School Games and engaging with Alternative Provision schools

‘Every child, regardless of their characteristics, needs or the type of school they attend, deserves a high-quality education that allows them to flourish and paves the way to a successful future’ Timpson Review, May 2019

Alternative provision (AP) is defined as education outside school, arranged by local authorities or schools, for pupils up to age 18 who do not attend mainstream school for reasons such as school exclusion, behaviour issues, school refusal, or short- or longterm illness. AP is provided through full or part-time, and short or longer-term placements.

AP includes a variety of settings such as pupil referral units (PRUs), AP free schools and academies, and independent providers. As of January 2017, there were 234 PRUs, 79 AP academies (56 converters and 23 sponsored) and 39 open AP free schools in England.

Of these, only 6 are actively engaged in the School Games.

40% of children in PRUs, AP academies and free schools are eligible for, and claiming for free school meals. The extrapolated costs for excluded children are worth £2.1 billion in education, health, benefits and criminal justice - highlighting that school exclusion can often lead to social exclusion.

1 in every 200 young people in England are educated outside of mainstream or SEN schools, and 40 children are told to leave each day.

The demographics of these young people indicate they are:

- Twice as likely to be in care
- 4 times more likely to grow up in poverty
- 7 times more likely to have SEND
- 10 times more likely to have mental health problems

Certain ethnic groups, including Bangladeshi and Indian pupils, have lower rates of exclusion than White British pupils, with the analysis also finding some ethnic groups, such as Black Caribbean and Mixed White and Black Caribbean pupils, experiencing higher rates, after controlling for other factors.

Boys with social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH) but no statement were around 3.8 times more likely to be permanently excluded than a non-SEN child while girls were around 3.0 times more likely after controlling for other factors.

79% of pupils who are permanently excluded either have SEN, are classified as in need or are eligible for free school meals. 11% of permanently excluded children have all three characteristics.
Schools must be places that are welcoming and respectful, where every child has the opportunity to succeed

Based on discussions and insight from the national Local Organising Committee (LOC) and School Games Organiser Consultation Groups (SGO) the following challenges in currently engaging with AP through the School Games were highlighted:

- Understanding the cohorts and needs of young people in AP
- Trying to engage a ‘fluid’ population of young people who move between AP and mainstream
- School perceptions and attitudes (from other mainstream schools about AP which may affect participating in competitions)
- A lack of understanding on the most meaningful School Games opportunities for pupils in AP and when these should occur
- AP not necessarily having enough space or facility to participate at an intra-level
- Understanding the levels of staffing required.

As a result, 4 counties led by the Youth Sport Trust Lead Inclusion School in each area were identified after a thorough application process to design, develop and deliver inspiring, accessible and meaningful interventions for young people in AP to engage with and through the School Games. These were;

- Abbey School, South Yorkshire
- Bensham Abbey, Surrey
- Poltair School, Cornwall
- Westcroft School, Wolverhampton

The rationale behind Lead Inclusion Schools driving this work is because it is well documented that there are longstanding trends that children with SEN are more likely to be excluded, both for a fixed period and permanently, than those who do not have SEN. In the most recent statistics, children with identified SEN accounted for 46.7% of all permanent exclusions and 44.9% of fixed period exclusions\(^v\).

There are many examples of excellent practice in schools and local areas, who model effective practice and show what is possible. Some of the Top Tips from this practice to support SGOs are captured on the following page:
10 Top Tips for SGOs

1. Understand your patch!

Access your School Games dashboard to pull off a report to see how many AP schools are in your area. Are they registered/actively engaged in the School Games?

2. Meet with your AP Schools!

See overleaf for key questions you could ask your AP when you first meet with them to understand the needs of AP and their pupils.

3. Meet with pupils!

Consider the use of Chateez cards and run an inclusive focus group (your Youth Sport Trust Lead Inclusion School can support you with this) to understand the needs and wants from pupils.

4. Timetable your School Games opportunities appropriately.

For example, consider not running events on Monday’s- due to often challenging circumstances for children and young people over a weekend who may need to come into school for food and hydration before they consider exercise.

5. Consider the range of opportunities available through the School Games

Many APs deliver Sport Leaders programmes. Consider how young people can be deployed through your events as a first engagement into the School Games via leadership roles.

6. Spend time ensuring young people feel safe.

There is often a greater need for pupils in AP to feel safe in their environment. Intra school competitive events or virtual opportunities may therefore have greater take up when pupils can take part on their own school site

7. Do your research! What formats in the School Games could really encourage a team feel and sense of belonging?

One outstanding AP in London draws upon the sport of boxing for the primary reason that stepping into a boxing club gives an immediate sense of belonging and a family atmosphere for their pupils.
8. Consider School Games formats that meet the needs of these young people.

For example, if the motivator from pupils is to physically ‘look good’, seek to offer formats that pupils may choose to engage with outside of attending the AP such as the use of rowing machines.

Are there School Games formats which would support small group work to focus on increasing attendance, changing behaviour, improving attainment and raising self-esteem, with a shared interest in sport helping to motivate pupils?

9. Consider where there are transition opportunities

Changing schools can be challenging for any child, but for children with additional needs these challenges can be intensified. Parents and carers speak about the challenges for children with SEN and attachment disorder, whose wellbeing is often supported by familiar routines and trusted relationships. Therefore, they can struggle to understand transition or can feel distressed by the secondary school environment, where they interact with more teachers and move between different classrooms far more than they are used to doing. How can the formats and the environments you offer through the School Games offer an effective intervention to support with transition?

10. Promote school to school collaboration through your events

The best schools work with each other and local services to take collective responsibility for planning the right provision for children in their area. How can you, and the relationships you have locally encourage a positive conversation and a willingness to pilot something new for this/next academic year?
**Further considerations:**

The Timpson Review of Exclusions published in May 2019 identifies 4 key pillars that are integral to reforming practice and supporting schools in achieving the best outcomes for every child. The below table outlines where **your School Games offer** can complement these pillars and the questions you could either ask when engaging with AP (and mainstream) Head Teachers, SENCOs and PE leads when working with vulnerable young people at risk of exclusion.

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<th>Key Pillar</th>
<th>Connection to the School Games and key questions for SGOs to ask</th>
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| **A system that delivers ambitious leadership for every child at all levels** | As SGOs, support your Head Teachers to create strong school cultures that deliver the best outcomes for every child. This can be achieved through the School Games. Consider the School Games values and how explicit reference could be used with these as the focus for School Games events.  
**Question:** What are the key priorities for you as a school?                                                                 |
| **Equipping: giving schools the skills and capacity to deliver**          | As SGO, work with your Youth Sport Trust Lead Inclusion School to consider the training needs of your school workforce around the School Games.  
**Question:** What additional knowledge and skills may your workforce collectively need to understand the outcomes School Games can provide to meet pupil needs? |
| **Incentivising: creating the best conditions for every child**           | Consider the right incentives you could offer through the School Games and recognise/celebrate the schools that are delivering good inclusive practice locally.  
**Question:** what is currently missing from our School Games offer that you would like to see?  
**Question:** could we consult with your pupils about what we could change about the environment and format to encourage their engagement? |
| **Safeguarding: ensuring no child misses out on education**               | No parent sends their child to school believing they will be excluded. Similarly, no teacher starts their career wanting anything other than to help children achieve their potential. While permanent exclusion is a rare event – 0.1% of the 8 million children in schools in England were permanently excluded in 2016/17 – this still means an average of 40 every day. A further average of 2,000 pupils are excluded for a fixed period each day.  
Ensure through your School Games calendar you offer safe, appropriate and meaningful opportunities for all children and young people.  
**Question:** Are you aware of all the opportunities available through School Games? Such as links to curriculum (blogging, journalism, sports data, reporting); leadership/volunteer roles; free intra school competition resources. |
Glossary of Terms:

**Alternative provision (AP):** Education arranged by local authorities (and in some circumstances schools) for pupils of compulsory school age outside of mainstream or special schools, who would not otherwise receive suitable education for any reason. This includes pupils with behaviour problems, with health needs preventing school attendance or without a school place. This may include full or part-time placements in PRUs, AP academies, AP free schools, hospital special schools, FE colleges, independent schools and other provision such as home tuition services and voluntary or private sector providers.

**AP academy:** PRUs that convert to academy status become AP academies. PRUs can convert on their own, as part of a chain of academies, or with the support of a sponsor.

**Department for Education (DfE) Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan):** An EHC plan details the education, health and social care support that is to be provided to a child or young person who has SEN or a disability. It is drawn up by the LA after an EHC needs assessment of the child or young person has determined that an EHC plan is necessary, and after consultation with relevant partner agencies.

**Exclusions:** These can be permanent (the guidance states that ‘permanent exclusion should only be used as a last resort, in response to a serious breach or persistent breaches of the school’s behaviour policy; and where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others in the school’) or fixed-term exclusions (which can be for a maximum of 45 school days in a single academic year, and where schools have a strategy for reintegrating the pupil back into the school at the end of the exclusion period).

**Free school meals (FSM):** Section 512 of the Education Act 1996, as amended, places a duty on maintained schools, academies and free schools to provide free school meals to pupils of all ages that meet the criteria. Under the benefits-based criteria, children who receive, or whose parents receive, one or more of the support payments are entitled to receive FSM, and must make a claim to the school for FSM.

**Local Offer:** Local authorities in England are required to set out in their SEND Local Offer information about provision they expect to be available across education, health and social care for children and young people in their area who have SEN or are disabled, including those who do not have EHC plans. Local authorities must consult locally on what provision the Local Offer should contain.

**Parent:** This includes any person who is not a parent of the child, but has parental responsibility or who cares for him or her.

**Permanent exclusion:** This results in a child being permanently removed from a school’s roll. Permanent exclusion should only be used as a last resort, in response to a serious breach or persistent breaches of the school’s behaviour policy; and where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others in the school.

**Pupil referral unit (PRU):** A type of school that is set up and maintained by local authorities to provide an education to pupils who cannot attend mainstream or special schools which is specifically organised
to provide education for children who would not otherwise receive it. This can be, for example, because they are excluded or have a mental or physical health condition that means they cannot attend their normal school.

**Special educational needs and disability (SEND):** A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions.

SEN are generally thought of in the following four broad areas of need and support: 1) Communication and interaction 2) Cognition and learning 3) Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) 4) Sensory and/or physical needs. Mainstream schools and maintained nursery schools must have a designated Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO), a member of staff responsible for co-ordinating the provision for pupils with special educational needs.

**Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO):** A qualified teacher in a school or maintained nursery school who has responsibility for co-ordinating SEN provision. In a small school, the head teacher or deputy may take on this role. In larger schools there may be a team of SENCOs. Other early years settings in group provision arrangements are expected to identify an individual to perform the role of SENCO and childminders are encouraged to do so, possibly sharing the role between them where they are registered with an agency.

**Special school:** A school which is specifically organised to make special educational provision for pupils with SEN.

**Youth Sport Trust Lead Inclusion School**(viii): Schools that are established in each county across England who are recognised for their expertise in engaging young people with SEND to participate, compete and lead through PE and School Sport.

**References:**

i This is a 62% increase since the 2018-19 academic year due to the School Games pilot work with Youth Sport Trust Lead Inclusion Schools and SGO engagement with AP; *School Games data, May 2019.*


v Inclusive focus groups guidance using Chateez cards as an effective student voice tool and based on European best practice is available via Youth Sport Trust Lead Inclusion Schools.


viii [https://www.youthsporttrust.org/inclusion-lead-schools](https://www.youthsporttrust.org/inclusion-lead-schools)