

**An Evaluation of the School Sport Co-ordinator
Programme in Scotland**
Research Digest no. 91

*A research study for **sportscotland**
by*

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1 Aims and Objectives of the Research Study

This aim of the study was to assist **sportscotland** to make decisions about the future direction of the School Sport Co-ordinator Programme (SSCP) by collecting information on its impact, various aspects of its operation and the extent to which School Sport Co-ordinators (SSCs) have been able to fulfil their remit and identify any obstacles to the development of the SSCP.

2 Research Approach

The research approach had four components:

- A postal survey of all current SSCs.
- Interviews with representatives from the Scottish Association of Directors of Leisure Services (SADLS), the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) and the Scottish Executive.
- Group discussions and interviews with SSCs from four local authorities.
- Case studies of eight schools (interviews with SSCs and head teachers).

3 School Sport Co-ordinators and their Schools

3.1 Length of Time in Post

- SSCs had been in post for varying period of time. Almost one third (30%) were in post for between 30-36 months, while a quarter (26%) had been in post for less than a year.

3.2 Professional Status of SSCs

- Ninety per cent of SSCs were PE teachers. Of the qualified teachers, 59 per cent were in non-promoted posts, 21 per cent were principal teachers and 14 per cent were senior teachers/assistant principal teachers.

3.3 Size of Schools

- There was wide variation in the size of the SSCs' schools. Almost half (47%) had a school roll of 801-1200, about one third worked in schools with school rolls of between 401 and 800, with 12 per cent with 400 or less.

3.4 Sports Facilities at the Schools

- Almost all schools had some form of indoor sports facilities (99%) and 58 per cent regarded them as 'excellent/good'.

- Ninety-five per cent had outdoor facilities, but only 45 per cent regarded them as 'excellent/good'
- Just under one-half (48%) of schools had a swimming pool, with two thirds (66%) rating them 'excellent/good'.

4 Impact of the SSCP on the Quality of Extended Curricular Sport

4.1 Quality of Extended Curricular Sports Provision

- Nearly all (97%) SSCs indicated that the quality of the extended curricular sports programme had improved since they had taken up their post.
- Coaching has experienced the greatest overall improvement, accounting for 56 per cent of reported improvements. In 12 out of the 14 most participated sports, more than 70 per cent of those perceiving improvement nominated coaching.
- Equipment is the second most frequent area of improved quality, accounting for 36 per cent of improvements.
- Facilities had the lowest level of improvements, accounting for only eight per cent of improvements reported.

5 Factors Influencing Extended Curricular Sport Provision

5.1 Deciding on the Nature of the Programme

- Eighty-five of SSCs based some of their programme on existing staff expertise; 72 per cent used personal judgement; 63 per cent consulted with other staff; 49 per cent surveyed pupils and 36 per cent met with pupils.
- Pupils were rarely involved in the organisation and delivery of sessions.
- SSCs were strongly in favour of autonomy in interpreting the aims of the SSCP to reflect local circumstances.
- There was substantial variation between the four case study authorities in their approach to the strategic management of the SSCP.

5.2 Payment by Pupils

- In only four per cent of schools did pupils pay towards the cost of all extended curricular sports activity, although nearly half (48%) pay for some activities.
- Some school senior management teams were meeting the costs of travel.

5.3 Obtaining Additional Resources

- Over three-quarters (79%) of respondents had managed to obtain additional resources for their programmes.
- The resources were: volunteer coaches (66%); resources from school (53%); free or reduced costs access to facilities (37%); donations of equipment (24%); and commercial sponsorship (22%).

5.4 The Degree of Support Received from Various Partners

- Ninety-five per cent of SSCs described head teachers' support as 'good/OK'.
- Of the 95 per who received support from local authority sports development officers, 87 per cent rated this support as 'good/OK'.
- Where local coaches were used, 86 per cent rated them as 'good/OK'.
- Where relevant, 89 per cent rated support from **sportscotland** as 'good/OK'.
- Where relevant, support from local education authority advisors was rated as 'good/OK' by 79 per cent of SSCs.
- Only two thirds (67%) regarded the support from other teachers as 'good/OK'.

6 Factors Affecting the Recruitment of Teachers, Parents and Community Coaches

- Three-quarters of SSCs had experienced difficulty recruiting school teachers (non-PE).
- Sixty per cent of SSCs experienced difficulty recruiting parents, while some were concerned about parental values and attitudes.
- A third experienced difficulties recruiting PE teachers and community coaches.
- Only one fifth experienced difficulty with local authority support services.
- Input by local and national sport development officers was highly valued.

7 Participation and Associated Factors

7.1 Participation in Extended Curricular Sport

- SSCs claimed varying levels of participation. About half (47%) claimed up to one in five pupils taking part in SSCP, with 22 per cent claiming between 31 and 50 per cent of pupils participated in extended curricular sport.
- Smaller schools reported higher participation than larger schools.

- Over two thirds (69%) of respondents referred to the lack of commitment of pupils as a constraint on development. SSCs found it consistently more difficult to attract girls into extended curricular sport.
- Boys were relatively uncritical in their desire to participate in extended curricular sport.
- Most pupils preferred to take part for fun and preferred competitions or sports festivals, raising important questions about monitoring of the *standards of performance*.
- SSCs indicated they would benefit from training and the sharing of best practice.

7.2 Factors Affecting the Potential to Increase the Number of Participants in Extended Curricular Sport

SSCs were asked to identify factors affecting their ability to increase participation in extended curricular sport:

- The main perceived constraints were lack of involvement of teachers (84% of respondents) and lack of commitment of pupils (69%).
- A general *lack of funding* constrained development, including funding for: coaches (51%), travel (47%), staff training (36%), facility use (32%) and equipment (29%).
- *Lack of access* to sports facilities (50%) - outdoor and indoor facilities (both 48%).
- *SSCs' own working conditions* were viewed as a constraint. Nearly half referred to their work patterns and 46 per cent needed more time for their duties.
- *Involving others* was also an issue: parents (48%), coaches (36%), PE teachers (32%).

8 SSCs' Role and the Extent to which their Remit is Fulfilled

8.1 Time Committed to the SSCP

- Forty-two per cent of SSCs indicated they worked for the contracted time, while about one third (31%) work more than this. Twenty-seven per cent work less than one teaching day in their SSC role.
- A quarter (25%) of respondents spent six hours or more per week coaching on their programme and a third (31%) committed between 3.5 and 5.5 hours.

8.2 Proportion of Time Spent on Different Aspects of Remit

- On average, 60 per cent of SSCs' time is spent on the core organisational tasks associated with establishing and running the extended curricular sport programme.
- Less time is allocated to developing the broader aspects of the SSCP – working with feeder primary schools (11% of their time), creating links between schools and clubs (7%) and working with community clubs (5%).

8.3 Extent to which Areas within Remit have been Fulfilled

SSCs were asked to indicate to what extent they had fulfilled the seven main functions of a co-ordinator:

- *Co-ordinating extended curricular activities:* Half the SSCs indicated they had 'fully' fulfilled this aspect of their remit, while another 40 per cent had 'mostly' fulfilled this aspect of their remit. Those longest in post were more likely to have done so.
- *Monitoring levels of participation:* Thirty-eight per cent indicated they had 'fully' addressed this issue, 39 per cent 'mostly' and 21 per cent 'partially'.
- *Work with feeder primary schools:* One in five (20%) had 'fully' fulfilled this requirement, 17 per cent 'mostly' 41 per cent 'partially', 21 per cent 'not at all'. Time in post does not increase the extent to which this work is undertaken
- *Work with other organisations:* Only 13 per cent had 'fully' addressed this issue, with 41 per cent 'mostly' having done so.
- *Work closely with community clubs:* One third (32%) have 'not' addressed this issue, with 50 per cent only 'partially' doing so.
- *Create links between school and clubs:* Five per cent have 'fully' established links, one third (30%) 'mostly', 53 per cent 'partially', and 12 per cent 'not at all'.
- *Recruit, support and develop teachers, coaches and leaders:* Only seven per cent have been 'fully' successful in recruiting volunteers, 28 per cent have been 'mostly' successful, 59 per cent 'partially'. This was found to be a widespread and difficult issue irrespective of time in post.

9 The Perceived Effects of Participation on Pupils

9.1 Nature and Extent of Impacts

School Sport Co-ordinators (SSCs) were asked to what extent they agreed/disagreed with statements about the perceived benefits of the SSCP:

- Nearly two thirds of SSCs (63%) 'strongly agreed' that participation in extended curricular sport *leads to a general improvement of pupil-teacher relationships.*

- Forty-six per cent 'strongly agreed' that participation *leads to increased self-confidence among pupils* - 48 per cent 'agreed'.
- Thirty-five per cent of SSCs 'strongly agreed' that participation *leads to a greater involvement in the general life of the school*. A further 51 per cent 'agreed'.
- Thirty-five per cent 'strongly agreed' that participation *leads to increased enthusiasm for PE* - 50 per cent 'agreed'.
- Only 16 per cent of SSCs 'strongly agreed' that participation in extended curricular sport *leads to an improvement in general behaviour in school* – a further 60 per cent 'agreed'.

10 Conclusions

10.1 Enhancing the Range and Quality of Current Extended Curricular Sporting Provision.

10.1.1 Successes

- The SSCP has been broadly successful in increasing the range and quality of current extended curricular sporting provision, especially in the area of coaching.
- There was widespread support for the continuation of the SSCP, with concern that cessation of funding would lead to the collapse or reduction in scope of the programme.

10.1.2 Constraints on development

The following constraints to the development of extended curricular sport were identified:

- Difficulties in developing the *volunteer infrastructure* places limits on the evolution (and sustainability) of the SSCP.
- There is a limited level of support from other teachers and SSCs were unsure how this could be addressed.
- SSCs experienced problems recruiting (and paying) relevant coaches.
- Some SSCs held ambivalent attitudes towards the recruitment of parents to lead extended curricular sport activities.
- There is a need to acknowledge the limitations of the strategy of 'volunteerism', with a need for a more co-ordinated and integrated model of development between schools and local authority services.
- A lack of pupil commitment was regarded as a major constraint on the development of the SSCP.

- Assumptions about ‘constrained demand’ need questioned if realistic participation targets are to be set. SSCs need to consider the ‘relevance’ of current provision (including involving pupils in delivery).

10.2 School Size and Resources

- SSCs rejected funding for schools on basis of proportions of pupils taking part and/or teacher involvement.
- There is a case for differential funding related to school size.

10.3 Careers and the Continuity of SSCP

- Evidence suggests that many SSCs do not regard this role a long-term career option and there is a need for *succession planning*.
- There was little evidence to suggest that schools or authorities had addressed the issue of an *exit strategy*.

10.4 Training and Sharing of Best Practice

- There is a need for training to share best practice and address common problems.
- In Phase 2 of the SSCP, there is a need for a systematic analysis of each school’s strengths and weaknesses and an agreed programme to address specific issues.

10.5 Influencing and Assisting the Development of Sport within the Wider Community.

- If the current strategic aims of the SSCP are to be maintained, SSCs need to commit time to creating links between schools and clubs, working with community clubs and associated primary schools.

10.6 Monitoring and Evaluation

- There is a need for improved and robust monitoring and evaluation to address issues of efficiency, effectiveness and assist SSCs to achieve the strategic aims of the SSCP.
- Given the emphasis of festivals and participation, it will prove very difficult to monitor pupils’ standards of performance, especially in larger programmes.
- To measure increases in the *quality* of opportunity and experience some guidance is required.

