



English Schools' Football Association

Membership Matters

A message from the Chairman

Don't forget...

ESFA AGM—
Monday 26th July
6.30PM for a
7.00 PM start

The Draws for
our 2021/22 Inter
School National
Cup
Competitions are
now Live! View
the fixtures [here](#)

At a recent inter-district cup final that I attended, the manager of one of the teams approached me to say how much he, his players and their parents were looking forward to next season's ESFA Champions Cup. He had just received the draw and was delighted to see that his team would be playing different opponents, travelling to new places, and would be able to have several guaranteed matches in the competition. Moreover, he told me that, prior to entering, he had consulted with players and parents, who were all very enthusiastic about the new format.

I wonder how many managers have done likewise. Sometimes our preconceptions about what players and parents might like are based on our own preferences and experiences. Sometimes we need the views of young people to guide us towards the practical and obvious. The ESFA recently carried out a survey of players who have taken part in schools' rep football, and these were some of the findings:

- When invited to comment on whether they would seek to change anything about their participation in rep football, the most commonly cited suggestion was the provision of more games, closely followed by the provision of more training. These constituted the very great majority of the responses.
- Only 4 players rated their experience at below 8/10 and in most cases, this was due to a lack of fixtures or playing time. Those scoring 8 and 9/10 also commonly cited the lack of fixtures as the reason for their score. Most cited the love of the game, having fun, good quality coaching and playing at a higher level as the main reason for their (high) scores.
- The thing that players enjoyed most about rep football was playing against good players/playing at a high level (32% of responses included this), with playing against different/national opposition (18%) and making friends (14%) the second and third most common answers. 11% of responses included reference to the pride of playing for the Association.
- 76% described their feelings about the resumption of football as "excited", with the balance describing themselves as "happy".
- 100% of respondents said that they "always" felt safe playing schools' football.

Continued...



A message from the Chairman continued...

Overall, it is clear that schools' rep football is viewed very positively by those involved in it, and that the ESFA is clearly on the right lines in introducing the new Champions Cup format. As things stand, not only will approximately 5000 young people – the highest number ever – have the opportunity to represent their district and / or county in an ESFA national competition, but they will all be involved for several months, rather than half of them ending their participation after just one knock-out match.

There is more good news. Entries for our inter-school competitions have bounced back to pre-pandemic levels and the draws have already been published. As always, provision has been made for late entries so please encourage the schools in your district / county to make contact with the office to enter if they have yet to do so.

Finally, as I step away from the Chair's role after two seasons that none of us would ever have anticipated, I want to thank everyone involved in this wonderful organisation, at school, district, county and international levels, for all that you do, often in challenging circumstances, to provide the very best experiences for over a million young people who enjoy what you collectively offer. Like any family, we have our disagreements but, when we all work together to focus on what really matters – the huge benefits that those young people enjoy – we achieve so much more.

I now leave you in the very capable hands of our brilliant staff, so expertly led by Andrea, our new Chairman, Mark Hignett, and Vice-Chairman, Stuart Botham. I am especially delighted for Mark and Stuart that they will (hopefully!) be able to enjoy a normal season that is full of all the pleasurable aspects of the role – National Finals, international matches, and, above all, meeting the young people who take part in the many activities for which the ESFA is responsible.

Report of Council

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and reflected on the season, thanking Council and staff for their determination to provide opportunities this year for children to enjoy their schools' football where it had been safe to do so. Members noted that some 19/20 national finals had been held, as had a fixture for each of the boys' and girls' international teams from 19/20, allowing caps to be presented in person to most of the players. Members were also pleased that national rep football competitions for this season had begun, and would conclude in early Autumn, and thanked Membership for their commitment to the provision of schools' football.

Council Members approved the proposal for Mark Hignett to assume the Chair for season 21/22, and Stuart Botham the Vice Chair.

Council considered the Committee structure for next season and to reflect the priorities of FA funding and the associated staff structure, it was agreed that two new Committees of Council be established to replace the work of the current Association Development Committee. A Governance Committee would take oversight of the governance of the game, and a Development Committee would take oversight of activities designed to increase participation. Rep Committee and Competitions would remain unchanged, and all Council Members would serve on two of the four Committees, with a practicing teacher serving on each, where possible.



Report of Council continued...

Competitions Committee reminded Council of the details of the national competitions this year and were pleased that, despite the loss of Danone as a sponsor, primary competitions would continue next season whilst a replacement sponsor/partner was sourced. The format of the inter-schools' competition would remain as a 7 a side contest, run on the pyramid system from local rounds through to national finals as previously: rep football would however be continued as per the 20/21 season, as a 9 a side competition on a knockout basis, in response to feedback from participants. Council also heard of the success of Schools' Football Week, which had resulted in 105,000 players in 8000 teams from 650 schools taking part in some form of schools' football, three times the number taking part in the previous season. Members were pleased to hear that the Department for Culture, Media and Sport had supported SFW for a second season by providing a quote from the Minister for Sport to support activity.

Rep Committee provided dates for regional trials, with boys' trials to take place over the weekends of 24th Oct and 7th Nov, and the girls on Sunday 10th October. Members were reminded of the need to appoint a CWO for each event and make their name known to participants; to appoint a physio and to complete a full risk assessment. To ensure that the programme could be sustained within the sponsorship budget, some adjustments had been made to activity. Reports of the fixtures for the 19/20 squads were provided, with players and parents delighted with the events and the cap presentations. Members received a report on affiliation, and all were reminded to conclude the process for the new season at the earliest opportunity.

Association Development Committee reported on the completion of the Association restructure process, noting that, following the departure of the FDO, individual Council Members would support any CSFAs in this regard, should be it be needed. Members received the routine discipline report and finished by thanking Kieren Laverick for his work on behalf of the Association.

Trustees reported on FA funding, which whilst improved for the coming season, was set to decline significantly over the following two. A Football Projects Manager was to be appointed, replacing some of the responsibilities of the outgoing football development team and taking on new responsibilities arising from the conditions of FA grant. PlayStation had confirmed continuation funding, as had UCFB, and partners to support primary schools' competition were being sought. National competition entry levels were good, with interschool entrants at about the same level as the last full season, and there was confidence that further entries would follow. The player survey, offered to Associations with teams in the national rep football competitions, had identified that players engaged in rep football were highly satisfied with their experience, with the only feature they would wish to change being an increase in opportunities to play/train.

The meeting concluded with Chairman Elect, Mark Hignett, thanking Phil Harding for his Chairmanship over the previous two seasons, commending him on his leadership, commitment and support for others to ensure that the interests of children remained at the heart of the decisions of Council.



Proposed Rule Change for Season 21/22

As Members prepare to attend the AGM, Council wishes to provide the following statement regarding its decision to rule out a proposed rule change for next season. The rule change proposer is aware of Council's intention to take this course of action.

The ESFA Trustees and Council received a proposed rule change for consideration at the AGM. Regrettably the rule change was not considered eligible by Council and in the interests of transparency, that rule change, and the rationale for Council's decision, is being shared with you for information. The rule, as submitted by Berkshire County Schools' FA and seconded by Essex County Schools' FA as mandated by their respective Members, is provided below:

- **Replace 'General Rule 15' by 'Constitution Clauses 11 and 29'**
- **Add an additional sentence: "The closing down of any existing competition and its replacement by a new competition for the same age-group and level of players, but with a different rule structure, will be subject to this rule'. No specific competition can be excluded from this requirement."**

Rationale 'General Rule 15' refers to the old rule structure, but was not amended when the new Constitution was adopted in 2016.

The English Schools' FA Council wished to create a new rule structure for the inter-District and inter-County secondary competitions. Instead of submitting the proposed changes to a national meeting, they opted to close down the original competitions, and introduce new ones. There is nothing in the current rule structure to say that membership approval is required to introduce a new competition – only to amend the rules of an existing one. It is believed that there should be a clear distinction between the two processes".

Trustees gave significant consideration to this proposal, given the potential impact it had on our ability to meet sponsor needs. These, and subsequent conversations, were had in the context of a phased reduction in FA funding of around 30% over the coming two years, and the loss of Danone sponsorship for our key primary school activity. Trustees were clear that any restrictions to their ability to act quickly and responsively to potential new partners and investors could restrict them in their legal responsibilities for protecting the Association's financial health. This legal imperative guided their thinking and Council, when considering the matter, reflected on the impact that a lack of agility in decision making could have on our ability to provide young people with the outstanding footballing opportunities the ESFA provides. The Danone competition was considered as an example - for Districts in particular, maintaining two national knock-out competitions, one for boys and one for girls, required the ESFA to be able to terminate the existing competitions and introduce new ones - and to do so quickly, without the potential constraints that the proposed rule change would cause. The ability to flex format, introduce new activity and cease activity if funding constraints demand it, was considered a vital component of the ESFA's ability to meet the needs of young people and to fulfil its charitable objects.

Continued...



Proposed Rule Change for Season 21/22 continued...

Council too noted that the Champions' Cup competitions, to which the proposed rule change referred, was a competition which was already now in existence, given that entries had been accepted and fixture dates published. These competitions are expected to provide the opportunity for around 5000 children to take part in an activity which would otherwise have ceased to exist.

After careful deliberation, Council unanimously determined that the rule change was not eligible for consideration by the AGM.

Safeguarding Updates

As this season draws to a close and planning for next commences, colleagues may find the following safeguarding information useful:

Association Child Welfare Officer briefings: it is the intention to run a briefing for Members' CWOs just prior to the start of next season. The briefing will be on-line, and will be full of reminders and support for key actions to ensure your child welfare arrangements are effective. We will cover affiliation requirements, portal access and even some hints about raising the profile of the CWO to parents and players. The briefing will last for around 45 mins, and you'll be invited to recommend topics for future events, should you think them useful. Look out for the date later in the summer

Young match officials: if you use match officials who are under 18 at your rep football fixtures, please ensure that you send them the letter found at the bottom of this [page](#) when you appoint them. It explains what they should do if they have any safeguarding concerns, including being victims themselves. It is important that we encourage young officials in their careers, and this small step will, we hope, support them to succeed. Please remember to personalise this letter for your own Association.

A reminder too that you must report any incident/accident at your events. You can find the template here: [Resources – English Schools' Football Association \(schoolsfootball.org\)](https://schoolsfootball.org/resources)

Heartsafe, a company providing defibrillators to the sports community, has published a map of locations of its defibrillators for public use. You can find the map here, and the link is now in the ESFA's risk assessment templates. More information on our website [here](#).

Safeguarding Training:

For AOTTs and Welfare Officers who have never completed FA Safeguarding training, the new online course can be found here: <https://thebootroom.thefa.com/learning/qualifications/safeguarding-children-course>. The cost is £30, which includes future recertifications.

For those who are renewing their Safeguarding training, there is no charge, but they must complete the Recertification Course on this link, otherwise they will need to pay the £30 fee: <https://thebootroom.thefa.com/learning/qualifications/online-safeguarding-children-re-certification>.

The FA Safeguarding Course must now be recertified every 2 years in order for AOTTs to remain compliant.



Under 11 7-a-side Inter-School Cups

As you will be aware from the previous edition of Membership Matters, the Danone sponsorship of the ESFA portfolio of primary competitions has now ended. However, we are pleased to confirm that we will be continuing with our offer for Under 11 age group using the following three categories of competition:

School Teams' Cup (mixed permitted)

Girls' Cup (girls only)

Small Schools' Cup (schools must have fewer than 65 pupils in total in Years 5 or 6 according to the numbers on roll as confirmed by the preceding year's summer census)

The ESFA deadline for completing each stage of the competition is as follows:

District Rounds Saturday 04 December 2021 (winning team details must be sent to the County Secretary / Organiser)

County Rounds Saturday 29 January 2022 (winning team details must be sent to ESFA HQ)

Regional Finals Saturday 26 March 2022

The tournaments will operate using the existing rules and format. Please remember that only pupils in Years 5 and 6 are eligible to participate.

A toolkit to support team managers and competition organisers will be sent out in due course.

Under 11 9-a-side Inter-District Cups (Boys and Girls)

Due to the cessation of the Danone sponsorship, the ESFA Council has agreed to continue with the 9v9 National Knockout Cup format which was offered successfully to association rep. teams in 2021. The entry form for the 2021-22 competitions will be sent in the coming days, so please keep an eye out! An entry fee of £25 will be applied to each entry. The ESFA Council will review the format of this competition for Season 2022-23 and will keep membership updated on any developments. Please note; the previous 7v7 format, which was operated through County Rounds / Regional rounds, will no longer be available.

ESFA National Inter-School Cup Draws

Round One and Two draws for the ESFA National Inter-School Cup competitions at the secondary age group have now been published and can be viewed at www.esfa.co.uk/competitions. If you know of any local schools which are keen to enter, then please ask them to email competitions@schoolsfa.com and we will be happy to include them as a late entry, subject to availability. So far over 6,300 teams have registered to participate, so we are looking forward to what should be an exciting year ahead.



ESFA Champions Cup Draws (Inter-District and Inter-County)

The draws and fixtures for the 2021-22 season of the ESFA Champions Cup are attached in excel format (you can view specific fixtures and play-on dates by clicking on the appropriate tab at the bottom of the spreadsheet). As you will see, the ESFA has tried to accommodate the request from associations to include double header fixtures, where possible. However, this has not always been possible due to varying entries across the various age groups. In the coming weeks, we will advise on the specific procedure for registering players for Player Passport and the platform which will be used to host fixture dates, results and league tables. Please note, associations withdrawing from the competition will be charged a £100 administration fee per team

Compliance for Rep Teams

Members should ensure that rep team personnel are recorded on the portal on or before 1st September 2021 as failure to do so will result in suspension. If you have any queries or concerns about this, please contact one of the National Child Welfare Officers

Deadlines for Compliance thereafter

The ESFA has updated its suspension policy to be specific about the timelines in which any subsequent non-compliance needs to be addressed and you can find the update [here](#)

AGM Reminder

The ESFA AGM will be held virtually on **Monday 26 July 2021 at 6:30pm** for a **7:00pm** start, online via Microsoft Teams. Please RSVP directly to Sarah.Kearney@schoolsfa.com in order to register your attendance. All attendees will be sent a link to the virtual meeting approximately two weeks prior to the meeting date.

The ESFA was delighted in the large attendance to 2020's online AGM, owing to the fact there was no travel involved, making it easier for more representatives to be present. We hope to receive a similar turnout to this year's meeting, however so far we have not had quite the uptake we had hoped for. If you would like to attend, do please let us know at your earliest opportunity and by no later than **21 July 2021**. Please ensure you confirm the name(s) and email address(es) of your attendees and also highlight the voting delegate for your Association.



New Covid-19 FA Guidance

The FA has provided an update on 'non-elite' football inline with Step 4 of the Government's roadmap. This guidance applies to all schools' football activity and includes aspects such as:

- On Field adaption for playing football are no longer required
- No limits on how many people can meet
- One metre plus rule removed

Find out more information as well as some downloadable documents [here](#)

Insurance Certification

Please find [here](#) an amended insurance evidence certificate for our associations to use for their public liability cover.



Follow @SchoolsFootball on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook to keep up with all the most up to date news from the Association