

ESFA



English Schools' FA Champions Cup Guide Season 2021-2022



ESFA

CHAMPIONS
CUP



www.schoolsfootball.org

 @SchoolsFootball

 @SchoolsFootball

 www.facebook.com/SchoolsFootball

 www.youtube.com/ESFATV



INTRODUCTION

The ESFA is delighted to introduce the 'Champions Cup' which is a Champions League style competition with a group phase leading into a knockout section creating more opportunities for representative footballers to play throughout the season. Supported by the Player Passport, a fee-paying registration scheme which brings perks for the payer as well as the player, the ESFA Champions Cup will be the overarching brand for a new set of competitions for District SFAs and County SFAs, underpinned by commercial re-branding and investment funded by the Player Passport Scheme.

THE COMPETITIONS WILL BE RUN AT THE FOLLOWING AGE BANDS

District Boys' Cup	District Girls' Cup	County Boys' Cup	County Girls' Cup
Under 12 (Year 7 only)*	Under 12 (Year 7 only)*	Under 14 (Year 9 only)	Under 14 (Years 8 & 9 only)
Under 13 (Year 8 only)	Under 13 (Year 8 only)**	Under 16 (Year 11 only)	Under 16 (Years 10 & 11 only)
Under 14 (Year 9 only)		Under 18 (Years 12 & 13 only)	Under 18 (Years 12 & 13 only) From 23/24
Under 15 (Year 10 only)			

* Under 12 competitions will be contested using the 9v9 format

** Under 13 Girls District Cup will commence from Season 2022/23 and the age groups will roll up thereafter

FORMAT AND OVERVIEW

Group Phase: This section of the competition is based on a League format. In the Inter-County Cups, teams will be drawn into groups of 4 teams, but the number of entries may dictate that some groups of 5 teams will be required. In the Inter-District Cups, teams to be drawn into groups of up to 5 teams (subject to demand) with each team playing each other once in the group phase (for example; 16 groups x 5 teams or in the event of more than 80 teams applying to enter, some groups may contain 6 teams). Groups may be drawn geographically wider than the "usual" ESFA regions depending on entries. In the group phase a win will gain 3 points a draw will gain 1 point and a defeat will gain 0 points. The highest ranked team in each league will be determined using the following:

1. Points
2. Goal Difference
3. Goals Scored
4. Head to head result
5. Play-off match if required to determine if a team qualifies for the Champions Cup or Champions Plate

The winners and runners-up of the group phase will qualify to compete in the 'Champions Cup' and those teams finishing in 3rd, 4th and 5th (and in some cases 6th where demand allows) will be entered into a 'Plate' competition. Final league tables will be calculated on Monday 13 December 2021 (except the Inter County Girls' Cups which will be calculated on Monday 14 February 2022). Both categories of the Champions Cup and the Champions Plate will become a knockout competition after the conclusion of the group phase. Games not played by the completion date of the group phase will be declared null and void.

CHAMPIONS CUP GUIDE



EXAMPLE:

Middlesbrough and Sunderland will qualify for the 'Champions Cup' Knockout Phase

GROUP A	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
Middlesbrough	4	2	1	1	7	5	2	7
Sunderland	4	2	1	1	8	7	1	7
Chester-le-Street	4	2	0	2	9	9	0	6
Newcastle	4	1	2	1	9	8	1	5
Stockton	4	1	0	3	9	12	-3	3

Chester-le-Street, Newcastle and Stockton qualify to compete in the 'Champions Plate' Knockout Phase

Knockout Phase: From this point onwards, matches will take place on the cup-tie principle, using extra time and penalties, if necessary, to determine which team progresses to the next round.

DATE STRUCTURE

October - December 2021
Group Phase*

January -April 2022
Knockout Phase

May / June 2022
National Final
To be arranged by ESFA
to take place during
May, June or July

*Girls' Inter-County Group phase may end on Saturday 12 February due to restrictions with RTC Open Weekend dates.

The date structure for the group phase and knockout phase has been sent to Association Secretaries and is also published on the ESFA website.

Please note: The ESFA reserves the right to adjust the number of games that may be required in the League and Knockout phase in order to conclude the competition. This will be dependent upon the number of entries received for each competition.

ESFA
CHAMPIONS
CUP

#ChampionsCup

CHAMPIONS CUP GUIDE



MATCH ARRANGEMENTS

After the closing date for registering team entries for the subsequent season, the ESFA shall arrange for the draw of fixtures. The first Association drawn shall be regarded as the home team and will secure an appropriate venue to host the fixture in accord with ESFA rules and guidelines.

Matches will take place on the published play-on date, unless a mutually convenient date is agreed by both teams for the match to take place during the week leading up to the play-on date and playing the fixture early does not disrupt any other local competition fixtures.

In order for this to happen, permission must be obtained from ESFA before proceeding with any match arrangements. Failure to fulfil the fixture will result in the offending team losing the points and may be disqualified from the competition. No match shall be permitted to go beyond the play-on date, unless the fixture is postponed due to inclement weather (in accordance with ESFA policy for postponing fixtures). Inclement weather will be the only acceptable reason for postponing a fixture. Postponed fixtures will be played as directed by the ESFA.

In the event of an Association team withdrawing from the competition after the publication of fixtures, the offending Association shall pay a withdrawal fee of £100 and all results of that team shall be expunged from the competition.

REPORTING FIXTURE DATES & RESULTS

The home team will be required to report all fixture dates, venues and kick-off times on the ESFA portal prior to the match taking place. Once the match has been completed, the competing teams must report the final score via the ESFA portal, promptly after each match.

E S F A

CHAMPIONS
CUP

#ChampionsCup

RULE SUMMARY

A more detailed version of the rules is attached with this document, but for your convenience, here are some important matters to note:

INTER-DISTRICT COMPETITIONS

	BOYS						GIRLS
	U12	U13	U14	U15	U16	U18	U12
Format	9v9	11v11	11v11	11v11	11v11	11v11	9v9
Match Duration	2 x 30 mins	2 x 35 mins	2 x 35 mins	2 x 40 mins	2 x 40 mins	2 x 45 mins	2 x 30 mins
Extra Time (knockout phase only)	2 x 7 mins	2 x 7 mins	2 x 10 mins	2 x 10 mins	2 x 10 mins	2 x 10 mins	2 x 7 mins
Penalties (no replays in the knockout phase only)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Size of Match Ball (teams can mutually agree to use size 5)	4	4	4	5	5	5	4
Number of Substitutes / Substitutions (R = Repeated subs are permitted)	5 (R)	5 (R)	5 (R)	5 (R)	5 (R)	5 (R)	5 (R)
Substitutes:	5 named players are permitted to be named as substitute. Repeated subs are allowed.						
Facilities:	All matches are played on grass or 3G and 4G pitches where the 'home' team gives sufficient notice to the 'visiting' team and the venue holds a valid test certificate and appears on The FA's National FTP Register http://3g.thefa.me.uk/ . Teams are not permitted to play fixtures on sand based AstroTurf pitches.						
Finance:	The ESFA is unable to provide any financial assistance towards travel or accommodation in any round of these competitions						

INTER-COUNTY COMPETITIONS

	BOYS			GIRLS	
	U14	U16	U18	U14	U16
Format	11v11	11v11	11v11	11v11	11v11
Match Duration	2 x 35 mins	2 x 40 mins	2 x 45 mins	2 x 35 mins	2 x 40 mins
Extra Time (knockout phase only)	2 x 10 mins	2 x 10 mins	2 x 10 mins	2 x 10 mins	2 x 10 mins
Penalties (no replays in the knockout phase only)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Size of Match Ball (teams can mutually agree to use size 5)	4	5	5	4	5
Number of Substitutes / Substitutions (R = Repeated subs are permitted)	5 (R)	5 (R)	5 (R)	5 (R)	5 (R)
Substitutes:	5 named players are permitted to be named as substitute. Repeated subs are allowed.				
Facilities:	All matches are played on grass or 3G and 4G pitches where the 'home' team gives sufficient notice to the 'visiting' team and the venue holds a valid test certificate and appears on The FA's National FTP Register - http://3g.thefa.me.uk/ . Teams are not permitted to play fixtures on sand-based AstroTurf pitches.				
Finance:	The ESFA is unable to provide any financial assistance towards travel or accommodation in any round of these competitions.				

CHAMPIONS CUP GUIDE



PLAYER AGE AND ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Inter-District Competitions

Only bona-fide scholars receiving full-time education in accordance with the Education Acts, who are on the role of a school or college, which holds a current and valid DFE Unique Reference Number (URN), in affiliated membership with the local District Schools' FA, shall be eligible to participate in this competition.

U12 Boys:

Students over the age of 11 years and under the age of 12 years at midnight between the previous 31st August and 1st September shall be allowed to take part in the competition (Year 7 only).

U13 Boys:

Students over the age of 12 years and under the age of 13 years at midnight between the previous 31st August and 1st September shall be allowed to take part in the competition (Year 8 only).

U14 Boys:

Students over the age of 13 years and under the age of 14 years at midnight between the previous 31st August and 1st September shall be allowed to take part in the competition (Year 9 only).

U15 Boys:

Students over the age of 14 years and under the age of 15 years at midnight between the previous 31st August and 1st September shall be allowed to take part in the competition (Year 10 only).

U12 Girls:

Girls over the age of 11 years and under the age of 12 years at midnight between the previous 31st August and 1st September shall be allowed to take part in this competition (Year 7 only).

U13 Girls (Season 2022-2023):

Girls over the age of 12 years and under the age of 13 years at midnight between the previous 31st August and 1st September shall be allowed to take part in this competition (Year 8 only).

ESFA

CHAMPIONS
CUP

#ChampionsCup

CHAMPIONS CUP GUIDE



INTER-COUNTY COMPETITIONS

Only bona-fide scholars receiving full-time education in accordance with the Education Acts, who are on the role of a school or college, which holds a current and valid DFE Unique Reference Number (URN), in affiliated membership with the County Schools' FA, shall be eligible to participate in this competition.

U14 Boys:

Students over the age of 13 years and under the age of 14 years at midnight between the previous 31st August and 1st September shall be allowed to take part in the competition (Year 9 only).

U16 Boys:

Students over the age of 15 years and under the age of 16 years at midnight between the previous 31st August and 1st September shall be allowed to take part in the competition (Year 11 only).

U18 Boys:

Students over the age of 16 years and under the age of 18 years at midnight between the previous 31st August and 1st September shall be allowed to take part in the competition (Year 12 & 13 only).

U14 Girls:

Girls over the age of 12 years and under the age of 14 years at midnight between the previous 31st August and 1st September shall be allowed to take part in this competition (Year 8 and 9 only).

U16 Girls:

Girls over the age of 14 years and under the age of 16 years at midnight between the previous 31st August and 1st September shall be allowed to take part in this competition (Year 8 and 9 only).

U18 Girls (Season 2023-2024):

Students over the age of 16 years and under the age of 18 years at midnight between the previous 31st August and 1st September shall be allowed to take part in the competition (Year 12 & 13 only).

Please note, girls are permitted to play in mixed football matches up to and including the Under 18 age group in accord with FA rules. Boys are not eligible to participate in the Girls' Competition as those competitions are specifically for the development of girls' football.

If the ESFA has any doubt over the eligibility of any player taking part in a competition, it shall have the power to call upon the player's Association to which he or she belongs to prove that he or she is eligible according to the rules, and failing satisfactory proof, the offending Association may be disqualified from the competition and / or have points deducted.

CHAMPIONS CUP GUIDE



FEATURES OF THE “PLAYER PASSPORT”

The Player Passport will be an online registration system, accessible by computer or mobile phone, with the functionality to confidentially hold player details, make online payments, hold player performance stats (should Associations wish to utilise this function) and to provide squad lists, team sheets and to submit scores throughout the competition.

Once an Association has indicated to a player that they have been selected for one of its representative teams, players will register for a Player Passport by providing some personal details online and paying the annual fee – this will be £25 in Season 2021-22, rising to £40 thereafter. Once registration is complete, the Association will be able to select that player for the next round of games in the national competition, assuming (s)he is eligible to play for the association which has selected the player. The system will check player eligibility by geography (checking that the player's school is in your District/County, as defined by the Association restructure process) and by institution (checking that the school or college appears on the DFE list of institutions funded as “schools” – i.e. the establishment holds a current and valid DFE Unique Reference Number). The system will also check age eligibility as competition entries are made.

Registering on the Player Passport will bring several benefits to the player and to the payer. For the player, first and foremost, the Player Passport provides increased opportunities to take part in representative football, if selected. This brings with it the insurance the ESFA provides for its representative game, and a number of other perks, which are being developed for both the player and the payer.

ESFA

CHAMPIONS
CUP

#ChampionsCup

PLAYER/PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to register the player. They will be required to provide their child's personal details and to give you permission to use the Player Passport for the purposes of organising representative football. They will only need to register once, upon selection for their first representative team: their registration will remain in the system for that year (subject to payment of the annual fee) so the actual registration process only needs to be completed once: the system will be able to pull through player details as they progress through the age groups, and from District to County.

It will be the responsibility of the parent/carer to pay the registration fee, or to arrange for a third party to make a payment on their behalf. The fee will be payable online, by card, by Apple Pay or by Android pay. The parent does not personally have to bear the cost – the payer can be anyone agreed by the parent, so a grandparent could pay, as could another family member, sponsor or school. There will be the means by which a family coping with financial hardship can pay a reduced fee.

It is the responsibility of the parent to keep the player's details up to date. Changes of address, contact details, school or other pertinent information must be made so that player data is accurate.

ASSOCIATION RESPONSIBILITIES REGARDING PLAYER PASSPORT

The County or Local Association's responsibility for Player Passport is four-fold:

1. To advise parents/carers and players about the requirement to register on the Player Passport;
2. To select only those players who are appropriately registered;
3. To make the squad list/team sheet visible to your opposition, via the ESFA portal, at the start of each fixture;
4. To otherwise abide by the rules of the respective National Competitions, and to organise your participation in those competitions, as usual.

PLAYER PASSPORT: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How will the money earned from Player Passport be spent?

- ⚽ The money made from the scheme will be distributed to members in recognition of their commitment to providing representative football, once the costs of managing and administering the competitions have been covered. For 21/22 only, a guaranteed £190 per team entering the national competitions will be paid to Associations. The funding will come with no conditions, unlike other funds the ESFA can access, which are often restricted to particular activities

Who is responsible for registering a player on the Player Passport?

- ⚽ The parent, carer or person paying for the registration is responsible for setting up the record. Associations will need to support this by informing parents, carers or payers of the requirement

When do players have to register by?

- ⚽ Registration needs to be concluded prior to the kick off in the first fixture of the national competition in which the team is participating. All players in the squad must be registered at this point: team sheets can be submitted after the game, along with the scores.

If our team wants to play locally but not in the national competitions, do players still need to register?

- ⚽ They don't, but any participation in the international trials process will be administered through the Player Passport, so players will need to be registered should they be involved in trials: there is no fee for players who are not otherwise registered for Player Passport because their CSFA does not enter national competitions.

How much will it cost and how will payments be made?

- ⚽ Payments will be taken online at the end of the registration process. Associations are not expected to be responsible for this but will need to support the process by informing parents, carers or payers of the requirements. An annual fee of £25 has been set for 21/22 only: thereafter, it is expected that the fee will be £40. Payments must be made by bank/credit card or android or Apple pay.

What if a parent can't afford the fee?

- ⚽ If a pupil is in receipt of free school meals, a discounted Player Passport fee of £5 will be charged. The pupil and the parent will still get the full range of benefits and the fact that they have paid the discounted rate will not be visible to anyone other than the payer and those administering the payment process at ESFA HQ. This will be processed through the Player Passport app/website, so will be managed electronically. Payers will be required to declare criteria under which the player is eligible free school meals, and to note that the ESFA may check this.

What if a parent can't afford the rebated fee?

- ⚽ We would encourage parents to discuss this with their child's school, or perhaps the local/County Association could support them in this circumstance.

Is there an instalment payment process?

- ⚽ No. Payments need to be made in full, up front, prior to playing. You can register players at a later stage if the hardship arrangements above are not suitable and a parent wishes to pay later.

I already charge a fee for taking part in our rep teams – without it, we can't afford the cost of the team. Will you take that into account?

- ⚽ Ultimately, the ESFA aims to share the cash generated from Player Passport with member Associations, but beyond 21/22, when the ESFA is underwriting a payment to teams, this cannot be done until the scheme makes a financial profit. In the meantime, there are no restrictions on local Associations fee charging arrangements

If a player pays a fee but is then not selected for each match, or only plays one game, is he or she entitled to a refund?

- ⚽ No. Payment and match selection are not inter-linked, and this should be made clear to payers and players at the outset.

This will be expensive for families with more than one child

- ⚽ The full fee is payable for the first sibling to register on the Player Passport scheme/ Any siblings which then join will pay at the discounted rate set for those in receipt of free school meals.

What about circumstances where the usual squad isn't available, and we have to call in a player for a game at the last minute? It's not fair to ask them to pay a fee for a single game.

- ⚽ Agreed. Once a squad of at least 16 is registered, the Association earns 3 free registrations for single appearances across the season. This is NOT a free registration for any one player.

Can there be exceptions made for refunds if, for example, a player is seriously injured in game 1 and will be out for the rest of the season? Likewise for children in military families if they are moved overseas mid-season?

- ⚽ Associations can refund from their own resources but the ESFA is not able to refund the fee, unless there are exceptional circumstances, on application to ESFA Trustees. Perks will remain available to the player and payer.

What happens if the parents have not registered the player before the start of the season? Can that player still play in the District SFA team?

- ⚽ Any player taking part in national competitions must be registered prior to playing. Players may register throughout the season, but cannot take part until they have.

What if, as an Association, we don't have enough players registered before we play our first game of the season?

- ⚽ You will need to be able to field a fully registered team to enter the first round of the national competition.

Can we add players throughout the season?

- ⚽ Yes, as new players join teams, please make sure that they are registered. If they have already played rep. football (in a previous year, for example), they may already have a registration. Bear in mind it is the pupil being registered as a player, not a player being registered to play for your specific team.

The ESFA national competition rules state that “a pupil shall not play for more than one Association in the same competition during any season, except by permission of Council”: Please note; that for the purposes of District football in these competitions next season, this permission will automatically be granted in the case that a pupil changes school in-year, and moves from one District to another (but does not play for both).

So if a player has registered as part of playing for a District, he or she doesn't need to register again as a County player?

- ⚽ That's correct. A player registers once to be part of the ESFA's rep football programme and can then play through the ages and at any representative level, on selection, subject to paying the annual fee.

Is there a minimum/maximum number of players that can be registered for an Association?

- ⚽ You will need a full squad of registered players before you play your first fixture of the national competition. There is no maximum number but obviously competition squad size rules will dictate the number of players named for a match.

Can a player's registration be transferred between Associations (for example, if the player moves school which means they may qualify to represent another Association)?

- ⚽ A player's registration will exist once they create their record. They will simply need to be included in your team if they join you part way through the season – there is no need for a second registration, just a need to link the player to the appropriate team.

Do passports have to be carried and provided on match days for opposition to see eligibility? If yes, what if they don't have them or is there an online function to show lists of players?

- ⚽ Player Passport registrations will be made online and held online. Players and payers will input all their details and from this a squad list and a team sheet can be created. If the squad list and team sheet are created through the Player Passport and are visible online, all players named will be eligible to play.

Does that mean that anyone can see everyone else's details?

- ⚽ No. Both data protection and child protection legislation will be built into the Player Passport, with only those needing it having access to personal details. Player names can be published in a squad list and team sheet, but not any other identifying factor. The option to upload a photograph of the player will be available to parents but will not be mandatory.

So as a team manager, I can log in and use appropriate personal details to set up and manage my team?

- Yes. You will have password-controlled access to the relevant information

Can the Player Passport be used to hold emergency contact details then?

- It can, subject to parents agreeing that such details can be provided in that way.

What happens if a rep team is formed in season 1 and then the county or district doesn't run one in future, at no fault of the player/parent?

- Associations need to be certain that they are running a team before players register for the Passport. As the fee is an annual one, should teams not run in future years, then no fee will be payable for that year

What do the players get for their fee?

- Primarily the players get an enhanced fixture list, through the Champions League-style competition. We envisage at least four or five fixtures: rather than having only one game, if a team gets knocked out in round 1 of the current cups, the teams will play several others in the group phases, and some will then go on to contest a Cup or a Plate in a knockout phase. Their insurance is covered as part of this fee, and an increasing number of perks will be made available to payers and players as the Player Passport develops.

If used to its fullest extent, the player and parent will be able to track their participation and performance and build up a record of their achievements, should the Association wish to operate the system in that way. The system will have the capacity to record things such as player of the match, goals/assists, corners, match time and so on.

Our trials won't take place until early September so I can't ask players to register until then. Will this affect my entry into the national competition?

- No. You can enter your national competition as soon as you are ready, but you must make sure your players are all registered before the first fixture.

What if I think the opposition is playing an unregistered player?

- ⚽ If the player features on the squad list or team sheet produced by the Player Passport, then he or she is properly registered. The registration process will build in checks that a player is at an eligible DFE funded school, so that any anomalies can be addressed at the start of the season. If you have other grounds to believe the player should not be playing, you should follow the rules of the relevant national competition.

What if I believe the opposition is playing a pupil from a school outside of their area?

- ⚽ The player registration process will check that the player is at a school in the geographical area for Districts confirmed in the Association restructure process. Again, if the player features on a Player Passport squad list or team sheet, then their eligibility has been confirmed.

What if a player moves schools and wants to play for a different District mid-season?

- ⚽ In the inaugural season, this will be permitted by Council by default, providing that the pupil concerned does not play for two Districts at the same time.

Who is responsible for changing the player's address and school records on the Passport in this scenario?

- ⚽ All the data is personal to that player, so only they or their parent/carer/payer can change that data.

At the AGM, reference was made to an U11 district competition for girls. This doesn't appear on the briefing?

- ⚽ We will run an U11 District Girls' cup, but not in the Champions-league format and a Player Passport registration will not be necessary for this age group.

Will Associations have to pay a competition entry fee for these competitions?

- ⚽ No. However, the ESFA reserve the right to charge a withdrawal fee should teams withdraw after the fixtures are published, which will be on the first working day after 1st September.

Will travel expenses be paid?

- ⚽ Associations reaching the Cup or Plate finals will be eligible to claim expenses.

CHAMPIONS CUP GUIDE



SAFEGUARDING

All teams must be under the control of individuals which have been appropriately approved in accordance with ESFA regulations. All Associations operating representative teams must also have a qualified and compliant Welfare Officer in accord with ESFA and FA regulations.



E S F A

CHAMPIONS CUP

#ChampionsCup



FOLLOW OUR
SOCIAL CHANNELS
and stay up to date
with fixtures,
results and current news

English Schools' FA, 4 Parker Court
Staffordshire Technology Park, Stafford ST18 0WP
Email: competitions@schoolsfa.com

 @SchoolsFootball

 @SchoolsFootball

 www.facebook.com/SchoolsFootball

 www.youtube.com/ESFATV



www.schoolsfootball.org