

Manchester RISE Up – MCA Girls’ Engagement Case Study

Manchester Communication Academy (MCA) is leading the way in enhancing girls’ participation in PE through the **Manchester RISE Up programme**, with a focus on **Year 9 girls**, aiming to improve **mental wellbeing, confidence, and engagement** in physical activity.

Key Objectives:

- Increase **engagement and attainment** in PE for Year 9 girls.
- Build **confidence and ownership** through choice-based physical activity.
- Promote **mental, emotional, and social wellbeing** via movement.

“By introducing the RISE Up programme, we’re hoping to reignite the girls’ interest in PE and create a more inclusive and supportive environment where they feel confident to join in.” – Joe Neild, Head of PE

Implementation:

- PE lessons for a target group of **25 Year 9 girls** were restructured to focus on **student choice and wellbeing**.
- Sessions took place during normal PE time and allowed girls to select from activities such as trampolining, stress-busting circuits, and body scanning exercises.
- The programme encouraged **autonomy and emotional safety**, embedding wellbeing strategies within PE.

“We want the girls to take ownership of their experience. Whether that means choosing to work out in the fitness suite or picking from a circuit of RISE activities, we want them to find joy and happiness through movement.” – Joe Neild

Student Voice:

- Students reported higher enjoyment, motivation, and confidence:
 - *“I have really enjoyed having the choice of activity within the lesson and doing something I wanted to do rather than being told.”*
 - *“By taking part in RISE Up, I now enjoy my PE lessons.”*

Impact & Results:

- **School Wellbeing Scorecard** rose from **58% to 92%** post-intervention (+34%).

- **WEMWBS survey** indicated a **63% improvement** in observed student wellbeing.
- Clear improvements in **optimism, relaxation, behaviour, and emotional resilience**.

“Since introducing RISE Up, we’ve seen real progress in students’ optimism, relaxation, and self-confidence. Many now feel more capable of managing their own wellbeing.” – Joe Neild

Leadership Insight:

Headteacher **Miss Watmough** praised the programme’s transformative impact on girls’ development:

“The RISE Up Programme plays a crucial role in supporting our Year 9 girls by fostering resilience, self-confidence, and emotional strength. We’ve seen these young women grow in their ability to navigate challenges and support one another.”
– **Miss Watmough, Headteacher**

Future Plans

- MCA aims to embed RISE Up within its **Healthy Bodies/Healthy Minds curriculum**.
- Plans to **expand support across year groups and partner schools** in Greater Manchester.

One student, **Shelly (14)**, shared how the programme has helped her feel **more confident, emotionally supported, and connected with peers**. Through activities designed to be fun, flexible, and inclusive, she has developed a **healthier relationship with movement**, built stronger friendships, and learned to **better manage her emotions**.

Shelly’s experience illustrates how trauma-informed, choice-led PE can make a profound difference to young people’s wellbeing and school experience. *“The RISE Up lessons have positively impacted my week as well as my PE lessons,”* Shelly shared. *“More people have engaged in the lessons, and since we’ve talked about topics like mental wellbeing, it’s helped people socialise and understand each other better.”*

“I enjoy having more choices in PE because my voice and opinion are heard,” she explained. *“Being able to choose means I can pick an activity I know I’ll fully engage in, which makes the lessons even more enjoyable.”*

Shelly reflected on how the programme has changed her perspective on exercise and movement. *“These lessons have changed how I feel about exercise because they approach it in a new, fun way. I also feel more comfortable since we’re not being sorted into groups anymore—I can exercise with my friends, which makes me feel more at ease.”*

When talking about the impact on her friendships, she said, *“The lessons have helped with my friendships. We’ve been doing activities we all enjoy together, which has created more moments to laugh and have fun. This has built a positive environment around us. During the lessons, my friends and I often laugh and give each other good feedback, which makes it even better.”*



Although the lessons haven’t changed how Shelly feels about her teacher, she explained why. *“That’s because I already had a positive view of them. They’ve always been supportive, and that hasn’t changed.”*

Finally, Shelly spoke about the emotional benefits she’s experienced. *“These lessons have helped me manage my emotions better. They take my mind off my worries and have helped me understand why I might feel the way I do. This has made a big difference in how I handle things.”*

Joe Neild concluded, “This is just the start. We’re looking to support more young people across Manchester in collaboration with Future Action, Team MCR, and GM Moving.”

Call to Action:

Educators and stakeholders are invited to join the growing **Manchester RISE Up network** to create movement-led, trauma-informed strategies that improve young people’s wellbeing.

If you are interested, please contact Vicky@TeamMCR.co.uk

To read the full article, please click [here](#) and for the MCA student case study please visit; [A Teenagers Story](#)