# Inclusive Participation Guide

Small adjustments can create more ways for students to join in, contribute and feel they belong.

## Participation is more than being present

An inclusive opportunity gives students **real choice, access, a meaningful role and a sense of belonging**. The aim is not to make every student do the same thing. It is to remove avoidable barriers while keeping the purpose of the activity or learning clear.

## A four-step approach that works in any setting

**1**

**NOTICE**

Who is joining? Who might be missing out?

**2**

**ASK**

What do students say would help?

**3**

**ADJUST**

Change one barrier, not the whole program.

**4**

**REVIEW**

Did the change improve their experience?

## Start with one thing you can change this week

**1** **Choose an opportunity**

A lesson, break, sport activity, route or school space.

**2** **Make one adjustment**

Offer more choice, change a rule, adapt equipment or clarify instructions.

**3** **Ask what changed**

Check access, belonging and meaningful participation, not attendance alone.

### Use this guide with the other Toolkit resources

**Strategy Selector:** choose an idea to trial. **Staff Capability Guide:** help staff feel ready. **Action Plan:** record who will act and when. You can use this guide directly from any Key Priority Area (KPA) page without completing every resource.

**Important:** Ask students privately where appropriate, involve families and specialist staff when needed, and follow school accessibility, child safety, supervision and reasonable adjustment processes.

# Find the barrier first

A student may want to participate and still face barriers. Use what you observe, then check your understanding with students.

## Look across four areas

### Activity design

**Look for:** Long waits, elimination games, rigid rules, fast pace or only one way to succeed.

**Try:** Try different roles, smaller groups, varied rules or several ways to complete the task.

### Space and access

**Look for:** Difficult routes, uneven spaces, noise, heat, unsuitable equipment or sensory overload.

**Try:** Adjust layout, location, equipment, information or access to a calmer option.

### Belonging and choice

**Look for:** Public team selection, teasing, narrow activity choices or pressure to compete.

**Try:** Use respectful groups, student-led options and non-competitive as well as competitive formats.

### Practical access

**Look for:** Cost, uniforms, time, transport, communication or a lack of staff support.

**Try:** Use existing resources, allow suitable choices and discuss what support is realistic.

## Ask without putting anyone on the spot

Use quiet conversations, accessible or anonymous response options, or the Student Voice Toolkit. Students may point, draw, speak, write or use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).

“When do you feel welcome and comfortable joining in?”

“Which parts are tricky or less enjoyable for you?”

“What would make this easier, safer or more interesting?”

“Would you like another way to take part or show your learning?”

**Remember:** Do not assume needs from disability, gender, culture or confidence. Avoid asking students to share personal information publicly. Check reasonable adjustments through school processes.

# Inclusion across the six KPAs

Use these quick prompts with each page's "Making it inclusive" section. Every setting can be adapted.

## ACTIVE CLASSROOMS

Barrier: One fast, standing activity suits only some students.

Try: Offer seated or standing choices, visual cues and a calm option.

Check: Can students move in ways that work for them?

## ACTIVE RECREATION

Barrier: The same confident students join break-time games.

Try: Offer informal play, small stations, varied challenges and activity choice.

Check: Are more students choosing to join and return?

## ACTIVE TRAVEL

Barrier: A full journey is unsafe or not accessible for everyone.

Try: Plan accessible routes, shorter or partial journeys with families.

Check: Are the options safe and realistic for each student?

## QUALITY PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Barrier: One pace, rule or task prevents meaningful learning.

Try: Adapt space, time, equipment, instruction and challenge.

Check: Can each student work toward the lesson's learning goal?

## QUALITY SCHOOL SPORT

Barrier: Uniforms, costs, team selection or competition deter some.

Try: Offer modified and social formats, suitable uniform choices and roles.

Check: Who is welcomed, participating and influencing sport?

## SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Barrier: Spaces, routines or attitudes limit access and belonging.

Try: Improve accessible spaces, equipment, signage and shared decisions.

Check: Do students feel safe, included and heard?

**Across all six KPAs:** Ask students who participate less what would help. Seek perspectives from girls, gender-diverse students and students with disability, including in specialist school settings. Make suitable adjustments without removing real choice, movement or learning. Involve families and relevant staff where helpful.

# Small changes, big difference

These swaps can be tried in a lesson, during a break or through school sport. Pick what matches the barrier you found.

## Instead of this... try this

| | |
|---|---|
| **Long queues or elimination** | More equipment, short turns, several stations and quick re-entry. |
| **One set of rules for everyone** | Adapt space, pace, targets, ball type, scoring or task complexity. |
| **Students picking teams publicly** | Use planned, inclusive groupings; rotate meaningful roles. |
| **Only spoken or complex directions** | Model the task, use pictures or short steps, and allow extra response time. |
| **Only one way to join in** | Offer suitable movement choices, challenge levels and roles, without making anyone sit out unnecessarily. |
| **Only competitive sport options** | Balance competition with modified, recreational and social opportunities. |
| **Fixed uniform or equipment assumptions** | Ask about cost, comfort and access; use suitable school-approved options. |

## 10-minute inclusion huddle

| 2 min | 3 min | 3 min | 2 min |
|---|---|---|---|
| **NOTICE** | **ASK** | **ADJUST** | **CHECK** |
| Name a participation barrier. | Share what students have said. | Choose one small change. | Set a quick review point. |

**Keep the purpose:** In PE, preserve the intended learning. In school sport and recreation, make participation meaningful. For active travel, check accessibility and safety before making changes.

# What inclusion can look like

These are illustrative examples, not evidence from an individual school. Adapt them to your students and setting.

1 ACTIVE CLASSROOMS

## Movement breaks with choice

**What staff notice:** Some students find fast, standing-only movement breaks difficult or overstimulating.

**What they try:** Students choose seated or standing movements. The teacher models two options and offers clear visual cues.

**What they check:** Students report whether choices feel comfortable; teachers check whether more students can join.

2 QUALITY SCHOOL SPORT

## More welcoming school sport

**What students say:** Some girls and gender-diverse students describe uniform discomfort, cost or public team selection as barriers.

**What they try:** Staff consult students privately, offer suitable school-approved uniform adjustments, use thoughtful grouping and provide social or modified formats alongside competition.

**What they check:** Students say whether options feel more welcoming; staff review who is joining and whether further adjustments are needed.

3 ACTIVE TRAVEL AND SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

## A more accessible journey

**What families and students notice:** A full walk or ride to school is not practical for some students, including students in specialist settings.

**What they try:** Families and school staff identify safe, accessible short or partial journeys and suitable arrival arrangements, while retaining transport options that students need.

**What they check:** Students and families report whether the option is safe, manageable and worthwhile.

**The common approach:** Listen first, remove one barrier, give meaningful choice and check the result with students.

# Your one-change inclusion trial

Choose an existing activity. Use this page for a quick team conversation, then record any agreed action in your current Action Plan.

**School / team:** _____ **Date:** _____

**1 NOTICE: What activity or opportunity are we looking at?**

**What might prevent meaningful participation? Describe the barrier, not individual students.**

**2 ASK: What have students told us? Whose perspective is missing?**

**3 ADJUST: What one change will we try?**

**Who will help, and when will we try it?**

**4 REVIEW: What changed? What did students experience?**

**Next decision:** Continue / Adjust / Stop / Expand.
Share what students said, record the agreed action in the Active Schools Action Plan and revisit it.

Active Schools Toolkit homepage