



Over the past 2 years The Craggs and Blaze has worked with Active Schools Edinburgh to welcome and include people from all walks of life into our community.

We began by undertaking school visits to as many schools in the South Neighbourhood as possible trying to increase participation in Basketball within the city.

Some of these schools had Support Units for children with additional support needs, and it was sometimes challenging including some of the children within the mainstream class. That's where this idea grew and developed because at The Craggs and Blaze we believe sport is for everyone not just the super confident.

What we discovered from these school visits were not that the children with additional support needs were not less able, we learnt the opposite, they were actually very capable but had boxed themselves into a frame of mind where they didn't believe they could achieve.

I'll never forget the first time we went to Sciennes Primary School and we met a girl the first week who has Autism. She was too afraid to participate amongst her peers, I remember her teacher having to convince her to give it a go and reassure her, but she still wouldn't budge from the bench, it was all just too overwhelming.

Eventually as the class drew to a close we had convinced her to stay for the lunch time all girls club, this was a much more comfortable environment for her, fewer numbers and less noise. From the first minute of that session to the last I've never seen someone grow in confidence in such a short space of time she was fantastic, scoring baskets and making incredible passes. It was as though she had been playing for years.

From that initial visit she has gone onto play for Blaze girls under 12 development squad and is continuing to develop interpersonal skills that we hope will serve her well in the long run. The shy girl that was hiding behind the teacher is no longer there and she has recently attended national sessions with over 200 children there.

This experience 2 years ago really helped us and continues to help us try and lead the way in breaking down walls for participation.

Thanks to the help of Active Schools Coordinator for Disability and Inclusion Jill Coleman we have gone on to deliver blocks of basketball sessions to Kaimes High School/Primary School, Redhall Primary School, Pilrig Park High School and are looking to engage with more of the special schools over the coming months. This has been a wonderful experience and our coaches have taught basketball to some very talented people through these sessions.

We've had very positive responses from the schools we've gone to visit so far but it's not enough and we aim to provide even more basketball to children with additional support needs. We will be introducing a weekly session at The Craggs during the 2016-17 school year for children with additional support needs.

