



Admission by Aptitude for Physical Education (PE) and Sport: Guidelines for Academies with a Specialism in Sport

Although it is not mandatory to do so, Academies, like any school with a specialism, may select up to 10% of their intake on the basis of aptitude for any of a number of prescribed subjects, including sport. These guidelines concern talent development and support for talented young athletes in schools, and consider national governing bodies of sports' (NGBs) performance development models.

The guidelines focus on just one aspect of identification – psychomotor ability. But in order to adequately identify those young people who have the potential to be talented in PE and sport with other abilities, schools must also consider identification strategies that pick out above-average potential in game-sense, learnability, creativity, personal/inter-personal and cognitive development. The result will be a fully competent register of young people who are likely to be gifted and talented in not only sport, but also in PE.

This means that some baseline assessment of potential or aptitude in young people must be considered in terms of other key abilities, in addition to psychomotor ability. For example game-sense – should also be considered when selecting potentially talented young athletes. Lastly, due to the development and rates of maturation in all aspects of young people, such as physical maturation and social and emotional maturity, we recommend that gifted and talented registers are constantly reviewed for Years 8 through to 11 at least twice a year.

1. Admission of young athletes in Year 7 by “aptitude” may have been based in the past on performance-achievement criteria. This means that you would have admitted only those young people who were usually early maturers, or born between the months of September and December, or both.
2. There is no certainty that these young athletes will eventually go on to achieve success at a higher level during their years in school. Furthermore, late maturers will tend to be missed and these could potentially achieve much higher performance levels than early maturers.
3. If admission by aptitude in PE and sport is to be applied lawfully, then we recommend not using performance-based norms or achievement, which are precluded in law – such as membership of NGBs' World Class programmes, county or regional representation, nominations from external agencies like NGBs – but considering aptitude in fundamental motor skills, such as running, jumping, throwing, catching, leaping, striking, balancing, etc.
4. Selection of young athletes based on aptitude in fundamental motor skills is consistent with current thinking in performance development, relating to Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) guidelines adopted by many NGBs, e.g. Rugby Football Union (RFU), England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), England Netball (AENA), Lawn Tennis Association (LTA).
5. In order to do this, schools must first decide on which fundamental skill to test for, and how many skills should be included in their battery of “tests”. Research

journals or 'Measurement and Evaluation' textbooks in Skill Acquisition usually have a good selection of these.

6. This would indirectly impact upon the number of young athletes in Year 6 accommodated at each test sitting and upon requirements for staffing, record-keeping and analysis.
7. Schools should collect baseline data from a randomly selected population of current and past young athletes in Year 7. Those achieving scores above the norm will be deemed as having superior aptitude in the parameters of fundamental motor skills. There is however still the question of benchmarking to decide how places will be allocated to *{those}** who achieve above the mean norms.
8. Longer term implications of admitting by aptitude in PE and sport will usually concern the school's ability to provide for enrichment, extension and accelerated learning in PE and sport for those with fundamental motor skills aptitude. Linked to this is the school's wider ability to form club links and programme links with external agencies to provide such pathways for their potentially talented young sports athletes.
9. Further, admitting by aptitude on the basis of current performance levels or achievement (e.g. World Class programmes, national level athletes) as well as being unlawful, usually means that at some point in the future during their school career, there will be pressures on the talented young athlete to balance both academic achievement and sports performance.
10. From Point 9, the school has to look towards having a proper gifted and talented policy for the whole school, as well as a specific one in PE and sport. In addition, a common, co-ordinated strategy must be put in place to identify, forecast, and finally to cater flexibly for the needs of these pupils, rather than dealing with issues arising ad hoc as and when clashes or conflicts arise.
11. A talent support programme such as Junior Athlete Education (see www.talentradder.org.uk) includes a talented athlete mentoring component to help to forecast, plan and ward off conflicts such young people will have in trying to balance education and sport. Programmes such as Junior Athlete Education also help the school and its gifted and talented young people by engaging parents to establish priorities.
12. Admitting a host of young people with aptitude in PE and sport on a talent support programme will lead to considerations of staffing. Staff time and effort will be spent on mentoring and engaging with young athletes and their parents, coaches and external agencies. This has to be planned and accounted for.
13. Point 12 also highlights the need for a key member of staff to take a co-ordinated view of each young athlete's participation in PE, school sport and school and local competitions. This support enables co-ordinated and prioritised participation in local and school competitions while still taking into account wider performance-development competitions as timetabled by NGBs and external clubs.
14. The financial implications for staff time to support such young athletes, including continuous professional development (CPD) requirements, need to be built in to plans for gifted and talented provision.
15. A review process should monitor whether each talented cohort has benefited from the support, and gauge the success of exit pathways for extension and accelerated learning and performance with external partners and/or clubs.
16. As children grow and change over the years, normative data will need to be reassessed and where necessary retesting undertaken to ascertain that normative data is representative of each school's sample population of young athletes in Year 7 according to race, gender, social background, etc. It is essential to ensure that aptitude testing is without bias in any of these areas.

{ }* The number of places cannot exceed 10% of the total admission number.

Summary:

- identification of young athletes should be based on prediction of future potential, not current performance
- individualised planning and support for curricular studies as well as sports training and competition is essential
- there is a need to establish a regular and effective communication and consultation system with parents or carers and coaches of each young athlete.

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