



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

News Release

Issued: 28 August 2018

Mix of study and sport helps boys raise their game in class

A scheme that uses football to raise educational aspirations and outcomes is encouraging teenage boys from low participation neighbourhoods to stay longer at school, research shows.

Boys taking part in the University of Edinburgh initiative are almost 20 per cent more likely to complete a sixth year compared with the Scottish average, the study has found.

The Educated Pass project works with 13 and 14 years old boys that play for local youth football teams. The project allows the boys to see how the school curriculum is relevant to them.

Some 77 per cent of boys taking part in the Educated Pass initiative stayed until their final year, in comparison with 59 per cent of males across Scotland.

The scheme - which links the University with youth football clubs - also encourages boys to apply the same level of commitment in the classroom as on the pitch.

Participants in Educated Pass are more likely to go on to further study, training or work on leaving school, the research found.

Statistics reveal 100 per cent entered higher or further education, training or employment - eight per cent more than the Scottish average.

Figures show 77 per cent of the group achieved one or more SCQF level qualification – predominantly Highers – which is 21 per cent higher than the average across Scotland.

The project team works in partnership with the Scottish Youth Football Association (SYFA), Edinburgh College and West Lothian College.

Each year since its launch in 2006, Educated Pass has worked with local youth football teams throughout Edinburgh and the Lothians and North Lanarkshire.

The new report – produced by the University of Edinburgh’s Widening Participation team – tracked educational and health outcomes from pupils who took part in 2011-12 and 2012-13.

Project leader Neil Speirs, who is part of the Widening Participation team, said: “Educated Pass has addressed the academic underachievement of male pupils with great success. The results from our report are incredibly heartening and demonstrate the important role that sport – football in particular – can play in engaging young people in education.”

Educated Pass is funded by the Sutton Trust and run in collaboration with Edinburgh College, West Lothian College and the Scottish Youth Football Association.

The scheme is one of many pioneering projects run by the University of Edinburgh to encourage pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds to consider going into higher education.

Ranked among the top universities in the world

Professor Peter Mathieson, University of Edinburgh Principal and Vice Chancellor, said: “Widening participation is an absolute priority for us, and it is wonderful to see evidence of the real impact an original project such as Educated Pass can have. We have a strong track record for innovation in this area, and this is something we will continue to do to encourage people from all backgrounds to consider studying at Edinburgh.”

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