

## Placing the schools at the heart of the local community Southfield Community College

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Based in Wandsworth, Southfields Community College is a non-selective challenging school, a specialist college of sport, geography and applied learning, and a training school.

The college is a mixed use facility, open to the public during both curriculum and non curriculum time. The NHS, local community police and adult learning have offices within the college and operate as a community service under the name and brand Aspire.

Many of the 1400 students travel to the college from deprived areas because many local children go to selective or independent schools. This mixture of socio-economic and local demographics makes it challenging for the college to fulfill its desire to integrate the local community with its students and to be fully used as a community hub.

Southfields has benefited from National Lottery capital investment into community sports to build a new sports hall, changing facilities and a climbing wall.

It also received £65,000 from Extended Schools, which helped to fund a fitness suite, whilst a gym extension has been funded by the Learning Skills Council.

### Current facilities

Southfields currently offers a:

A 20 metre swimming pool

Four outdoor floodlit tennis courts

Four court sports hall

Netball courts

Cricket nets

A movement studio

Fitness suite

Floodlit multi-use games area

Climbing wall

### Key project information

In 1998 former PE teacher Jacqueline Valin was appointed head. Based on past experience Jacqueline felt that sport was a powerful tool that could help raise standards, create an appropriate culture and boost morale. She also believed the college should be at the centre of the community, embracing its diversity, addressing a number of issues, using its facilities and staff to support lifelong learning, something sport could also support.

As a result, the college became a specialist sports college in 2000 and three years later created Aspire@Southfields.

The college describes its culture as focusing on *the children, the family and the community* and this is the philosophy, focus and raison d'être for all its activities.

### Aspire@Southfields

Aspire@Southfields is Southfields' community arm. It works closely with the local community, and primary, secondary and special schools to engage everyone in lifelong learning and an active lifestyle.

Aspire is run by David Holt, Associate Deputy Head Teacher Community, who started life as a PE teacher at the school and whose career progression has resulted being at the college for the majority of his 20 year career. David line manages the local partnership development manager who helps co-ordinate activities through the local school sport partnership.

Aspire is firmly linked to college life. Staff, pupils and ex-pupils help deliver Aspire's community programmes, both during the college day, in the holidays and evenings whilst at the same time supporting students achieve academic qualifications, such as a BTEC in sport and becoming qualified coaches or volunteers as a result.

## Curriculum and community use

It is important that both groups feel a sense of belonging and ownership. Community users have their own entrance to the school which is open during curriculum and non-curriculum time. Areas where the groups could meet have been designed with lockable entrances so one is closed when the other is open. The college has also found that having both groups onsite at the same times has a calming affect on the students.

## Making full use of available facilities

The College is used by a number of local clubs including archery, netball, martial arts, climbing, a number of water-based sports and tennis for the visually impaired.

Regional national governing bodies including tennis and cricket are allowed to use the facilities for their courses for free in return for course places.

When they're not being used by Southfields, the facilities are open to local primary and special need schools for free. This ensures the facilities deliver the best possible return - providing opportunities for local school children to take part in sports which are not offered at their own school.

## Good by design

The centre's activity studios were designed with sprung floors to ensure users' safety and reduce noise whilst still being sufficiently sprung for trampolining, dance, yoga and martial arts. Importantly sufficient storage has

also been included to keep rooms free of equipment and intrusions.

The fitness studio is used by the students for a number of curriculum activities and offers the double benefit of learning and fitness. The technology available on the machines allows science-based learning such as biology, physics and nutrition and is used by the college and community as part of the Aspire lifelong learning programme.

## Aspire results

19 clubs and community groups regularly hire Aspire facilities

787 active Aspire members

2000 people visit every week

150,000 people visit every year

To ensure the programmes offered reflect what users want, feedback is collected both electronically and by forms available at the centre. Most programmes are run on a termly basis; ensuring classes are based on demand and fully subscribed.

The climbing wall is particularly popular and is used to develop and support student team work. There is also a progression path offered enabling college users to join a climbing club.

Large sports equipment such as badminton and netball posts are also shared between users. However smaller pieces, such as balls, are held separately allowing for the differing needs of the community and College.

## Community classrooms

Classrooms are fully accessible and available for use by both the college and community.

Classrooms used by the community have a marked area outside of the windows (similar to the markings on the road) - indicating a student free zone. This is important during school break periods, as it maintains community users' privacy and noise is kept at a distance.

## Top tips

Win the support of senior staff for your project and make sure it is embedded into the school's culture.

Ensure what you are doing is strategic; do not chase opportunities that do not meet your core aims and objectives.

Plan for the outcomes you want, do not build the facilities and expect delivery to just happen  
Understand your audience and talk to them.

Establish a base of core services to provide firm foundations on which to build innovative ideas.

Prepare to take risks and learn from lessons.

Make full use of the facilities and staffing you have available and think laterally about their purpose.

Don't forget to plan your storage

Again, to enable the areas to be used for more than one activity, storage has been carefully thought-out, with lockable storage available in communal areas.

For example, to allow for both painting, yoga and evening classes, three lockable cupboards and a sink are provided in the room and hard wearing plastic flooring which can be cleaned easily has been laid.

## Community groups

As part of Aspire's support for the local community, the NHS, Police, Citizens Advice Bureau and adult learning all have dedicated offices within the college. This brings the community into the college and generates customers for Aspire's programmes.

For example, the kitchens are used for healthy eating programmes, linked to healthy lifestyles and physical activity, for both students and their families.

The local primary care trust (PCT) and National Childbirth Trust (NCT) hold clinics at the college in addition to exercise referral

schemes for adults, the Mind, Exercise, Nutrition, Do it (MEND) programme for children, Weight Watchers and a family baking course involving students and parents.

## Outreach

And if the community won't come to Aspire, David ensures the programme goes into the community through 'franchises' at four local primary schools where courses take place.

## Funding

Southfields is aware that whilst capital funding is limited, by clearly understanding both the needs of the students and the community a funding application can demonstrate how the facility can both be linked to both the college's objectives and those of the funding organisation.

This focus and clear vision places the college in a stronger position to attract grants and has, so far, been successful with awards not only from the education sector, but from the PCT and police.

## Further information

### Southfield Community School

<http://www.aspirecentre.com/>

### Sport England

[Sustainable Community Sports Hub Toolkit](#)