

Sheffield Hockey Club

Mission and Philosophy of the Junior Section



“Developing hockey players who will want to play the sport for life”

At Sheffield Hockey Club, in our Junior Section, we value above all:

1. Effort and enjoyment, and

2. Performance

We welcome all children and aim to cater for players of all abilities. We want all our players to be in an environment where they have fun and improve, so it is vital that coaches, volunteers and parents emphasise enjoyment, effort and performance as our key values. To us, these values are much more important than results. We are looking to create people with a lifelong love and attachment to hockey, who have a desire to go play or be involved in our sport well into their adult life.

Enjoyment and competition are not mutually exclusive. Our junior teams play in the Yorkshire and North-East Area Youth Leagues, and, whilst the winning of the matches is not our priority, the players are very competitive the moment you give them a stick and a ball. Performance matters, but **our juniors should always be playing for themselves, their teammates, and for their own enjoyment**, and not for the benefit of adults, whether that be coaches or parents. Any wins that our juniors achieve will be ‘Victories with Values’ and underpinned by high standards of behaviour both on and off the pitch.

With equal playing time for our Juniors, there are more opportunities for our youngsters to learn, to self-organise and to lead. We believe this is the way in which all players can become good players, and good players can become great players! There is ample evidence to support our philosophy.

The Coaches will not seek to direct play from the touch line. This type of ‘joy-stick coaching’ does not help to produce thinking hockey players and is seen only as a short-cut to achieve short term victories or align with the adults’ desire to win.

We are clear about our philosophy and are firm in our belief that it is for the long-term benefit of the youngsters, their enjoyment of the sport and their development as hockey players.

We want to place our efforts into ‘winning over’ our juniors with sport, and not lose sight of this by focusing too heavily on ‘winning sport’ with our juniors.

How our coaches implement our philosophy:

1. Provide the best quality experiences for all players to reach their potential

- Quality coaching in a safe environment for all, whatever their level of experience. There are enough coaches and helpers to meet or exceed minimum supervision ratios of adults to young people.

- Coaching will focus on individual player development in age-appropriate club coaching sessions.
- Coaches apply the Golden Thread elements (looks something like the game, constant decision making, loads of touches on the ball, stretch, fun!) in all session designs.
- Coaches will work collaboratively with others (including parents, junior co-ordinators, welfare officer, hockey development officer, club and team captains, other club coaches and volunteers, and county system coaches) for the good of each player. Working together and maximising our collective expertise and strength will create a stronger and more fulfilling environment for all our junior members.

2. Allow youngsters to play with freedom

- "Young players need freedom of expression to develop as creative players they should be encouraged to try skills without fear of failure." *Arsene Wenger*
- Top coaches agree that the greatest players in the world have developed their skills through being allowed to play with freedom. It is essential for creativity.
- Sadly, too often children's play is overmanaged by adults. We aim to encourage children's natural creativity.
- We don't recognise "mistakes" in our terminology. Of course, there will be instances of poor execution, or a decision that wasn't effective, but these are to be seen as learning opportunities. Focussing on "mistakes" stifles freedom and creativity because children begin to avoid trying things for fear of error.
- To accelerate player development, we encourage players to make their own decisions in matches. Individual development comes before team wins and produces more confident players.
- Hockey is a dynamic sport, not a computer game. We want to develop adaptable, thinking hockey players.

3. Develop the whole child

- Kids who feel happy and confident play better and keep playing. Kids come first!
- The mental, physical, emotional and social well-being of every player matters. We aim to develop the whole child and create opportunities for players at the Club to become involved in community activities and to socialise together.
- Kids will be given opportunities to share their views and to get involved in the development of the club.

We believe that this approach aligns with England Hockey's 4P Model (Person, Player, Performance, Partnership) for fostering a healthy talent development culture within clubs.

What this looks like for our junior age-group hockey

Under 8s (Y3 and younger)

Taking place on Sunday mornings, hockey sessions will be filled with opportunities for U8s to discover, explore and play with their own hockey ball as much as possible. We want the U8s to learn to become comfortable with a ball on the end of their stick, promoting ball carrying whilst having loads of fun with enthusiastic and engaging coaches. Some older U8s will be given the opportunity to play with our U10 group in 7-side matches and tournaments where appropriate, to support their on-going development.

Under-10s (Y4 and Y5)

In addition to the opportunities covered at the U8 level, players will also explore and undertake discovery learning in a game context. This is the youngest age group that play in 7-side matches, playing across half of a pitch, in Yorkshire Youth Hockey League tournaments and festivals. At these tournaments, players will have equal pitch time via a rotation. Through match play, children will explore different positions on the pitch (including goalkeeper), but should not be given a specialist position at this age.

Under-12s (Y6 and Y7)

With a slightly greater understanding and experience of the game, the coach will set goals for the juniors that are process orientated e.g. count how many times we can win the ball in the oppositions half; count how many times we can make a connection with a player in the D; count how many 10m or more forward passes can we complete etc... This enables as many juniors as possible to experience success through focusing their efforts on achieving particular tasks and challenges. At Yorkshire Youth Hockey League tournaments, players will have equal pitch time, and should have the opportunity to play in a number of positions. We also encourage children from U12 to use their understanding and experience to self-organise, with the coach as a facilitator to this process.

Under-14/Under-16s (Y8 - Y11)

These age groups play 11-side matches on a full-size pitch, with teams taking part in the Yorkshire and North-East junior leagues and England Hockey Championship competitions. Some structural and positional play therefore becomes more relevant. However, we still want juniors to experience a range of positions where possible and appropriate.

In terms of match play, rotations should be run in a similar fashion to adult hockey, whereby there may be an extra player or two for each line (defence/midfield/forward) and players will be substituted off for between 5 - 7 minutes before rotating back on for a teammate. All players should have had roughly equal time on the pitch by the end of each match. The self-organisation introduced to the U12s will be more prevalent at these age groups, accounting for the juniors' greater levels of experience, game understanding and team cohesion.

What happens if an age group has very high numbers?

In many of our age groups we are fortunate enough to have enough children and willing volunteers to enter more than one team into the leagues and tournaments. This gives more children the opportunity to play matches against other clubs than would otherwise be the case. When we have this situation, team managers will do their best to match all children to an appropriate playing level. The priority remains enjoyment and developing juniors as both people and players.

Sheffield Hockey Club - Junior Section

We all have a role to play

Our aim is to develop lifelong hockey players by prioritising enjoyment and development of junior athletes as both people and players.



We choose to prioritise:

1. **Effort and enjoyment**
2. Helping to **develop** juniors as **people**
3. Helping to **develop** juniors as **players**

Coaches and Volunteers:

- Apply the **Golden Thread** and **make it fun**
- Allow children to play with freedom
- Aim to develop the whole child
- Focus on the development and enjoyment of each and every child.

We actively support our coaches to take England Hockey Coaching Courses and provide mentoring opportunities for them

We welcome involvement from parents:

Can you help to coach?

Can you help to umpire?

Can you help to manage a team?

Parents and Supporters:

- Support, encouragement and praise for **all** junior players (whatever their team)
- Model great behaviours for our children by respecting coaches and officials.
- Let children make their own decisions on the pitch - it is how they learn and develop!

We help to develop our older junior players by providing coaching and umpiring opportunities for younger age groups.

We support junior player progression through South Yorkshire Academy Centre (county hockey), Talent Academy, and National Age Group Squads

Junior Players:

- Enjoy yourself
- Try your very best
- Help other people on your team to be their best
- Respect and be kind to players, coaches, umpires and parents.

If interested in any of these opportunities for yourself or your child, please contact the Junior Coordinators or lead contact for your age group.