

**ENGLISH INDOOR  
BOWLING ASSOCIATION LTD**



**BOWLS  
AS A  
SCHOOL SPORT**

## **Introduction**

Our sport must maintain a positive approach to increase participation and in particular we should seriously consider offering opportunities to young people.

One obvious route for this would be to approach schools and in principle there is nothing wrong with doing so. However, experience gained by those who have adopted this approach has shown that in some cases a range of success has been achieved and in many other cases the unfortunate outcome has been a complete failure.

The English Indoor Bowling Association Ltd commissioned a small working party to look more closely into the topic by examining the experiences gained by people in different parts of the country. As a consequence of the study, this guide is now available, which it is hoped would provide some assistance and form a basis for our ongoing endeavours to promote the sport through schools.

Before simply attempting to set out a series of recommendations, it is important to look closely at both the suitability of the sport being appealing to school children and how the current schooling structure could handle the sport. The next two sections of this guide will examine these two aspects.



## **Bowls for Schools**

Whether we like it or not, we must face up to the image of bowls not being a sport generally associated with young people. This is not only on account of our dress code but also the framework of the normal games is not often “loaded” with the excitement and action which some other sports can offer. This is not simply an opinion but has been borne out by feedback from young people who have been caused to cope with comments from their school peers.

This we must take on as a “challenge”.

It is probably fair to suggest that most of the young people who have found their way into the sport have come from clubs where they were introduced to the sport by grandparents and parents. So in other words there is already some “genetic” leaning towards the sport. Some clubs have been fortunate in being able to provide a junior section which has probably encouraged some young people to progress through to our County, National and International teams.

Unfortunately, it has been confirmed that some young people have been ridiculed at school once it has become known that they play bowls which, probably is not helpful where sustainability is concerned.

In addition to what has been mentioned so far, we need to consider identifying potential barriers to bowls becoming a school sport.

There are some other essential considerations to be borne in mind.

1. As far as flat green bowling is concerned, schools do not have “on site” facilities.
2. School staff will generally not have sufficient basic knowledge of the sport to provide ongoing, challenging and interesting coaching for those who would be willing to play.
3. Young people will place “having fun” high in their consideration for participating in the sport – is the conventional game of bowls, fun? We must be honest and realistic.
4. We are competing with a vast array of sports being “thrown” at schools at this time leading up to the London Olympics in 2012, however in such a period of sporting fever we must consider this time to be an “opportunity” for all sports.
5. Apart from suitable footwear, we need to bear in mind the overall dress code requirements generally imposed upon the sport. Of these the most sensitive area is with the women. Dress codes for all sports are important for a variety of reasons but initially we should consider focusing on the important issues concerning simply participation. Once young people are involved and they venture towards competitive bowls, dress code considerations will develop.
6. Often quoted terms when speaking to young people are “boring, I’m bored, etc” We need to consider before embarking upon any pathway towards introducing the sport into schools as to what scope we need to identify for its subsequent

development. If this is not done initially, it could be difficult to see the potential for our efforts being greeted with much enthusiasm.

7. The complexity of present day school life is highly demanding upon both staff and pupils. It is often difficult to arrange convenient times and regularity of sessions which match all essential criteria. We need to get a good understanding for the scope available to us before attempting to formulate detailed arrangements.
8. School “slots” are generally quite short so extensive preparation before commencing the activity cannot be accommodated.
9. How much do schools really appreciate what our sport is about and what it can offer?

There are probably other key considerations which could be mentioned but any framework for the introduction of the sport to school must be identified so that potential constraints and difficulties are foreseen as much as possible.

### **The current “Schools” Structure**

For a number of years, many schools have been encouraged to develop their activities based upon a concept of “specialisation” in a number of key areas. One of these has been sport and at this time there are 450 within the country referred to as Specialist Sports Colleges (SSC’s).

To have been granted this status, the respective schools have been required to submit a comprehensive “bid” covering key areas for their future development. In addition they have been required to raise finance amounting to £50K to back their development objectives. The successful schools have in return been afforded substantial funding by the Government to enable them to take their development intentions forward over a four year period.

Having successfully gone through this process it is clear that these schools are credible performers and we need to acknowledge that in whatever we aim to present to them in the process of offering our sport as a potential part of their work.

Because SSC’s are forward looking, they have in place in many cases a lead role for development and this is a post known as the Partnership Development Manager (PDM). This person is required to operate with a structure that is designed to “link” other locally based schools with the work of the SSC. This is achieved through a series of teaching staff who are required to function as School Sports Coordinators “SSCO’s”. These form the “hub” for other schools to link into the work of the SSC.

There is generally a key feature about the way these schools operate which must be understood as this has to be the “network” into which we must integrate anything which we aim to offer.

All grant maintained schools are now linked into “partnership” working referred to as a School Sports Partnership (SSP). There are currently 475 SSP’s operating around the country. Some Counties have only a few SSC’s and others are more extensively covered so the number of SSP’s will be generally lower.. For example there are currently fourteen SSC’s in Kent and twelve of these now operate an SSP.

To illustrate the potential effectiveness of integrating into this concept, one SSP in Kent is linked to sixty-three schools so from this it can be appreciated how advantageous it could be to introduce our sport through the current network of SSC's.

### **Where are we now?**

A few years ago the Government launched an initiative known as the P.E, School Sport and Club Links Strategy (PESSCLS). The basis of this initiative was to encourage children to participate more in sport on a regular basis outside of core school time and to encourage this process, it was desirable that sports clubs became involved.

A number of small projects have been set up in various parts of the country linking schools with bowling clubs which have been very useful.

One important development with this initiative was that a set of "standards" were drawn up in conjunction with the school staff and submitted for approval to an Awarding Body as a module for the GCSE in PE. Approval was granted and a number of candidates were successful in achieving the standards.

Again from these activities, lessons have been learned including:

1. Pupil's interest has been difficult to maintain with the irregular attendance.
2. Fitting in suitable session times which could lead to more frequent participation has been practically impossible.
3. Maintaining the availability of regular coaching staff has been a problem.
4. Providing satisfaction for their efforts to coaching staff has been difficult.
5. Saturday mornings as an additional activity is not popular due to other school events.

### **The potential to "Move Forward"**

In this section of this guide, we will now look at getting started on establishing schools links.

Mention was made earlier about the awareness that schools might have of our sport. Research has shown that it is a fair and probably realistic to assume that most schools and their staff have very little, if any, understanding. The first issue to address is this. The next consideration is to find out how many SSC's there are, where they are located and who is their PDM. This information can be determined by contacting your Local Education Authority, referring to your CSP website or simply contacting a local school and seek their guidance.

It is important to appreciate that some counties are quite rural and this can place quite a strain on the resources that may be available to deal with the schools. Whatever one finds out in relation to the number of SSP's, etc. do not try and do something which will overstretch your resources and in particular the coaches that you will come to rely upon.

It is much better to take on a small task and as all relevant factors fall into place, consider expansion rather than take on something too large and risk failure.

We must get familiar with the principle of “hub” working so it is suggested that the “hub” needs to be formed by an Indoor club that has an established junior section.

Currently the EIBA are aware of ninety-six Affiliated clubs with junior sections so check that your club has registered with the EIBA if this is appropriate. This is a very significant indication that our sport is attractive for young people but there are quite a number of difficulties being experienced in maintaining suitable numbers which will ensure the ongoing development of the section. Linking with schools is likely to help.

The next move is to decide how to get this “sport awareness” issue underway.

It would be preferable to meet with the PDM of one of the SSC’s in your area and simply endeavour to gain an understanding of how his/her school operates with respect to a range of sports. Knowing something about the successes gained by the school is often quite interesting.

There are now a few options to consider:

1. You can invite the PDM (and some of his/her staff) along to a junior section session to see how you operate and how your young people enjoy the sport. It may also be worth suggesting that a few pupils from the school come along and “have a go”. From this experience you will be able to gain some feedback – discuss with the PDM how you would like to gain that information.
2. You can organise a “special” event when you arrange to show a range of activities on the “green” (recommend using an indoor club) to illustrate various types of typical junior bowling. For example a “nine end” junior match between two local clubs, a juniors versus adults, purposeful practice exercises.
3. A “bowls football” challenge match with club shirts (Manchester United, Liverpool, Chelsea, Tottenham, just to mention a few) can be very popular and bring with it colour and excitement. It is also worth inviting your local Short Mat Club along to set up a couple of mats on a rink so that the schools can appreciate how simple it is to play bowls in schools.
4. The “New Age Bowls” can also be demonstrated as this is another form of bowling that can easily be accommodated in school class rooms and halls.

An event like this does take some organising and will incur costs but if you go about setting it up properly, it is very likely that your CSP will assist you with some funding. It is worth talking through with them your ideas as they normally have excellent marketing support which they can offer you.

To complete the event and subject to the area that you aim to cover, various clubs and other organisations would probably be prepared to put on a small table display about their junior club activities. This type of event does have many benefits for the wider recruitment of people to play bowls and if you can get one or two of our “international stars” to come along, that all adds to the status of the event.

Do not forget to make your local media aware of what you are staging and talk to your local Mayors office and see if you can get their support.

Again gathering “feedback” is essential and it could be worthwhile assigning someone to specifically handle this not only when the event is on but by contacting people after the event.

Now to the important part – you must assess what you have or might have achieved and this assessment must be quite ruthless as decisions must be made if you are to gain anything from your work so far.

The PDM that you have worked with (there could of course be a number) is likely to have some valuable input to be offered so once you have made your assessment then arrange a “review” meeting. Out of this hopefully it will be possible for you to identify the next action to be taken. The school/s would probably like you to assist them in setting up Short Mat for them and your coaches can “train” the teaching staff to run some sessions. You may have recruited some more young people to come along to your junior session. It is always possible that ideas are put forward to run a “special” event again and cover a much wider area in which case some close liaison with other junior section administration would be very worthwhile.

Obviously to give a “finite” plan to suit all situations and all areas is quite impossible but by thinking along the lines that has already been covered should provide for some promotional activity to be undertaken.

### **Ongoing Support**

It is extremely important to appreciate that it is unlikely that any activities to promote the sport for schools is going to attract expenses and it is a grave mistake to think in terms of “sorting that out later”. Our sport has relied for far too long in expecting a limited number of people to dig continually into their own pockets to cover costs which should be dealt with in a more appropriate way.

The Government has provided very considerable funds to promote sport for young people and there is no reason why various sources of funding should not be investigated. Guidance from the PDM, CSP, etc should yield some help.

Mention was made earlier about resources and in particular coaches. Unfortunately this is very much a local issue to be addressed and is influenced by the people that are available and prepared to assist the schools. Under no circumstances attempt to do anything which will ultimately suffer by not being properly supported at all times. Quite often some very successful ventures have got “off of the ground” only to encounter problems later because the activity has depended upon one or two individuals.

It is therefore essential to speak with the coaching resource that you have available before you embark upon any of the promotional activities covered previously. It may be that before doing anything externally that some attention has to be given to the preparation and development of internal resources. This can take time and money.

We must not forget that “teachers” are trained people. They know how to deal with children in modern times and they understand present day learning styles. There is much to be gained by offering training to the teaching staff so that they can “instruct” pupils to play bowls. This arrangement works well in practice because it becomes a “two-way” learning process for everyone involved. This will assist with taking pressure off of coaching resources.

Take every opportunity to get the teaching staff to play and this is often initially achieved by holding a “social” couple of hours with them simply playing a “fun” game. They will quickly understand what is involved and soon appreciate the skills that must be developed if they and indeed the pupils are to become successful players.

These arrangements would apply to all aspects of bowls. Obviously if a school has Short Mat facilities then making the necessary arrangements might be quite easy whereas when indoor and outdoor facilities are required, there is the availability of rink space to bear in mind and of course the weather.



## **ACCREDITATION OF PERSONNEL**

Schools will be sensitive about this issue and it is quite right for them to be so.

There are two main aspects of accreditation that we need to consider as follows:

1. People being suitable to “Work with Children”.
2. People being “competent” to deliver training/coaching to children.

With regard to people being suitable to “Work with Children” the minimum requirement is that they have been subjected to a Criminal Records Bureau Enhanced Disclosure and often referred to as a CRB check.

Anyone who has been subjected to this process will have received a certificate. It is a bit like an MOT certificate on a vehicle in as much as it was a “look” at the facts concerning an individual at a set point in time. It is for this reason that generally certificates are NOT CONSIDERED TO BE PORTABLE DOCUMENTS.

In other words, because someone has a CRB certificate then they can simply walk into a new appointment or activity is simply NOT TRUE. It is a matter entirely for the “new employer” to decide if they will accept or otherwise, a current certificate.

The policy over these documents within the sport is clear in as much as certificates are “deemed” valid for three years from the date of issue. It is therefore important to appreciate that coaches and any others that you engage in your working with schools, are aware of when their CRB check is due for renewal and that six to eight weeks must be allowed for making a new application.

It must be understood that there are many policies on this topic practiced by Local Education Authorities, so ensure that you discuss the matter as a high priority issue with the schools concerned and then act accordingly. However in most instances and certainly initially, the school teaching staff will always be the “responsible” people involved with the delivery of a bowls session.

Please bear in mind that at the time of producing this guide, new legislation is about to come into being (12<sup>th</sup> October 2009) and referred to as ISA (Independent Safeguarding Authority). This in “simple” terms is a process to improve the monitoring of people who are unsuitable to work with children which no doubt our sport will welcome. However, the legislation will probably have some impact upon the sport in time. The EIBA is monitoring the situation and will issue specific information on this topic once a number of key issues have been clarified.

Now to consider those who will be working with schools and involved with bowling sessions:

We have in our sport the ENGLISH BOWLS COACHING SCHEME (EBCS) who are considered to be responsible to the NGB’s for training and accrediting of suitable people to deliver Instruction and Coaching with regard to our sport.

Schools will be keen to know something about the competence and experience of those who will be involved as Instructors and Coaches engaged to support the sessions. Make sure that you can offer a suitable portfolio of evidence to demonstrate the credibility of those who will be involved.

If you have identified any future plans for additional training for your people, make this known to the school and do not overlook that your CSP might be able to offer some support for your plans.

When you get involved with bowling sessions involving the schools, ensure that your people are conversant with all aspects of activities involving emergencies which could affect the children and of course themselves.

### **CLUB ACCREDITATION**

If you are intending to work with schools with the aim of improving participation in your club junior section, it will not be long before the schools concerned will be taking a keen interest in the "Quality of your Club". Without any doubt, they will be thinking of your club becoming accredited under the Sport England Clubmark criteria.

This is an in-depth study of how you run your club based upon a compliance with critically defined standards.

It is a demanding process but the EIBA are keen to encourage as many clubs as possible, particularly those with junior sections, to achieve this accreditation. You should initially contact your County Sports Partnership for guidance.

Not all County Sports Partnerships are licensed at this time to award Clubmark but at present thirteen of the forty-nine are accredited with others are working towards obtaining their license. A full listing of County Sports Partnerships can be provided by the EIBA.

Work has already been started by the EIBA to produce a "Guide to Clubmark" for Affiliated clubs and this will be published in due course.

## **KEY POINTS TO BEAR IN MIND**

1. We must promote our sport to the schools – they will not simply take it because we are offering it.
2. Schools work within a clearly defined framework which is very linked to their ability to achieve their performance criteria which can influence the benefits that they stand to gain through funding channels – We MUST use their framework of operations.
3. The extent to which we as a sport can benefit from working with schools is quite significant but we must investigate fully on a “local” basis how all of the potential “partners” in an area can work together.
4. Creating a detailed PLAN for your project to work with schools is an essential first stage and must have involved all potential “partners” – remember Plan for Success, the failure to “plan” is likely to result in failure.
5. Do not attempt to make wide ranging plans to work with a school project until it can be shown that a small scale project actually has been proved to work satisfactorily for all concerned work.
6. Ensure that resources, both financial and human, are suitable and adequate to fulfil the needs of what you plan to do with schools.
7. Make sure that an in-depth appraisal is made of all that is undertaken. Remember that it is only by analysing what has or has not happened, can meaningful plans be adjusted as necessary.
8. Keeping all “partners” fully briefed on how the plans are progressing and ensure that where appropriate, they are keeping their resources briefed. This is particularly important where coaching resources are concerned. These people are vital to underpin what you are expecting to achieve.
9. As soon as it can be seen that your plans are starting to yield results, consider carefully what this might mean with regard for future planning needs.

**Remember that the EIBA Ltd considers that any work that you contemplate doing with regard to schools is important to the future development of the sport. If you have any problems that are not specifically covered by this Guide then please seek their help.**

**Project Committee  
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