-belief. Girls from less affluent backgrounds and diverse communities, or disabled girls may face additional barriers to sport. This guide will help you challenge accepted norms, tackle the gender play gap and champion the value of sport for all.

WHY sport matters for girls

Sport gives girls resilience, courage, self-belief, and a sense of belonging.

It contributes to their education, and equips them with life skills as well as bolstering physical health and wellbeing.

But far too many girls don't experience these lifelong benefits due to limiting gender stereotypes.

WHY school matters

School might be the first and only place girls are able to take part in sport and physical activity, given it is not yet the norm for girls outside school.

Good or bad experiences of PE and school sport last a lifetime.

Educators and peers greatly affect girls' experiences: it is vital that limiting stereotypes are challenged, not perpetuated.

WHY boys matter

Boys can play a significant role in the experiences of girls in school sport. Boys should be expected to respect girls and be allies for them in the playground, in PE lessons and in other school sport.

Sport can be a powerful way to unite boys and girls which can positively impact their education and wider school life. Sport has value for girls as well as boys. All children should support and celebrate each other's sporting journeys and achievements.



What Does Gender Equality in and School Sport Look Like?



Equal participation

- Actively develop girls' skills in catching, throwing, striking and kicking, to begin to reverse any skills gaps we know may exist when girls start school as a result of stereotyping.
- Mixed sex physical activity is actively designed to ensure girls can participate fully and thrive, for example by rotating teams and groups, and actively inviting children to praise each other's progress and respect varied abilities and skills.
- Positive behaviour and respect towards girls in sport is rewarded (for example with leadership roles). Negative behaviour is firmly challenged, whether derogatory comments about skills or excluding girls by not passing to them.
- The value of sport to all is reinforced in the classroom, as is the reality of historic and ongoing gender discrimination in sport.

Equal opportunities

- No assumptions are made about which sport or activity girls will take part in, they should have equal access (as recommended by the Government), and girls are not held back by impractical or insensitive PE kit.
- All children have the chance to take part in the full range of sports (gymnastics is not just for girls, football is not just for boys).
- All children are introduced to unfamiliar sports such as korfbal or volleyball to help level the playing field, while recognising girls may still have a skills gap.
- Girls and boys are given equal responsibility and equal opportunity to captain teams, coach peers or younger children, or support planning.
- Boys and girls who display positive attitudes to one another are used as role models and celebrated.

Equal recognition

- Educators recognise that girls thrive on feedback and recognition, and they celebrate girls' achievements in equal measure to boys.
- School communications (assemblies, parent newsletters, website, social media) give equal profile to girls and boys in sport.
- Sportspersonship and joint endeavour is highly valued, as is resilience, progress, effort, respect and teamwork. Winning is not over-valued, and losing is seen as a chance to learn and develop a healthy sporting mindset.
- Profile is given to girls and women participating in sport at all levels from recreational to elite, to inspire girls and boys and normalise female participation.
- Adult female role models within the school community are celebrated, whether staff, parents or carers.

The Playground

- Adults supporting children at break times know outdoor play matters to girls but boys can dominate. They use conflict resolution and play leadership to help children to share space and equipment fairly. The balance of use is monitored and reviewed regularly.
- Children are engaged in discussions about why it matters to girls to have equal access to the playground.
- Girls are expected to be as active as boys throughout the school day. Girls are liberated to move by frequent PE kit days and the right school uniform and shoes. Reasons for this are communicated to parents and carers from the outset.
- An equal number of older girls and boys become play leaders to encourage participation, organise games and act as role models in the playground.

Wider School

- All staff recognise the value of sport and activity to girls, ensure the wider school day gives girls particular opportunities, and use positive language around girls in this context.
- Girls' bodies change as they enter puberty and this impacts their experience of sport. Staff are sensitive to this and the related practical, cultural and religious implications.
- Afterschool provision and extra-curricular clubs offer girls the full range of sports, including girls-only opportunities. Uptake and continuation is monitored by gender and action taken to equalise participation.
- Schools work with local community sports clubs and physical activity providers to expand provision and offer a variety of sports and activities.
- Sports Days prioritise fun, good sportspersonship and teamwork. Girls are not pitted directly against boys in linear activities such as races as boys already have a physical advantage before puberty. It is not right or fair for girls to miss out on experiencing success.

