

# College keen to boost sporting participation

'WE need to be known as an inclusive environment where every single one of our students can have their individual talents nurtured and to feel welcomed.'

That was the message from Victoria College head Gareth Hughes after the launch of a pilot scheme between the school and Strive Health Club that aims to provide opportunities to pupils who

## ■ *Sports development*

by Paul Lees

are not participating in regular physical activity both inside and outside of school.

The scheme follows a series of meetings between the school's director of sport, Sam Habin, and the head of the

Strive Academy, Chloe Montgomery.

The sessions are currently available to a number of Year 9 students with the aim to expand into Y8 and Y10 next term, and Habin said the response so far has been 'massively positive'.

He added: 'They have really enjoyed being given a unique opportunity.'

'One of the things that resonated with both myself and Chloe is that it is easy to look at your most sporty kids but then that isn't having much of an impact because those boys are already playing so much sport. So what we came up with is to target the people who aren't participating much in sports and get them enjoying it. We know the mental and physical benefits that is going to have and my main aim is to make sure we can provide them with the tools to carry on outside of school.'

The sessions are led by Strive Academy's coaches and a member of the PE staff, with the focus on what Montgomery refers to as 'movement competency' through activities such as boxing, circuit training and obstacle course.

'We want to do it in a fun and enjoyable way,' she added.

'This term is about adapting and seeing what they like doing and what they don't like doing and not putting them in a huge structured thing. It's more tailored to people who might not necessarily play competitive sports but just getting them physically active and enjoy moving.'

Habin said that parents have told him they are already seeing a positive change in the boys' attitude and approach to physical activity because of the confidence the Strive sessions had given them.

'Those boys might be sporty boys but they have not found their interests yet. By taking them to Strive, we might enable them to diversify our curriculum in order for them to find something they are interested in and they enjoy and want to carry on doing,' he added.

Over the last year more than 3,500 students from across the Island have spent 15,000 hours, free of charge, benefiting from Strive's specialist sporting facilities and health education. The arrangement with Victoria College is an extension of that, with Hughes aiming to ensure all students with different interests and skillsets are supported – not just the ones who are already exposed to competitive sport.

'It's about being in an environment where they feel they can belong and they feel important and supported,' said Hughes. 'We also feel that this helps develop their interpersonal skills. When these guys go and spend time with Chloe and Sam at Strive, they're talking to each other, they're engaging with each other, they're finding their voice.'

'There's a place here for the likes of first XI football but there's also a place for guys when sport isn't their first interest. I'm really proud of this and it's very exciting.'



■ Victoria College Y9 students have teamed up with Strive (pictured from left, back): Samuel, Hugo, Will and Alex with Chloe Montgomery, head of Strive Academy, and Sam Habin Picture: JON GUEGAN