Developing School Club Links

A Guidance Manual to Improve or Develop New School Club Links

GAA HANDBALL

Hundreds of thousands of children attend schools daily across Ireland, and thus it is an obvious location to introduce your sport to vast numbers of children by putting programs in place to encourage beginners to take up our sport of Handball.

By developing and sustaining an effective club school link, a GAA Handball club can successfully plan for both it's short and long term futures. Clubs who implement efficient and organized links with their local Primary and Secondary school will reap the long-term rewards by developing the next generation of members for their club. Numerous factors depend on its success, however the benefits can be vast for both club and school. This guide aims to show clubs how to get started with new links; provide idea's to reinvigorate existing links; and to highlight exemplary case studies of existing advanced school links of GAA Handball clubs.

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The Benefits of Developing a School Club Link

Handball Club:

- Increase the number of children playing Handball in your area, and increase your membership levels
- Opportunity for talent identification
- Increase adult membership in your club through raised awareness with parents and teachers
- Increase the pool of potential young volunteers, coaches and officials in the club
- Increase the profile of Handball in the community
- Potential access to school facilities, and school erecting Handball walls
- Opens up club access to the wider community
- Increase the potential to recruit new volunteers
- Raised profile of Handball in the community

School:

- Healthier and more active pupils
- School receives support with their extra curricular teams from experienced Handballers
- The standard of the school teams will be enriched due to improved coaching
- Successful participation in regional and national tournaments attracts recognition to the school
- Strong links can act as a recruitment tool to for prospective students
- School can formalize arrangements to use the Handball clubs facilities when desired for training purposes
- School provides pathways for pupils to play and maintain their involvement in sport outside of school hours
- Increased funding opportunities and financial support from the Handball club to promote the game

Developing School Club Links

A 5 Step Guide…….

Step 1

IDENTIFY YOUR SCHOOLS LIAISON OFFICER

Identify a member from your club to act as your Schools Liaison Officer. This person will provide the personal contact with the schools and pupils and thus is pivotal to the success of the link. Selection of the Liaison Officer should consider the persons availability and communication skills, and should not be made on a whim.

Step 2

IDENTIFY YOUR SCHOOLS

Identify schools in your local area to target. Schools close to the local Handball facilities, have a tradition of Handball, or have a teacher interested/involved in the sport are recommended targets, if such targets exist.

Step 3

DEVELOP YOUR OFFER

Before you approach your school, it is important to consider what you can offer, and your long-term plan for the link. Various schools may require different approaches according to their current stages of development. Ideas to include as part of your School Club link can be found in the 'Think Tank' on Page 7.

Step 4

INITIAL CONTACT WITH SCHOOL

Due to the competitiveness between all the different sporting organizations competing to get into the schools, it is crucial to be professional and make a good first impression. Making initial contact in writing, detailing your offer, and enquiring about a meeting can be useful. Establishing suitable points of contact, i.e. Head of PE or a teacher with an interest in the game is vital.

Step 5

BEGIN THE LINK……AND ALWAYS REVIEW IT

If the school accepts your offer, cooperate with your point of contact and if needed, tailor your plan taking into account their recommendations. It is important to establish what support the school needs. After this it is time to get started!

Always review your structures and plans after every programme delivered. This is imperative to the long-term success of the link.

Levels of School Club Link

As previously stated, each schools link must be individually tailored depending on the needs of the school, and the level of support both the Handball club and Schools Liaison officer can dedicate. Although the varying levels detailed below are not set in stone, they can provide a template for clubs to consider when trying to establish an effective School Club link.

Fundamental

- Establish a named point of contact between the school and Handball club
- Club supplies School with posters and flyers of upcoming events
- Coordinate an annual Fun/Taster Day in the school

Intermediate

- Establish a named point of contact between the school and Handball club
- Club supplies School with posters and flyers of upcoming events
- Coordinate an annual Fun/Taster Day in the school
- Coordinate a programme of Handball delivery in the school, e.g. Lunchtime or After School Leagues or Coaching
- School runs regular internal Handball tournaments

Advanced

- Establish a named point of contact between the school and Handball club
- Club supplies School with posters and flyers of upcoming events.
- School notice boards regularly updated with coaching times at the local Handball club
- Coordinate annual Fun/Taster Day in the school
- Coordinate a programme of Handball delivery in the school, e.g. Lunchtime or After School Leagues or Coaching
- School runs regular internal year group tournaments
- School takes part in regional and national tournaments
- Teachers in the school attend Fundamental Handball Coaching Courses

The 'Think Tank'

The 'Think Tank' provides your club with an array of ideas and concepts to incorporate into your School Club link plan to help strengthen its overall

1) Taster Sessions

Taster Days are fantastic opportunities to introduce Handball to large class numbers, and hopefully attract new players. Sessions should be short, fun and totally games based to ensure the child gets as much enjoyment as possible.

2) Lunchtime Leagues/Coaching

Lunchtime provides a perfect opportunity each day to get children playing Handball. Why not run a lunchtime league, held over each lunchtime for a short period of time. Or have coaching during this period, possibly having set days for different year group and sexes.

3) Curriculum Coaching

Curriculum Coaching provides the opportunity to coach Handball to large class numbers during their PE Lessons. The Handball club can provide a qualified coach who can deliver sessions on a weekly basis, with the PE teacher observing their drills and techniques for which they can replicate in future lessons.

4) After School Clubs

After School clubs allow children interested in the game an opportunity to play regularly in an extra curricular context. Children may not be ready to join a Handball club, but After School clubs allow children to progress their skills and develop a link with the Handball Club through the coaches.

5) Handball Club Open Nights

With an interest in the sport build up via the school, why not invite pupils and their parents to attend a Open Night at your Handball Club, and introduce them to existing young members. This will also enable the children to see and try out the various codes of Handball, of which they may not have experienced before.

6) School Handball Tournaments

Provide the pupils with a competitive outlet through Intra School Tournaments among year groups. Progress this by inviting neighboring schools for challenge tournaments, with schools taking it in turn to host.

Or why not enter you school in the regional and national School Handball Tournaments?

7) Student Coaching Courses

Student Courses are a perfect way to help develop Handball in the school. The older pupils in the school complete a 3-hour coaching course, after which they deliver 3 Handball sessions or tournaments to younger year groups in school in order to gain official certification from GAA Handball.

8) Teacher In-Services

Host a Teacher In-Service where the teachers are put through a Fundamental Handball Coaching Course, providing them with ideas and games to deliver Handball to large class numbers during PE Classes, and as part of the curriculum.

9) Notice Boards, Newsletters & Promotion

Promote the game and your club through various outlets in the school. Utilize the Noticeboards, and School Newsletters to get information to a wider audience, and to provide recognition to winners of local leagues and tournaments. This is also an ideal opportunity to provide player pathways and provide contact details and coaching times for the local Handball club.

For further information on developing your School Club Link, please contact

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CASE STUDY

St Coman's HC, Roscommon

Local Schools: Roscommon CBS, Convent of Mercy Secondary, Convent of Mercy PS, Roscommon CC, Scoil Mhuire Strokestown,

Interview With: Oisin Naughton (School Liason Officer of St Coman's HC)

How did the relationship come about?

The St Coman's Committee sat down last year to put a place in place, assign roles and targets. Several schools in the local vicinity were pinpointed as schools to focus our attentions on to get the programme started, Meetings were arranged with Principals and Heads of PE of these schools, were we presented our plans on developing the game in the school.

What does the relationship entail?

We are in regular contact, providing support where possible, and keep school notice boards up to date with all events and coaching in the Handball Club. We have a number of our top players in the club who come into the school yearly to deliver demonstrations to the new pupils and provide coaching sessions and fun taster days. A key aspect of the link is also to provide continuous coaching education for teachers, and the facilitation in development of in-house school facilities.

How positive is the relationship between club and schools?

We have a very positive relationship with all the schools, and the interest in the game as a result has grown significantly in the schools. Communication lines between both parties have improved, and due to the success of the first stage of our plan, we intend to expand out to a number of additional schools.

How has the relationship benefitted both parties?

The schools have seen the successful addition of a new sport being introduced to their pupils, whilst St Coman's have seen an increase in their membership numbers. The schools can avail of the St Coman's premises during all school times, receiving coaching from some of the top coaches in the club. Teachers in all schools have received Coach Education, whilst several schools have built Handball facilities. We ran our first Inter-School One-Wall Team Championships at the start of the year to great success. We had six schools competing, and previously unidentified talent shone on the day, which we hope to nurture and progress through to the 40x20 and 60x30 codes within the club.

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