



Membership Matters

A Message from the Chair

Dear ESFA Members,

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the ESFA Council for their support and endorsement. It is indeed a great honour to be confirmed as the new Chair of the ESFA, and I eagerly look forward to the season ahead.

October, 2023

As we embark on the 2023/24 season, I extend my sincere appreciation to all those involved in schools' football. This is an incredibly exciting and crucial time for our organisation, and I am delighted to have been given the opportunity to lead.

I am deeply passionate about the role the ESFA plays in providing playing opportunities for school pupils across the country and our ongoing commitment to creating new and improved opportunities for schools' football players in England. The importance of this contribution to our wider society cannot be overstated. It enables young people across the country to stay active and learn essential life skills, such as teamwork and communication, and it's incredibly rewarding.



However, there is always work to be done. We aim to increase collaboration and relevance with all football stakeholders, raise the profile of our competitions, enhance engagement with our members, and maintain the highest standards of safeguarding to ensure the safety of children. Our goal is to make the ESFA a more contemporary, innovative, and inclusive organisation, whilst maintaining our founding values.

As part of our drive to engage more effectively with our membership, we are currently conducting surveys to gather insights from our volunteers across the country. It is imperative that we hear from all corners to inform us about the national state of play, enabling us to provide the playing opportunities, engagement touchpoints, and rewards we all desire.

Looking forward to our competitions, the National Schools' Cup competitions have seen an astounding (7519 entries) at this stage, and we are well on track to surpass the previous record entry level of 7715. This reflects the tremendous enthusiasm for school football, and I want to acknowledge the hard work of the ESFA team, our teachers, and everyone involved in nurturing the next generation of school football players.

(Continued...)



Our commitment to inclusivity is further exemplified through the continuation of SEND festivals, the outstanding success of the ESFA Hotshots campaign, and the growth of the Muslim Schools', Deaf Schools' Trophy, and Pan-Disability Tournaments.

Our international trials are underway, and as we search for talent, we also place great importance on character development in young athletes, focusing on self-discipline, resilience, respect, and enjoyment. Witnessing these young talents grow, both as footballers and individuals, is truly inspiring.

I invite you all to join us for our 'AGM part 2' on November 30th, a testament to our increased utilisation of online meetings, which allows more volunteers from across the country to participate.

I want to extend my heartfelt appreciation to all those who dedicate their time to provide a safe and nurturing environment for our young people. Your efforts ensure that children flourish in a sporting setting, and I'm confident that students and parents alike recognise and value your dedication.

I would also like to use this opportunity to update you, that after a period of negotiations with the JPL, following the demise of RTC's and with it the protection afforded to girls' schools' football on the second weekend of the month, the ESFA and the JPL have released the joint statement below.

"The JPL and the ESFA are committed to ensuring that girls who play in both licensed PGA teams and ESFA County teams have the broadest playing experiences.

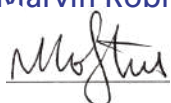
With this in mind and in the spirit of collaboration, the JPL will, subject to being notified 14 days in advance of County players involved fixtures, postpone JPL fixtures where three or more players or the goalkeeper in a PGA are taking place in an ESFA-sanctioned inter-county fixture. These timeframes will allow the JPL to support county football whilst maintaining the integrity of JPL competitions."

Further information on this will be communicated with County Schools' FA secretaries over the coming days.

As we move forward, let us celebrate our past achievements and embrace the opportunities of the future. Our journey in schools' football continues, and together, we will create a better, more inclusive, and successful experience for all involved.

Let the 2023/24 season be one for the record books.

Warm regards,
Marvin Robinson



Chair, ESFA - 2023/24

Report of Council September 23/24

Marvin Robinson, Chair for 2023/24, welcomed Members to the first meeting of the season, held at HQ in Stafford. A warm welcome was offered to new Council Member, David Burns and to Independent Member, Sion Portman who was able to attend in person for the first time.

Council worked in their regional meetings to review affiliations and agreed to follow up on those Associations which had started but not completed their affiliation or were as yet to start. Members are reminded that failure to affiliate makes insurance invalid, and without affiliation and the appropriate safeguarding approvals, representative football must not take place. The regions also re-allocated some CSFA support/liaison in the light of personnel changes, as follows:

Cumbria, Durham, Northumberland	Alan Johnston
Merseyside, GMCSFA	Tony James
Lancashire, Cheshire	Ian Latta
N Yorkshire, S Yorkshire, W Yorkshire, Cleveland	Richy Alderson
Derbyshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands, Leicestershire	Nick Loftus
Shropshire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Staffordshire	Mark Hignett
Remainder of Midlands	Vacancies
Gloucestershire, Somerset	Mike Coyne
Berkshire, Wiltshire	David Burns
Dorset, Hants, Oxfordshire	Gavin Rusling
Cornwall, Devon, Channel Islands	Ray Brown
Surrey, Kent, Middlesex	Phil Harding
Suffolk, Sussex, Inner London	Paul Jackson
Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire	Dave Woollaston
Essex, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire	Stuart Botham

(Continued...)

Members will see from this list that there are currently vacancies in the Midlands and the South West, and are invited to contact the Chair, the CEO or another Council Member in their region, should they wish to become involved in Council.

Members of Council were pleased to appoint Mark Hignett as England's nominee to the role of Vice Chair of SAFIB. A rule change requiring host Associations to share their venue risk assessments is being proposed by the ESFA for the Centenary Shield and the Bob Docherty tournament.

The Chair, who is also the ESFA's representative on The FA Council, reported back on his appointments to the Futsal Committee and the Development Committee, where youth development was now considered. He is also liaising with contacts at the PFA with the aim of re-establishing relationships with them.

Members updated their safeguarding commitment statements and went on to discuss the wider Council Code of Conduct and the updated draft list of roles and responsibilities of Council. Further work is required to align the two documents so that expectations of Council are clearly articulated.

Council committed to undertaking brief observations (rather than full Safeguarding Support Visits, which would remain the purview of the SSV volunteer task force) at rep football matches, which would include the identification of good practice or behaviours to commend, rather than simply checking compliance.

Consideration was given by Council to the filling of the vacancy on Trustees, and further consideration is needed. A Code of Governance for the Association includes succession planning for Council and Trustee roles and actions to address this need to be defined.

Long Service Awards, duly approved by individual Council Members, were accepted by Council.

Council approved the minutes of the AGM and made comment on the draft annual report, for further amendment.

Council again discussed how better to engage with Membership. The Chair wishes to seek the views of all ESFA Members about how effectively the ESFA liaison with them works, and what the experience of being an ESFA Member feels like. Council agreed that in the first instance this would be by means of a survey, to follow in October, with the outcomes to be considered by Council in November. Council Members committed to further exploring the outcomes thereafter with Members in their Regions. Membership is invited therefore to look out for invitations to those meetings in November, and for the link to the survey in October. In the meantime, a reminder that Council Members can be contacted with issues, questions or comments and where there is as yet no named Council Member, contact with others in the region, the CEO, the Chair or the Vice Chair should be made.

Council was pleased to hear of the plans for a bigger Volunteer Reward and Recognition event for the coming season and further details will be provided at the proper time.

Council determined that there should be a temporary adjustment to the structure of Committees, with the International work being considered separately to the rest of representative football. This would allow for the Rep Committee to focus entirely on supporting Membership to redevelop rep football locally and in Counties whilst others considered the future of the International programme. The International Committee would sit for season 23/24 and its continuation would be reviewed at the end of the season.

In response to a recommendation of Rep Committee, Council approved the decelerated learning policy which allowed a pupil to “play down” a year (or more) if they had FA dispensation to do so, or if a pupil had been held back in a year group due to a lack of academic progression. This policy was already in place for inter-schools’ football, and will now also apply to representative football, other than the international programme. In each eventuality, the ESFA will enact the dispensation of other bodies (respectively The FA, the school or SAFIB) but was not able to consider dispensation otherwise.

Report of the Representative Football Committee:

- Members confirmed their understanding of their remit, which was now for District and County rep football
- The meeting accepted the target in the business plan about reinvigoration of representative football and the possibility of different delivery models, and this is its priority task for the year
- An update on affiliation and individual suspensions was received and ESFA Members are again urged to complete their affiliations and update their personnel records

Discussions with The FA about women’s Professional Game Academies (PGAs) have resulted in the FA confirming that any club with three or more players, or a GK, being released for County football will be entitled to be given a postponement for the club fixture which will be played in the JPL. PGAs are under no obligation to release CSFA players as they had under the RTC structure, as the demise of the RTC structure also nullifies the RTC rules. Release is now at the discretion of the PGA Technical Director.

The Chair of Council is continuing to pursue the matter with The FA and the JPL.

- The Committee had been asked to consider the ESFA's Decelerated Learning policy and made its recommendation to Council, as noted above.

Report of the Football Governance Committee:

- There is as yet no further feedback from The FA on their current Youth Review, which is being conducted not to "fix that which is not broken" but to check that rules and the structures for youth football remain current and fit for purpose. The ESFA Council has been consulted on this matter and has shared its views
- Sanctioning is being managed by the Trainee Governance Manager, Joe Marsh
- The number of disciplinary cases throughout 22/23 was reviewed, and serious sanctions applied where Associations had not complied with ESFA safeguarding directives

Report of the Football Development Committee:

- Last season, there was a good level of engagement with the online volunteer recruitment strategy, with high levels of click throughs on the adverts to support ESFA Members' work. It is necessary to establish how many volunteers were finally recruited to Member vacancies before pursuing a further recruitment drive
- The final voting process for reward and recognition is being reviewed for the coming season and the awards scheme will open for nominations earlier this season than last

A comprehensive football development plan was approved. This included:

- A small discretionary development fund (subject to budget);
- The Deaf Schools' Trophy;
- Continuation of the SEND, Muslim Schools and disability festivals;
- The carry forward of year 3 and 4 festivals from 22/23 into 23/24 and the possibility of continuation funding from the PLCF;
- The grant from The FA for additional funding to run girls' Futsal, in collaboration with England Futsal.

Report of the National Competitions Committee:

- The Committee received an overview of the 22/23 national competitions, which had been excellent, having an enormous impact on the players involved in the finals in particular
- Entries into schools' cups this season are higher than last year (except in the U18 age group) with 7519 entries, compared to the previous record entry level of 7,715
- 406 rep teams have entered the national rep competitions
- Pokémon were extremely happy with their first year of competition

Consideration was given to the request to introduce a Small Schools Cup for girls at U11. The demand was not considered sufficient to make a viable competition and the Committee therefore determined that this would not be introduced at this stage

ISF World School Football Championships are being held in China this season and as usual the ESFA will offer this opportunity to the winners and/or runners up in the National Competitions at the appropriate age group

- Consideration is to be given to the need for regulation around the number of team managers permitted in the dugout at national finals
- Consideration is also being given to whether the ESFA can brand PlayStation Schools' Cup, Schools' Football Week or any of its collective activities as "the biggest youth football competition in the world"
- The Committee wishes to commend the staff involved in the national competitions and finals for their outstanding work.

At the start of October, the ESFA welcomed back Ray Brown to the ESFA council as a representative of the South West serving Cornwall, Scilly Isles and Devon.

Spotlight on- Dave Burns

This month, the ESFA 'Spotlight On' piece is focused on new Council Member for the South West, Dave Burns

"I retired from teaching as a secondary Vice Principal in 2014 and have always been involved in school and district football.

However, my wider ESFA story began in 1998 when then Chief Executive Officer, Malcolm Berry, kindly provided me with an ESFA bursary to undertake the FA Diploma in the Treatment and Management of Injuries course at Lilleshall National Sports Centre.

Malcolm then invited me to help staff the summer coaching course that year at Keele University and I remained a virtual ever-present until the conclusion of that wonderful programme at Repton School. Similarly, I staffed numerous Under 14 Isle of Wight Festivals, and what a privilege they were to attend, as festival football is a fabulous experience for our young players.



I was very fortunate to be appointed to the England Schoolboys' Under 18 International team as a Sports Therapist in 2009 after a number of years supporting the incumbent at local and Lilleshall trials. Further, I have also stepped in to cover the post-holder Sports Therapist with the Under 15 Girls' International Team when they have been unavailable. It has been a tremendous honour to have been involved in Centenary Shield and Bob Docherty winning teams, but equally in less successful seasons. It is the taking part that counts.

I hope to raise local issues and support colleagues in the counties I represent, Wiltshire and Berkshire, on the ESFA Council as well as participate in the national debate on schools' football. If I cannot do that, I will not be around that long, as that is the duty of a representative Council member."

FA Concussion Guidance

The FA has recently updated its guidance on concussion measures in football with the slogan "if in doubt, sit them out". Further information about concussion guidance, including how to recognise the signs of a concussion and how to react accordingly can be found here: [The FA's Concussion guideline for football | England Football](#).

Safeguarding Good Practice

The ESFA: Safeguarding Support

Volunteers are continuing with their visits, and sharing their experience. This month, we'd like to commend Gloucester Primary Schools' FA (GPSFA) for the priority they afford to safeguarding.

The Association's handbook contains important safeguarding information such as the welfare policy and the CWO contact details if these are reinforced in a presentation that parents are required to attend. This ensures that players, parents and staff know who to contact in the events of concern.

You can see their handbook [here](#), with our thanks to them for sharing.

Ratios of Adults to Children

A reminder on the guidance that can be found from the FA [here](#) on the correct ratio of adults to children when conducting schools' football. This guidance should be followed by members and is an example of best safeguarding practice for Association personnel.

FA DBS Checks / ESFA Portal

There are a growing number of FA DBS checks being approved but the names of the individuals do not appear on the ESFA portal – can we please urge all Membership to keep their data on the ESFA portal up to date by adding new staff where necessary and deleting staff if the individuals are no longer involved with representative team football.

If you wish to suggest or request content for next month's Membership Matters, please email ben.woolley@schoolsfa.com



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