



CLUB
MAITH

Developing & Sustaining Club - School Links





Introduction

The phrase “Club-School links” is a term often used in strategic documents, grant applications and general discussion within Sports Development/PE and School Sport and a phrase used in the both the Sports Council NI and Irish Sports Council and the national GAA. The phrase is becoming more common and there is a great need for schools and clubs to work more closely together – if only just in communication!

Many young people take part in school sport, but there are fewer who take part in activities outside of school. In addition, after they leave compulsory education most young people do not take part in any form of regular sport of physical activity at all. Establishing Club- School links gives young people the opportunity to continue participating in worthwhile sporting and physical activity throughout their lives. It allows youngsters to make the most of their experiences in both settings, to try out new sports, feel comfortable in a club setting and as a result makes them more likely to continue participating once they leave school.

Why should Clubs link to schools?

- Some schools don't even know what GAA clubs are in their area - personal contact is the best way to promote your club. Posters are not enough!
- Children are more likely to get involved if they know what they're dealing with– if they have already seen club coaches in the familiar surrounding of their school they are more likely to attend the club! (As they already know the coach!)
- Unless young people know where opportunities exist to take part in different Gaelic sports, they will never engage them.
- Schools and clubs can work together to promote opportunities for participating in Gaelic Games much more effectively.

Who should be involved?

- Children
- Parents
- School Staff
- Physical Education Staff/PE Co-ordinators

- Club Coaches
- Club Youth Officers
- Club School Liaison Officer
- Club Committee Members

What are the benefits of forming a Club-School Link?

Creating partnerships between schools and clubs helps to create continuity between the promotion of Gaelic sports in both the school and the club. Creating School-Club links can create the following benefits:

Club

- More young people involved in the club
- Increased participation levels in the club
- Opportunity to identify talent of the future
- Potential access to school facilities and equipment
- Raised profile of Gaelic Games in the Community
- Opening up club access to wider community
- Increase the potential to recruit new

- volunteers for coaching (parents)
- Pool of young leaders, coaches and officials of the future
- A familiar safe environment for the children

School

- More active, and ultimately healthier, pupils
- Raised profile within the community
- Increased funding opportunities
- Community Links – social benefits
- Pathways for sport – easy exit routes for children into ongoing involvement
- Increased standard in school teams due to increased coaching received by pupils
- Recognition as an institution that supports development beyond the school environment
- Support and assistance with extra curricular teams/activities

Young People

- Improved opportunities to access gaelic games in their local community
- Opportunity for their talent to be identified and nurtured



- Move confidently between school and club opportunity to develop coaching and leadership skills
- Understand how their experiences in school and at the club compliment each other
- Recognise how the GAA prepares them for their involvement in clubs at junior age and beyond
- Introduction to a healthy living agenda
- Choose a gaelic sport that are suited to them

How can School–Club Links Work?

What sort of things can you do to create a School-Club Link?

The following list highlights some of the things that you can do to create and develop a School–Club link.

However good communication between both parties is the main contributing factor for a good school club link!! The club should appoint a liaison who should identify a staff member to work with in promoting gaelic games.

Club

- Provide the school with information and promotional material about the club, establish a GAA notice board in the school that promotes club activities and events
- Assign a liaison contact to liaise with and provide info to the schools
- Run a competition at the school or between local feeder schools in the community
- Run a club open day/fun day at the club for the school
- Provide coaches to assist with the extra curricular clubs (even if it's just once per term)
- Link with the School's PE Co-ordinator
- Run a few coaching sessions on the school site during a term where the club goes to the school (familiar surroundings for the children) then after that the children attend the normal club night and venue. (They would have time to become familiar with the type of training and the coaches by then)
- Tell the schools about their pupil's achievements (e.g. in a school newsletter)
- Advise school of relevant events and activities that might attract youngsters to the club

- Provide officials for some school fixtures/ tournaments
- Make regular school visits (coaching)
- The school provides the club with letters of support for funding applications
- Actively promote the idea of a club member becoming a member of the Board of Governors
- School uses the club facilities for sports day or events.
- Invite local school staff and governors to club events

School

- Promote the Club within the school by highlighting and promoting upcoming matches and events.
- Provide facilities by offering the school site for the club to run sessions
- Nominate a club liaison representative to liaise with the club's schools liaison officer
- Distribute any promotional material that the clubs may have
- Invite club coaches to speak about their club in school assemblies/PTA meetings/ so that everyone is aware of what's on offer

- Dedicate a notice board of other point of information to the club
- Provide advice to pupils about getting involved
- Provide the club with letters of support for funding applications
- Regularly communicate local club opportunities and information to parents
- Encourage teachers to become qualified GAA Coaches

It would help initially if a meeting takes place between the school and club to develop an understanding of the club-school links programme and to provide a mutual commitment to the way forward and the development of the link

A programme of regular meetings between the school and club is a good way to review the effectiveness of the link

What makes a school – club link effective and successful?

When a school and sports club are working well together, they:



- Talk to each other regularly- Communication!
- Communicate well with young people and parents
- Respect each other
- Have a shared vision and approach
- Find ways of enabling young people to take part in club activities
- Agree expectations and goals
- Build on what young people learn in both settings
- Recognise, share and celebrate achievements
- Share and develop teaching and coaching expertise
- Share facilities, equipment and resources
- Understand the roles and responsibilities of other agencies that contribute to and support the school – club link

Who else can be involved/ assist with developing school – Club Links?

Other organisations in the community can also be of value to clubs. Each Local Council

has a Sports Development or Leisure Services Department, which houses a number of Sports Development Officers. These officers can support the club in a number of ways:

- Keeping clubs informed of wider sporting opportunities that are taking place locally
- Providing training opportunities for coaches, administrators and other club personnel
- Helping with applications for funding
- Creating links with schools
- Sourcing facilities or accessing time in facilities
- Linking with other sports and community programmes
- Supporting club promotions
- Helping in the writing of development plans

Additionally each County Board has Games Promotion Officers and Games Development Managers who are available to advise and support schools and clubs in forming new links and partnerships.

Five Easy Steps to Establishing Strong Club School Links

STEP 1:

Write a letter to the School Principal outlining the youth activities in the club. The Club Youth/Coaching Officer and Chairperson should hand deliver the letter to the school Principal and ask for a following up meeting with the Principal and PE co-ordinator.

STEP 2:

Meet the Principal and PE co-ordinator. Outline the clubs work in the community and highlight the youth and coaching programme. At the meeting, each party should agree appointed contacts from both the school and club. It would also be helpful if arrangements for promoting the club activities within the school were also agreed.

STEP 3:

Establish a club notice board in the school, which is updated by the Club Youth/Coaching Officer informing the children of the club activities and events. Also circulate monthly newsletter to the all the children to encourage them to become involved in the club.

STEP 4:

Host a schools go games blitz at the club pitch and hold a follow up event on a Saturday or Sunday morning. In addition, the club should offer the school use of its facilities for its community and sporting events.

STEP 5:

Build on the new partnership, both the club and school should link together on new projects and schemes that will encourage children to get involved in gaelic games!

Acknowledgements

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