

## Team profile: Papanui High School

Papanui High School first connected with Special Olympics ahead of the 2009 National Summer Games, when they decided to enter a football team. No other schools entered in football, so they switched up their sport and entered 12 students in a basketball team. And the school has never looked back!

“Getting involved with Special Olympics has been huge for Papanui High School,” says Head of Department Sharon Scott.

“The kids learn cooperation and communication skills and get to play at a level that’s right for them but be competitive at the same time. Parents love being able to cheer their kids along from the sidelines, just as they do with their other children competing in mainstream sport.”

Competing at national events has also helped the students make connections. At the 2009 Games they connected with Nelson’s Waimea College and decided to have annual sports exchange. Allenvale School joined them in Nelson in 2010 and then entered the 2013 National Summer Games. Allenvale School and Papanui now play regular games against each other.

Sharon says travelling out of town without their families gives the students a great confidence boost.

“Some have never travelled before or been away from their families so it’s a big challenge. At the National Summer Games we were lucky to stay in houses, so they got a small taste of what flatting, shopping for their own food and living with their peers would be like. The experience has made it easier for us to take other non-sporting trips out of town, as the kids are used to the experience.

“And our students have also benefitted from the Healthy Athletes Programme screenings. Several of them now have glasses after having vision issues picked up.”

Go Papanui High – we love having you in the Special Olympics New Zealand family!