



DEVELOPING SCHOOL CLUB LINKS

A GUIDANCE MANUAL TO IMPROVE OR
DEVELOP NEW SCHOOL CLUB LINKS

GAA
HANDBALL





INTRODUCTION

Hundreds of thousands of children attend schools daily across Ireland, and therefore 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 its short and long term future.

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 making new links; provide ideas 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
- 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 for prospective students
- School can formalize arrangements to use the Handball clubs facilities for training purposes
- School provides pathways for pupils to play and maintain their involvement in sport outside of school hours
- Potential funding opportunities and financial support from the Handball club to promote the game
- Handball courts can be used in Community Projects to develop extended schools services in the community

DEVELOPING SCHOOL CLUB LINKS

»»» A FIVE 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. Such a person must be Garda /Police Vetted through the GAA, in compliance with the GAA's best practice.



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/PROPOSAL

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 10.

STEP

4

INITIAL CONTACT WITH SCHOOL

Due to the competitiveness between 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 proposal, 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 agrees with your proposal, 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 Handball events and coaching sessions
- School notice boards regularly updated with coaching times at the local Handball Club
- 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 Handball events and coaching sessions
- School notice boards regularly updated with coaching times at the local Handball Club
- Coordinate an annual Fun/Taster Day in the school
- School runs regular internal Handball tournaments
- Teachers attend a Teacher Inservice for Handball



Advanced

- Establish a named point of contact between the school and Handball club
- Club supplies School with posters and flyers of upcoming Handball events and coaching sessions
- 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 effectiveness.

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.





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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

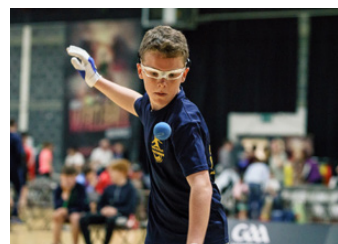
Handball Club Open Nights

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.



CASE STUDY



NAOMH ÉANNA HC, GLENGORMLEY, ANTRIM

Local Schools: Gaelscoil Éanna, Edmund Rice College, St. Malachy's College and St. Bernard's.

Interview With: Daniel McVicker, Handball Coordinator & Séamus Mac Domhnaill, Club Secretary, Naomh Éanna

How did the relationship come about?

In 2019, there was a rebirth of interest in Handball in Naomh Éanna. As a new club we knew from the start that a strong relationship with the schools would be pivotal to growing participation in the club and creating a tradition of handball. The key driver in developing a strong club handball relationship with schools was engaging with the Antrim GAA Handball Committee. Together we put a plan in place, assigned roles and agreed on priorities. Following meetings with Principals and Heads of PE at each of the schools we presented our plans on developing the game in the schools.

What does the relationship entail:

We worked closely with Antrim GAA Handball Committee in their work on the renovation of old outdoor courts in Edmund Rice College and St. Malachy's College. As part of GAA Handball's Schools 1-Wall Initiative we also marked out a new 1-Wall court at Gaelscoil Éanna and renovated two 1-Wall courts at Edmund Rice College. The schools have shown huge interest and the main focus has been on including teachers in training sessions and assisting them in developing their skills. Several teachers have since completed the GAA Handball Foundation Course.

How positive is the relationship between club and schools:

Naomh Éanna hosted a number of 1-Wall and 3-Wall competitions, with some of the country's top players participating. Teachers were invited to these competitions and it really was a catalyst for sparking their interest and creating a desire to develop handball in the school. In fact, the teachers at Edmund Rice College even organised a Teachers Tournament. As a result of the positive feedback from both the schools and our club, we will be moving forward at pace to replicate the success we have had to date with all of the feeder schools to our club. Of note, St. Bernard's primary school will soon have four new 1-Wall courts. Gaelscoil Éanna, which is on the club grounds will also be building a new school in the coming two years and plans have already been put in place to include a number of 1-Wall courts.

How has the relationship benefitted both parties?

The primary win is that the game of handball is growing considerably in the Glengormley area, both in terms of the numbers playing the game and its outreach to new audiences. This will clearly help our club membership grow and has done so already. Additionally, handball is a great complimentary sport to Gaelic Football, Hurling and Camogie and is already proving very popular amongst many of our players. The schools have found themselves a fantastic new physical activity option for PE lessons and afterschool clubs. Teachers have informed us that many pupils typically not engaged with sport or physical activity, are really embracing Handball, which is helping increase the confidence in sport.

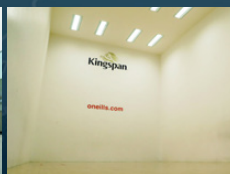


FIND YOUR NEAREST HANDBALL CLUB

WANT TO PLAY HANDBALL? FIND YOUR LOCAL GAA HANDBALL CLUB



CLUB NAME:



CLUB ADDRESS:



CONTACT NAME:



CONTACT NUMBER:

WWW.GAAHANDBALL.IE/CLUBZONE

