

Dear Parents / Carers,

The changing face of School Competition

I am writing to highlight the philosophy behind school sport and competition which I have managed in the Taunton Deane area for the last 13 years.

For 17 years as a Secondary PE teacher in the local area my PE Department's aim was clear: "To promote lifelong participation in sport and physical activity". However the extra-curricular programme only made sporty kids more sporty. It engaged about 20% of the school population of which approx 80% already had competitive opportunities in community club sport! Many pupils could not access what was on offer due to low self-esteem, never developing the basic agility, balance and coordination require to have basic success in the traditional sports on offer. Many of you may have had a negative experience.

The Government and Sport England's new focus, in an attempt to combat the rise in obesity and associated illnesses, is to focus on "more opportunities for more pupils to be physically active" and NOT more opportunities for the same pupils.

The Primary School competitive programme is very comprehensive in the area. The central venue tournaments my team established 12 years ago have been tweaked over the years to try and engage more pupils to participate. This year SASP have run 168 central venue events in 15 different sports. There have been more friendly events, where some schools have grasped the opportunity to allow different pupils to take part. However there are still some schools who play the same able children at each event with the majority of these pupils already engaged in community sport. School staff have expressed their concerns, stating pressure from parents to play the same able pupils and that parents don't appreciate that their able child cannot play in some events to allow others to play. Staff also express their concerns from above that success is measured on how many games they win or what trophies sit in the cabinet. Perhaps we can measure success by the percentage of pupils that are active.

Recent Government statistics highlight that worryingly 1 in 5 Reception pupils and 1 in 3 Yr 6 pupils are classed as obese and that the fitness of children is on the decline. There is a rise in children with mental health issues and huge evidence that supports being physically active cannot only help with this but also improve academic achievement.

With the above in mind we have reviewed the competitive opportunities and rationalised what we will offer for the 2017-18 academic year. However this will require us all to question our moral compasses to benefit the whole community.

A summary of future provision is below. We will:

- 1) Still provide a wide range of competitive opportunities for the more able to compete for their schools in an attempt to be area champions, however these will be reduced.
- 2) Maintain friendly competitions but ask schools not to bring their "A" teams.
- 3) Introduce some "CAN DO" events designed ONLY for pupils who have not represented their schools before and are not active. These will be modified versions of traditional games to ensure they can access and succeed in the sports.
- 4) Introduce some new sports designed to engage the less active e.g. dodgeball, catchball

We hope you support your school in making these slight changes so more young people can benefit from being physically active.

On the back of this letter is our code of conduct for parents, pupils and staff

Many thanks for your anticipated support

Dave Bullock
School Games Organiser
SASP – Tone Sports

Tone Schools, SASP

Code of Conduct for Central Venue Tournaments

Players:

- To wear the appropriate kit (including safety equipment. Shin pads **MUST** be worn for football. Shin pads and gum shields to be worn for hockey. Gum shields may be worn in Tag rugby but this only a recommendation)
- To wear appropriate footwear – daps are not suitable
- To support your team mates at all times
- Treat opponents with respect and shake hands and do three cheers at the end of every match
- Captain or team representative to thank the umpires/referees after each game
- Not to question the decision of the referee or umpire

Parents:

- Encourage fair play at all times
- Applaud both the opposition and your own team
- Respect the fact that the referee/umpire's decision is final and is not to be questioned. Discuss any complaints with the teacher in charge who will then consult the tournament organiser NOT the referee/umpire themselves
- Keep comments positive at all times, especially regarding young leaders umpiring/refereeing - they hear most comments from the side-line even if it is not directed at them.
- Never use foul language
- Please don't coach from the side-lines – positive encouragement works better – leave the teacher/coach to do the coaching

Staff:

- To let SASP know as soon as possible if you cannot attend a tournament
- To distribute the code of conduct to all parents
- To come prepared to umpire/referee if necessary
- To feedback comments from parents and staff to event organiser
- To explain to parents that these tournaments are about children ENJOYING playing some sport. It is not about WIN AT ALL COSTS
- To keep coaching to a minimum from the side-lines
- To liaise with the tournament organiser if there are any issues
- To keep all feedback positive and towards both teams