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 child safety requirements, provider checks, insurance, supervision arrangements, permissions and school policies must be confirmed?

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 school and partner contacts, supervision, equipment, fees and communication in writing.
Designing only for confident participants	Plan inclusive options and reasonable adjustments for different interests, abilities, backgrounds and support needs.
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. Compare participation before and during the activity, and seek feedback from students who participated and those who did not. Identify remaining barriers, then agree with staff and partners what to continue, change or stop. Nominate school and partner contacts and a manageable way to sustain what works.

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 safety, access and practical arrangements, then run a small, supported activity.
4. Review	Compare participation and student experience; refine, continue or stop.

Quick partnership planning record

Prompt	Record your response
School priority and student need	_____
Potential partner	_____
Shared goal and planned activity	_____
Roles, safety and access arrangements	_____
Success measure and review date	_____
Next decision: continue, adapt or stop	_____

Practical example

A school wants to broaden lunchtime activity options. Students request more non-competitive activities, so staff approach a local community recreation provider. Together, they trial a four-week program using school spaces and equipment, with agreed supervision and accessibility arrangements. Staff record participation and seek feedback, including from students who did not attend. The school and provider then review whether participation increased and decide what to improve or 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.