

Inclusive Participation Guide

Practical adjustments to help every student take part, feel included and experience success in an active school.

Purpose

Participation is more than being present. Students need opportunities to join in safely, contribute in different ways, make choices and experience a sense of belonging. Use this guide when planning or reviewing active classrooms, recess and lunchtime opportunities, Physical Education, school sport and active travel.

1 Notice what may be getting in the way

Ask students and staff what supports participation and what makes it difficult. Look for patterns rather than making assumptions about individuals.

Consider	Questions to ask
Access and environment	Can students reach, enter and use the space, equipment and facilities?
Confidence and belonging	Do students feel welcome, respected and comfortable joining in?
Choice and relevance	Are there options reflecting different interests, experiences and motivations?
Cost, time and equipment	Are fees, clothing, transport, scheduling or specialist equipment barriers?
Activity design	Are rules, groupings, pace or competitive demands excluding some students?

2 Make small adjustments with a big impact

Instead of...	Try...
One activity or way to participate	Offer a choice of roles, movement challenges or activity options.
Long waits and elimination games	Use small groups, multiple stations and continuous participation.
One set of rules or equipment	Adjust space, time, distance, ball type, scoring or task complexity.
Selecting teams publicly	Use thoughtful grouping and rotating, meaningful roles.
Assuming what students need	Ask students privately what would help and co-design adjustments.

3 Check participation, not just attendance

Look for who joins in, who returns, who has a meaningful role and who may be on the sidelines. Gather quick student feedback and adapt the activity. Avoid singling out students or asking them to disclose personal circumstances publicly.

Put inclusion into action

Choose one existing school activity or opportunity. Make one manageable adjustment, test it and review what changes.

A simple four-step participation check

Step	School action
1. Identify	Which students are participating less, or report feeling less included? What do students say?
2. Adjust	Choose one practical change to the activity, environment, communication or support.
3. Try	Test the change in a lesson, breaktime program or school sport opportunity.
4. Review	Did more students participate meaningfully? What should stay, change or be tried next?

Quick planning record

Prompt	Record your response
Activity or opportunity	<hr/>
Barrier identified	<hr/>
Adjustment to trial	<hr/>
Who will support it?	<hr/>
When will we review?	<hr/>
What did students tell us?	<hr/>

Practical example

A lunchtime ball game attracts a small group of confident students. Staff introduce two smaller games with modified rules, offer a non-competitive option and invite students to suggest formats. After two weeks, staff ask who is participating, who is not and which options students want to continue.

Questions for your team

- Whose voice have we heard, and whose perspective is missing?
- Can students participate in different ways without being singled out?
- What is one change we can make this week using existing people and equipment?

Use alongside the Active Schools Strategy Selector and Staff Capability Guide to plan, implement and strengthen inclusive opportunities across the school.