

School Sport in Scotland

Executive will recall the formation of the Scottish Sports Alliance, which is an informal forum involving SUS, Scottish Sports Association, Scottish Association of Local Sports Councils, Scottish School-sport Federation and Scottish Sports Association for the Disabled. The objectives of the Alliance are:

- a) to discuss relevant topics in sport that affect member organisations' constituents;
- b) to address specific issues and concerns and establish a consensus view;
- c) to share information between member organisations with respect to:
 - Scottish Government Consultations
 - Scottish Parliamentary Consultations
 - sportscotland consultations
- d) to consult and network with other agencies where appropriate.

Four meetings of the Alliance have been held over the past year or so, and the SUS Chair has attended them all. In addition to agreeing the terms of reference for the meetings, the Alliance has identified three strategic themes for discussion: school sport; coaching/volunteering; and access to facilities. The issue of diminishing school sport programmes was highlighted as the greatest priority affecting Alliance members.

Output ~ School Sport in Scotland

The attached paper represents the product of the Alliance's discussions on school sport. The paper is self sufficient and requires no further commentary or introduction.

SUS Executive is asked to:

Item

Note the paper, and offer views on its content and recommendations.

School Sport in Scotland; A Golden Opportunity for our Children

The Opportunity

The next six years and beyond provide Scotland with an unprecedented opportunity to benefit every child in the country.

A Curriculum for Excellence and the extensive new schools building programme across the country provide the academic flexibility and facilities to release the potential of sport to contribute to an improvement in children's lives. Allied to the fact that the Commonwealth Games have been awarded to Glasgow in 2014 and the follow-on interest in sport that will be generated by the London 2012 Olympics, these events must be used as a catalyst to change our nation's approach to sport, physical activity and health. *Reaching Higher*¹ is clear that if such events are to provide an enduring legacy, they must be used as a catalyst for change.

At the heart of this opportunity lies the role that sport can play in developing our children through improved self esteem and adopting a healthy lifestyle. An enjoyable involvement in sport will improve health, self esteem and a capacity to engage with learning which in turn brings benefits to the school in raising academic achievement and the creation of a positive environment that can contribute to the local community.

This short paper addresses both primary and secondary schools with specific actions identified for each when appropriate. The paper is presented by the Scottish Sports Alliance² to suggest what needs to be done, why it needs to be done and how.

The Scottish Sports Alliance believes that Scotland needs:

- More choice of school-led activity, including the out of school curriculum.

Why? To increase sporting opportunities for children in school to help physical literacy, build a work ethic and engage in a healthy lifestyle³.

- An increase in the numbers of children participating in sport for fun, recreation and improved health.

Why? To address the increasing incidence of obesity amongst our children and because participation in sport is fun and has its own intrinsic value.

The Rationale

If children are given the basic movement and physical skills at an early age, they develop their physical literacy. The enthusiastic engagement in sport is more likely to lead to an active lifestyle. It is argued that such development and support is a given in most other academic disciplines and *A Curriculum for Excellence* embraces a broader delivery agenda for all our children.

¹ The National strategy for sport in Scotland

² The Scottish Sports Alliance is a coalition of the Scottish Association of Local Sports Councils (SALSC), Scottish Disability Sport (SDS), the Scottish Sports Association (SSA), the Scottish Schoolsport Federation (SSF) and Scottish University Sport (SUS). Collectively they represent the vast majority of sportsmen and women in Scotland.

³ Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners, DfES, 2004

Evidence⁴ shows that achievement and self esteem for children is important to their development. Some children are gifted in a sporting way. The recognition of this talent and opportunity to express it is important. School sport often provides this.

The sporting world recognises that investment into schools must bring a range of benefits over and above that of improving the sporting abilities of our children. Schools, and ultimately the wider society in Scotland, must benefit. Head teachers will look for improved behaviour and greater academic achievement. Teachers also want healthier children that have a greater engagement with the activities of the school. Research carried out shows that this is often the case⁵. Inactivity in children can contribute to a range of health problems from diabetes, heart disease, obesity and mental health problems.

Children who take part in regular physical activity behave better and are able to concentrate following bouts of physical activity. The self esteem of pupils is significantly improved if they are able to demonstrate achievement through sporting prowess and have opportunities to represent their class, house or school. The ethos of schools is improved through representative sporting success just as much as academic success.

The dwindling involvement of girls in regular physical activity is a particular concern. There are now a wide range of sporting and physical activities that appeal specifically to girls, from dance and aerobics, to female football and the traditional sports like netball. An inclusive and innovative agenda can be developed to ensure there is something for everyone.

Equally important is the need for sporting opportunities within mainstream school for those with additional support needs. Scotland has a proud tradition of highly successful athletes within the Paralympics and other special competitions. These athletes demonstrate the determination and courage of the human spirit when provided with the right support and direction.

Additionally, Scottish sporting success brings pride and a 'feel good factor' to the whole nation. This is also true at School level, and its impact is felt not only by those participating, but everyone within that community. This sense of identity and belonging is evident throughout the sporting world and can be used as a very positive force for our children to engage with. Scotland needs sporting talent at all levels and the school environment is an ideal place to identify and commence the development of this talent.

Put simply, we believe that sport has much to offer the overall status and attainment of a school as well as that of its individual pupils. Equally, schools have much to offer in developing and sustaining Scottish sport.

What do we need to make this happen?

- High quality PE teachers in both secondary and primary schools to deliver the physical literacy agenda.

Much of this work is in hand and with continued investment in this area and a focus on skills based PE at an early age significant improvements can be made. The use of specialist PE teachers at primary school to deliver a programme of physical

⁴ Sport Playing its Part; Sport England 2004

⁵ Physical Education, School Sport and Club Links Strategy, DfES, 2004

literacy will furnish our children with the skills and confidence they need to enjoy and participate in sport.

- Further investment in the Active Schools programme, in particular additional support in the secondary sector.

An increase in the provision of Active Schools co-ordinators within Secondary Schools will continue the growth of physical activity, particularly in S1 and S2 where evidence suggests the drop off is greatest and the impact could be most significant⁶.

- Additional support to schools to allow staff and trained volunteers to further develop sport in school in the extended curriculum⁷.

It is recognised that teaching staff have increasing commitments and the incentive to provide additional sporting opportunities for pupils may be limited. However, there are many staff, and senior pupils that do enjoy this work and are committed to it. Perhaps their actions could be rewarded through recognition of this activity towards achieving chartered teacher status or coaching qualifications. Additionally, many local sports clubs have qualified coaches whose experience and enthusiasm can be harnessed to assist or deliver after school sports clubs. These school based clubs have benefits in their own right but may also provide that missing crucial link to the local club and a potential extended involvement in sport. Scottish Disability Sport can provide additional advice to those schools that may need specialist advice for pupils with special needs.

- Improve the links between schools and their local sports clubs

Reaching Higher mentions the importance of a sporting pathway that provides opportunities from early participation to elite performance. The clubs play a vital role in this and often offer appropriate coaching and competition for developing athletes. They also provide the foundations for a lifelong or extended participation in recreational sport for many people and a link to community engagement and volunteering opportunities.

- Volunteering / coaching opportunities for senior pupils

It is recognised that there is always a need for coaches and assistance when managing sport. The use of entry level and assistant coaching qualifications for enthusiastic senior pupils at S4 and above provides an ideal opportunity to address this. Senior pupils can act as role models and a vital 'extra pair of hands' to teachers and experienced coaches, whilst at the same time developing their own personal skills and working towards recognised national awards. A number of Scottish Governing Bodies of sport provide such qualifications and the Sports Leaders Award is already used in a number of Scottish Schools to great success.

- Consider the development of a number of specialist sports schools.

The current debate about the benefits of specialist sports schools deserves further investigation. The example of the Bellahouston School of Sport demonstrates that sporting and academic achievement can go hand in hand. Sport benefits from the development of potential elite athletes, an ethos of excellence can pervade across

⁶ Active Schools Network evaluation year two, **sportscotland**, 2007

⁷ Defined as: Lunchtime and after school clubs and inter-school competition

the whole school. The research recently carried out by the Scottish Institute of Sport Foundation⁸ supports such a move.

- Suitable facilities that are fit for purpose with ease of access for all sections of the community.

With the recent, current and proposed investment in the school estate these needs can be met with some clear and directed action.

The investment in the school estate infrastructure is providing many new schools with excellent sporting facilities that must be used to inspire and engage pupils. With the appropriate planning many of these have become available for community use 7 days a week providing crucial links with local sports clubs. An opportunity exists to ensure that all of these community assets become more widely available.

⁸ Sport Schools: An International Review, Scottish Institute of Sport Foundation, 2007

Summary

Scotland has a strong tradition as a sporting nation and has the potential to 'punch above its weight' on the international stage. Scotland's poor record on health and the importance of sporting success to its people make significant and sustained action an imperative. With the existing Active Schools workforce, *A Curriculum for Excellence*, improvement in facilities and the planned restructuring of **sportscotland**, the time is right to bring schools into the game-plan.

This investment in Active Schools should not weaken our ability to focus on sport, rather it should supplement the good work that is currently trying to improve the physical activity of our children. With more opportunities and the appropriate staffing the target of 2 hours PE per week for every child must become a reality. In addition, the additional opportunities that school-sport can provide should allow many more children to achieve significantly more than this absolute minimum. An increase in school-sport can provide a win / win situation for the children and the schools.

The next six years present the perfect platform to do this. The benefits will go far beyond Glasgow 2014 and provide a legacy that will be of much greater significance than that of sport alone.

This paper is asking for:

- A national summit in the summer of 2008 hosted by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning that debates sport in Scottish schools and brings together the many potential partners to discuss the issues and identify solutions.

It is recommended that the following topics are considered for discussion within this summit, or as separate projects that can be addressed over the next 12 months:

- Increased investment in the Active Schools programme in secondary schools
- The continued investment in PE specialists within primary schools
- Support for and recognition of additional school sport activity carried out by teachers, senior pupils and other volunteers in the extended curriculum
- Consideration of the development of a number of specialist sports schools
- The commitment to a minimum of 2 hours PE per week and the opportunity for an additional 2 hours in a school sport setting.

The 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing will provide the high profile backdrop for such a summit. The Scottish Sport Alliance and its member constituents would be happy to assist with developing the agenda. We look forward to an opportunity to meet with appropriate Ministers, Scottish Government, **sportscotland**, CoSLA, education leaders, teachers and other appropriate partners to discuss sport in school sport in Scotland with the aim of giving our children a flying start.