

CONTEXT:

The schools in North Stoke Excel Academy SGO area have really embraced the School Games Mark award since it first started. From one application in 2011-12, to 46 in 2018-19 out of a total of 54 schools. St Joseph's Catholic Academy have been a beacon of good practice since they first applied, aiming for a Silver in the year after the award launched. Their plan was to put together a solid application with an aim to see where they needed to make progress towards Gold. Since their first Gold, they have aimed to maintain and develop those high standards, and achieved Platinum in 2019.

The tiered structure of the criteria has been really helpful on their journey. At the start it gave them targets to aim for and provided a pathway to develop their provision to meet Gold. As new questions were added, they used the guidance to ensure their Gold level offer was maintained each year, and resulted in a successful Platinum application.

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✓ Raising aspirations



✓ Plan the year



✓ Strong focus on developing leaders through physical activity



"We are in an area of social deprivation, within Stoke on Trent, and therefore meeting national standards at the highest level is something the children see and can be really proud of, knowing that our school can do all these things and provide all the opportunities and collectively work towards a national award every year."

PE lead

"We strongly recognise that the children's experiences through sport and the opportunities they are offered are worth the extra work. One of our main aims is to give the children all the experiences and opportunities we can, and anything that can raise aspirations and make them see that they can achieve as individuals, and we can achieve collectively is crucial to what we do. For us to get Platinum, we were so proud to do it."

Headteacher

The School Games and the Mark award have been a significantly positive influence on the school, and links lots of different areas of the curriculum. In National School Sport week, they incorporate the Change4Life week into it too, so every lesson was based on the principles of Change4Life, working cross curricular in science, literacy, numeracy, music and then more wider in terms of health and wellbeing, nutrition, inspiring athletes / local heroes. They ensure the approach goes through from pre-school all the way to Year 6. During the year they have active maths lessons, music lessons outside and they try to make lessons active. The Active Heatmaps were really useful when they came in to see where activity was lower.

✓ Cross curricular approach
✓ Whole school ethos
✓ Strong focus on participation, leading, managing and officiating



"We encourage schools to engage and take pride in the Mark Award and promote it to children, staff, parents, senior leaders, and governors. Schools have responded well to the award, and recognise it has excellent value in promoting Physical Education, school sport and physical activity for young people."

Nigel Edwards, SGO

Funding and CPD

The school recognise how important the PE and sport Premium funding has been in their development, turning PE into the most heavily funded subject in the school. This funding has been used to ensure the students can access a wide range of opportunities and also ensure that there is a residual benefit to the school. The funding allows the school, as part of a local network of schools, to employ specialist staff to come in once a week to do CPD with their staff which means there is a year-round approach to training. At the start of each year the school conduct a PE skills audit to identify training gaps, and then plan out their CPD requirements for the year based on this information. The specialists lead the CPD, assist with team teaching, and help to develop high standards with demonstrations / observations / assessments etc. and it has really benefitted the whole staff. There is a much stronger delivery for PE across the whole school, and wider options for extra-curricular activities. Staff from Port Vale Foundation also come in and do additional CPD. The school make sure they target and use their funding wisely!



"Ten years ago there was no PE training for non-PE staff, and if we were lucky enough to have a PE specialist, they would have done most of the PE teaching. Now it is firmly embedded, we have an approach to upskill staff, and increase subject knowledge and identify opportunities. For any new staff to the school (newly qualified or not), we do an assessment of their PE skills when they join, and we ensure that those staff get access to the CPD offer first to make sure they have the most time available. We know that some newly qualified staff do not get the volume of time focussing on PE on their training courses which they may have done previously so we actively look to help them when they join us."

PE Lead

We try and help other schools facilitated through Nigel, the SGO, where schools can speak to Emily the PE Lead. We try to lead locally and use our journey to inspire others. Local schools have congratulated us at meetings, and when other schools get new staff leading PE, Nigel uses the local network to help them out when they start, so there is a positive local approach.

Head

Cross curricular and engaging parents

Although the school understand that their School Games activity is not the key to solve all the issues they face, there are strong examples of how PE and school sport has had a positive impact across the school community. For some parents over the last 10 years, their only involvement in their child's school life is through sport. For some others, their first involvement with the school was through sport, such is the importance placed on it. The school have found that sport can break down some of the barriers between school and home. Once parents come into school for a sporting event, many become more comfortable in building relationships with the staff. Once those relationships start, it has really helped staff to signpost parents to other aspects of school such as reading at home etc. The staff have used sport to create, improve and maintain stronger parent-school relationships through sport.

Clubs and Community

The school promote their sport/PE activity on social media which is really popular with parents, and the school try to involve families as much as possible in school life, with sport and PE a great way to engage local families. Parents and carers can come in and participate in events alongside the children, particularly the fitness and fun based events. The school ran an 'active family' event with the specialist PE staff running it, and they invited families to come into school and be part of it. It is about teaching families about activities and games they can play at home, to provide information on food, and nutrition e.g. what is a healthy lunchbox.



Local clubs have been great too, and the school have developed lots of new relationships with local clubs over the last few years. For example, Sandyford Cricket Club came into school to help in the lead up to the Inter-School competition, and young people from the school are now going to their club to play. It has been really good to see those active club links working again, as re-establishing links with local clubs has been one of the main challenges the school faced in 2021-22. They found some links had broken or became disjointed as some clubs folded / changed personnel, and it is great they are re-emerging. The school also facilitate some local clubs on-site, e.g. table tennis and tennis, as the school has facilities they can use.

"We supervise play times, help with equipment and Intra competitions. It is great to go any play against other schools at competitions!"

Student