

## Winning schools programme in Whanganui

Sport Whanganui and Special Olympics New Zealand have teamed up to provide a pathway for young athletes into Clubs.

Regional Sports Coordinator Jayden Richards has been working with Sport Whanganui Community Sport Advisor Ross Kinnerley to develop a physical activity programme for Arahunga School's five satellite units in schools in the Whanganui region. As far as Regional Sports Trusts go, Sport Whanganui believe they are the first to have a programme like this

Ross and his team go into the five units once a week on a Friday to guide the students through ten minutes of physical activity designed to improve their balance, flexibility, endurance and strength. The team then checks in with the students on a Wednesday to see how they are going and adds in more activities as they improve.

"We've seen amazing improvements in the six weeks we've been running the programme so far. At the beginning not many of the kids could balance on one foot, and now many of them can hop on each leg and have more freedom of movement," Ross says.

"It's also a good workout for their brains as we're teaching them to think carefully about their movements and they have to concentrate."

The programme is based on the Special Olympics Fit 5 resources. By developing students' interest and ability in physical activity they are opening the door for them to join a Special Olympics Club down the track. However, the main focus is to have a sustainable programme in schools so that students with intellectual disabilities will consistently have opportunities to participate in physical activity. The programme takes a holistic approach to their health and well-being which will benefit each individual for years to come.

The next step the programme is looking to take will be to work with parents to help them provide and understand suitable opportunities to get involved in physical activities. They will also look at bringing students with intellectual disabilities from mainstream schools together to work on movements with each other.

"Taking a holistic approach will not only allow them to practice the physical activities but will also help them improve their social skills," Ross says.