Opportunity Supporters: Amanda Billington

Bio

Name & Type: Amanda Billington (PE Teacher), Northgate Primary School
Location: Northgate, Crawley
Impact Award Category: Opportunity Supporters
Term: Autumn

Summary of Activity

When interschool competitions slowly returned to being in-person, Amanda Billington, the PE Lead at Northgate Primary School, started to notice that many of the children were keen to start competing again and get involved.

This came at a time when the school found that there had been a significant drop in number of children attending non-school sport clubs (36% down to 18%).

From this the school made it their mission to ensure that all children were given the opportunity to compete in a sport of their choosing appropriate for their age and stage of development and regardless of skill level. They did ensure that this was a positive experience for all young people and so for some this included some steps to ensure that they were suitably prepared.

To ensure the children were engaged, Amanda and her team targeted Year 6 students first, enlisting a competitions manager from each class in KS2 to collect data on their peers, finding out who attended what clubs and what competitions the children wanted to attend.

Then, when a competition was organised, the school could look at the data and offer the opportunity to attend to the not engaged children – those that hadn't had the chance to represent their school. This resulted in the school having entrants to all 17 competitions that had been set up by their local SGO, the only school to have a 100% record.

Impact on Young People

Thanks to the school's commitment over 227 opportunities were provided for children to attend, which included 153 young people attending the events themselves out of school.

By focusing on giving every child the opportunity to represent their school, Amanda and her team have developed a highly inclusive offer which can have a positive impact on all pupils, not just those competing at a high-level.

Thanks to this, the number of children and parents enquiring about clubs out of school has increased. With a recognisable change among the children's engagement within PE and them wanting to attend competitions for the sports they get to try through it.

Although initially focused on Year 6, this impact will no doubt trickle down to other years as they continue to offer more opportunities as the academic year continues.

Key Learnings

Amanda says that a key learning was to offer different types of opportunities to the children, not just to attend the events to compete.

For example, some children were very nervous about attending so they were offered 'journalist' opportunities first so they could see first-hand what to expect. They would take photos and videos as well, so these could be shown to other nervous children within the school to get a sense of what it is like to attend. This is an excellent example of creating a positive experience for young people.

Another key learning is to be flexible with the opportunities. For example, some children that were carers and needed to be home after school, they were offered events that took place during the school day.

How this could be replicated across the network

The focus on all children, not just those who were already engaged or strong at a certain sport, is something that should be replicated across the network.

Every child can be asked what types of sport or competition they would like to be involved in, and then depending on the local opportunities to do so, be offered attendance at an event, this does involve liaison with your SGO to ensure that they are aware of your priorities.

It may take time to gather this data but once in place it would be a valuable resource for any school to ensure their pupil's had equal opportunity to take part in outside school activity and that the activity meets the young people's needs in terms of their confidence, competence and motivations.

Amanda said: *"We are absolutely ecstatic to be shortlisted for the 'Opportunity Supporters Impact Award'! We completed the application so we could reflect on how we are supporting our children, but never thought we would receive a response! It truly feels amazing to be recognised, not only for receiving the shortlist but so we can share our journey and help other schools and settings to use the opportunities the award offers.*

"The School Games makes such a huge impact in so many areas for all children, especially after lockdown, including improving socialisation skills and mental health".