

The Philosophy of Coaching at Abberley Hall

Skills based coaching that is tailored to the individual to improve the performance of the team

The basis of this paper is to attempt to foster the belief in a system of corporate collectiveness at Abberley Hall on the games field.

Abberley Hall punches well above its weight in most sports. In order for us to deliver a professional and effective Games' Programme, we need to have a corporate strategy. This may not make itself apparent in the short term, but the long term results will be higher levels of quality all round.

The idea of a Preparatory School is in the name – we are entrusted to prepare our children for the challenges ahead. Thus we are aiming to provide our children with the attributes to succeed in sport at the next level. Each session spent developing core skills for sport is putting in place the building blocks that the child can develop from when they move to the senior school of their choice. If we concentrate on teaching each child the core skills, they will learn to appreciate the sport more clearly than if they are taught to win or lose. Repetition of core skills is crucial in developing good practice.

It is important that we look at improving the techniques of the individual athlete rather than the performance of the team if we are to analyse the true worth of our coaching. So, sessions should be planned with the individual athlete in mind.

For example – dribbling skills in football and hockey are more important than team shape.

In working on the individual athlete, it is important to allow them to take responsibility for their development and the understanding of the game they are playing. Therefore, decision making in game-play situations must be emphasized from a young age.

School matches are just another session in which to look at the individual development of the children. The performance is more important than the match result. It is not in anyone's best interests to look at the Win / Loss column at the end of the season and judge the success of the coach or the players on that alone. However, having said that, results will improve as the children become more skilful and more aware of their skills.

Communication with each child is vital to their improvement. Each child should have some individual input each week as well as personal areas to work on. Strengths should be indicated and weaknesses addressed through discussion. These discussions don't need to happen just on the games pitches. **It is our responsibility to encourage a culture of discussion with the children that is open and accountable.**

Planning

In order for the children to reap the benefits of this system, planning must look at long-term strategy as well as short term strategy.

Long Term Planning – Strategy Direction Planning

In order for the coaches to benefit from the corporate strategy, there needs to be in place certain actions that make the coaching on the field easier to implement.

Each major game should have a Programme of Study that will direct the coaches as to what is expected to be covered by the children in their time in that age category. This should be written and reviewed by the Head of each individual sport:

Hockey: Clare Eynon

Rugby: Nigel Richardson

Cross Country: Nigel Richardson

Netball: Josephine Parkinson / Vanessa Beer

Football: Jon Farrer

Rounders: Josephine Parkinson

Cricket: Alastair Wilkes

Athletics: Nigel Richardson / Matt Bennett-Tomlin

Swimming: Michelle Hayward

Medium Term Planning – Basic Season Planning

In the long term plan, we need to take into consideration the age and experience of the children and then develop the Programme of Study that can cover the whole term's work. This is not meant to be a prescriptive document that is adhered to, to the letter – rather an overview of what skills the children need to be exposed to during the course of the season.

Coaches need to understand the individual techniques that we view as important for each specific sport. These skills will need to be assessed. This assessment should then be used to create coaching sessions geared to improving the individual.

Session planning may take into account the recent performances on the pitch of the children, but should not be based around any deficits in play. This would be reactive coaching, and will only succeed in 'papering over cracks' as the season progresses.

Proactive coaching would see the direction of the season progress through skills based activities that are planned out in advance.

Short term Planning – Basic Session Planning

It is not essential that coaches have written plans for sport sessions – this places pressure on coaches after a long day in the classroom. Individuals will plan in any way that they see is fit. However, the idea that coaches should have an outline plan of how the session is to run is important so that the skills can be implemented.

For sessions to be truly useful, they should not be more than 70 minutes in length. The key to the sessions is to be focusing clearly on quality not quantity. There should be a core aim in each session that should involve improving the individuals.

Individual sessions can often be split into three different criteria:

Coaching

This is the area where development of the skilled athlete is paramount. We are looking at improving the individual techniques of the athletes, through activities designed to challenge an individual's proficiency. This is intrinsic to all other sessions of Games and should be used in the majority of sessions.

Training

In this section we are training the athletes to compete, either individually or with team-mates. This will involve small sided games with a particular emphasis.

Selection

In this section of the session, we are attempting to place the athletes in the correct group / team for matches. This will involve core activities for teams, such as tactics and team-play and mixed ability games for the major team sports.

The emphasis on these three areas will change in relation to what is approaching in terms of competitions and fixtures coming up. As a guide, we should look at:

Coaching – 60%

Training – 25%

Selection – 15%

Coaches Code for Sport at Abberley Hall School

The Coaches

- We will always look and act like a coach.
- We will plan our season.
- We will plan our sessions.
- We will work on developing the individual's ability as multi-skilled practitioners.
- We will encourage sportsmanship.
- We will develop character.
- We will encourage the players to take responsibility.
- We will stay up to date with the laws of the games played.
- We will stay up to date with coaching information and techniques.
- We will help each other as coaches.
- We will learn from each other and from the players.
- We will work in a safe environment for our players.
- We will not play injured players.
- We will not get angry at players mistakes – they are not intentional.
- We will not allow fixtures to dominate the season.
- We will ensure that selection is transparent and progressive.
- We will remember that sport is for everyone, not just the star players.
- We will tell the players that winning and losing are only by-products of the performance.
- We will keep winning and losing in perspective.