

School & Community Partnership Guide

Practical steps to build purposeful partnerships which expand inclusive physical activity opportunities for students.

Purpose

Schools do not need to work alone. Families, local clubs, community organisations and service providers can contribute people, spaces, expertise and opportunities. Effective partnerships begin with a shared purpose, clear expectations and student needs, rather than an offer of activities alone.

1 Start with a school priority

Identify an opportunity your school wants to strengthen, then consider who could help. Consult students and staff first, especially those who currently participate less.

Consider	Questions to ask
School priority	What participation opportunity are we trying to improve, and for whom?
Student voice	What do students want? Whose needs or interests are not yet represented?
Potential partners	Who has relevant skills, facilities, cultural knowledge or community connections?
Access and inclusion	Will cost, transport, timing, equipment or eligibility limit participation?
Safety and suitability	What checks, supervision, permissions and school policies apply?

2 Agree on a practical partnership

Instead of...	Try...
Starting with a partner's standard offer	Agree on a shared goal linked to student needs and school priorities.
Planning a large ongoing program immediately	Trial one achievable activity or short series before expanding.
Leaving roles and costs unclear	Confirm contacts, supervision, equipment, fees and communication in writing.
Designing only for confident participants	Provide choices and adjustments for different interests and abilities.
Ending without reviewing impact	Ask students and staff what changed, then decide next steps together.

3 Check impact and plan what comes next

Review whether the partnership improved access, participation and student experience. Gather feedback from students, staff and partners. Keep what works, adjust what does not and avoid relying on one enthusiastic person.

Put partnerships into action

Choose one priority and one potential partner. Start with a manageable activity, agree on responsibilities and review it together.

A simple four-step partnership check

Step	School action
1. Identify	Choose one priority and seek student input about what would help.
2. Connect	Approach a suitable partner and agree on a shared, inclusive goal.
3. Trial	Confirm practical arrangements and run a small, supported activity.
4. Review	Check participation, student experience and feasibility; refine or continue.

Quick partnership planning record

Prompt	Record your response
School priority	
Potential partner	
Shared activity or goal	
Responsibilities and access	
Review date and measure	
Next decision	

Practical example

A school wants to broaden lunchtime activity options. Students request non-competitive activities, so staff approach a local community recreation provider. Together they trial a four-week program using school spaces and equipment, agree on supervision and accessibility, then seek student feedback before deciding whether to continue.

Questions for your team

- Does this partnership respond to a priority identified by students and the school?
- Are costs, access, safeguarding, supervision and responsibilities clear?
- How will we know whether more students feel welcome and participate?

Use alongside the Active Schools Strategy Selector, Staff Capability Guide and Inclusive Participation Guide to plan partnerships which are practical, inclusive and sustainable.