

What now for school sport and PE: an update

Steve Grainger, chief executive of the Youth Sport Trust, provides *The Leisure Review* with an exclusive update on the current situation regarding government policy for school sport.

The months since the comprehensive spending review last October have been the toughest any of us working in school sport have faced in a long time. From the feeling of devastation when it was announced that all funding for school sport would be cut to a sense of hope in December when the government revealed a partial re-think and revised reinvestment, it has been a very challenging period.

I would like to thank everyone, from young people and parents to the general public and the media, who championed the importance of school sport and the success of school sport partnerships. I would also like to offer a special thank you to the network of those working in school sport whose passion and commitment has been uplifting during this period of huge uncertainty. All of these factors have, without question, been fundamental in helping the government recognise what school sport means to people and led to their decision to reinvest against a backdrop of unprecedented economic challenges.

The new commitment from the Department for Education (DfE) is to fund school sport partnerships until the end of this academic year and then invest £65 million over two years in 2011/12 and 2012/13 to pay for a PE teacher in every secondary school to be released from teaching one day a week to build on the work undertaken to date through the school sport co-ordinator role (SSCo). In addition to this, further funding from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department of Health was announced to ensure the local activation of the School Games and to support additional opportunities for the least active young people to get involved. The Youth Sport Trust is working with government on the plans for this and we are optimistic that local roles will be created and that opportunities will exist for some of the highly talented partnership development managers and competition managers to transition into these.

The Youth Sport Trust has been asked by the government to lead on the School Games and already things are moving at pace with the piloting of activity in nine areas. This four-tier structure of competitive opportunities has the goal of providing meaningful, regular intra-school competition in every school, progressing from this to a much broader and deeper programme of local inter-school competition, the culmination of which will be seen in an annual finals event at county/sub-regional level. This will all feed the performance structures of individual sports from where the most talented school-age youngsters will be identified to take part in a national high-profile event, building further on the successful UK School Games.

We were also delighted that the pre-Christmas announcement included plans to support the Youth Sport Trust to extend our Young Ambassador programme. This has been highly successful in illustrating the influence of young people and is a further opportunity to capitalise on the magic of London 2012 and to involve these young people in the development and organisation of school sport. Further welcome news was received with the prominent place given to physical education in the recent announcement by DfE about the review of the national curriculum. Confirmation that PE will remain a compulsory subject across all key stages will be warmly welcomed.

Our mission to create a PE and school sport system that is the envy of the world and which delivers the very best opportunities for our young people certainly took a severe knock towards the end of 2010. However,

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On a mission: creating a school sport system the world can envy

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our success to date has been achieved through our commitment to deliver positive experiences for young people and to demonstrate the difference that school sport makes to their lives. School sport is back on the agenda and our focus must now be on ensuring that we continue with this very important task, that we re-build and re-focus with the financial and human resource that is available and that we leave no one in any doubt about the impact that school sport has – on young people, their families and their schools.

The events of the last few months are a reminder to us all of the power of sport and when our core values of trust, integrity, responsibility and partnership working are brought to the fore anything is possible.

Read Steve Grainger's original article in the November issue of TLR.

The Leisure Review, February 2011

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