

ISA Awards 2024 Case Study: Award for Outstanding Sport, Small School



MAPLE WALK SCHOOL



FEBRUARY 2025

History of the School

Maple Walk School was founded in 2004 by the New Model School Company (NMS) with a strong philanthropic vision: to provide an outstanding yet affordable preparatory education. Unlike traditional independent schools, Maple Walk operates within a low-cost model, ensuring that high-quality teaching and extracurricular activities remain accessible to a wide range of families. Initially, the school started in a sports hall in north west London but later moved to its purpose-built, eco-friendly campus near Roundwood Park in 2010, with support from The Craigmyle Charitable Trust.

From the outset, the school recognised the importance of sport in education, not only as a means of promoting physical fitness but also as a tool for character development. Despite having limited on-site sports facilities, Maple Walk embraced an innovative approach by making use of local parks, community sports centres, and partnerships with nearby schools to provide students with access to a wide range of sporting activities.

Over the years, the school has developed a unique and inclusive sporting ethos, focusing on both participation and excellence. By fostering strong relationships with local schools, independent sports clubs, and borough-wide initiatives, Maple Walk has been able to ensure that its pupils receive a comprehensive sporting experience, regardless of their background or ability.



Claire Murdoch
Headteacher



Part of the New Model School
Company



This commitment to sport and innovation was recognised in 2024 when Maple Walk School won the ISA Award for Sport in a Small School. This accolade highlights the school's ability to overcome resource limitations and deliver an outstanding sporting program that has led to both individual and team success on local and national levels.

<https://maplewalkschool.co.uk>

Aims

The School's sporting ethos is built on four key pillars: participation, excellence, inclusivity, and innovation. The school strongly believes that every child should have access to high-quality sports opportunities, regardless of their athletic ability. To achieve this, Maple Walk has developed a comprehensive and multi-faceted sports program that caters to all pupils from Year 2 to Year 6.

Maximising Participation

Maple Walk ensures that every student gets a chance to engage in sport, whether through morning and after-school clubs, inter-house competitions, or borough-wide tournaments. The goal is to build confidence, resilience, and a love for physical activity that students will carry with them into adulthood. By introducing the role of Sports Lead into Year 6 they have ensured that the pupils have an effective input into the sports provision and competition choice.

Striving for Excellence

While inclusivity is a core value, the school also supports students with exceptional sporting potential. Pupils with strong abilities are encouraged to compete at a higher level, whether in Brent Borough teams, national competitions, or elite academies. The school works with professional clubs and external coaches to identify and develop talented athletes.



Inclusive Sporting Opportunities

Maple Walk is committed to breaking down barriers to sport. The school has introduced disability sports, mixed-gender teams, and targeted initiatives to encourage greater female participation in sports such as football. The six-week inclusive sports program ensures that students of all abilities can take part in adapted activities like Boccia, seated volleyball, and goalball.

Innovative Use of Local Facilities

Given its limited on-site resources, Maple Walk has developed strong partnerships with local sports facilities. The school uses Roundwood Park for football, rugby, and running, Willesden Sports Centre for athletics and swimming, and St Claudine's courts for girls and boys football. These partnerships maximise the sporting opportunities available to students, ensuring they receive the same quality of experience as pupils at schools with larger campuses.

Through these aims, Maple Walk has cultivated a culture of sporting excellence and inclusivity, making it a leader in small-school sports provision.

OUTCOMES

The commitment to high-quality, inclusive, and competitive sport has delivered remarkable results, both in terms of individual success stories and broader school-wide achievements.

Sporting Achievements

The school has developed a strong reputation in local and national competitions. 2024 highlights included:

- Football:
 - Three pupils currently play for the Brent U11 football team, representing the borough in regional tournaments.
 - A former Maple Walk pupil has progressed to the Arsenal Academy, demonstrating the school's ability to nurture talent.
- Athletics:
 - A Year 6 student won gold in the Brent 60m breaststroke championship.
 - Another student claimed first place in the 80m sprint at the Brent Athletics Championships, competing against 15 other schools.
 - Five students qualified for the ISA Cross Country National Championships, a testament to the school's high-quality endurance training program.
- Multi-Sport Competitions:
 - Forty pupils participated in the Mill Hill Schools Triathlon, one of the UK's largest school-based sporting charity events. They raised over £4,500, with part of the funds supporting Little Village, a local charity.

Inclusivity and Innovation in Sport

Their emphasis on inclusive sports has transformed the way students engage with physical activity:

- The introduction of disability sports has given students with additional needs a chance to compete in adapted games, fostering confidence and teamwork.
- Girls' football participation has risen dramatically, with the school growing from just four female footballers to a full squad of 20.
- The school's advocacy for inclusive sports has led to the Brent School Partnership adopting adapted sports into their inter-school competitions.

Community and Partnerships

The school's collaborative approach to sports provision has strengthened its ties with local and regional organisations:

- The hosts regular fixtures with The Lyceum School in Regent's Park, providing students with friendly yet competitive football matches.
- The school competes against a mix of independent and state schools, ensuring that students experience diverse sporting environments.





NEXT STEPS

Having won the ISA Award for Sport in a Small School, Maple Walk is focused on expanding its sports provision even further. The school has ambitious plans to continue its sporting evolution, ensuring that all pupils, from beginners to able athletes, benefit from high-quality coaching, facilities, and opportunities.

- Strengthening partnerships with professional sports academies and borough teams to create a pipeline for talented athletes.
- Encouraging more students to enter county-level competitions and beyond.
- Increasing the annual six-week disability sports program to introduce more adaptive activities.
- Working with the Brent School Partnership to expand inclusive sports across more schools.
- Exploring additional training spaces to complement current off-site venues.
- Investing in more specialist sports equipment to enhance on-campus activities.
- Establishing new collaborations with local and national sporting organisations to widen the scope of competitive and recreational opportunities.
- Partnering with mental health charities to provide sports-focused well-being initiatives.
- Continuing to strive to set a benchmark for small schools in sport.

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