



Birmingham Schools Table Tennis League



Themes: children and young people, schools, leagues

Chris Perrin is a Physical Education teacher at St George's School in Edgbaston, Birmingham, who's role involves co-curricular activities to enhance and enrich the regular curriculum and enhance students' individual and team sporting achievements. After receiving funding to kickstart table tennis at the school Chris now leads a successful Birmingham Schools Table Tennis League, which is growing year on year.

Background

During the 2018-2019 academic year, Table Tennis England and Sport Birmingham provided funding through Sport England's *Satellite Club* scheme to provide table tennis equipment to 20 high schools across Birmingham – one of them being St George's School in Edgbaston.

After starting with two tables the popularity of the sport amongst pupils became clear, with pupils regularly participating during break times and at extra-curricular clubs. Due to its popularity the school grew their table tennis infrastructure, now having eight tables which are always in use during break times.

The school had a few fixtures for pupils to participate in, however Chris wanted to provide more opportunities for his pupils to experience competitive table tennis. This led to the creation of the Birmingham Schools Table Tennis League, which brings schools across the city together to compete and engage with the sport.

"As the children were engaged in the sport, I thought a school league could be set up to get other schools involved with the same interests as our school and our pupils. I wanted to make the league as informal and as easy to enter and play as possible, encouraging multiple teams to play rather than their best four players".

Chris Perrin
St George's School, Edgbaston



The Project

The Birmingham Schools Table Tennis Leagues features two divisions, with division 1 seeing more experienced teams and players and division 2 seeing newer players entering. Schools who are part of the league have a block of home and away fixtures to play between September and March, culminating in a Finals day for the top two teams in each division. Trophies for the winners are provided each year using funding from the Birmingham 2022 Legacy project.

The league started three years ago with 25 teams across 8 schools, this has now grown to 39 teams across 10 schools with an estimated 200-250 pupils taking part and around 20% of these being female pupils. A range of schools are involved in the league, including schools from inner city areas, private schools and independent schools, resulting in children from different backgrounds coming together and interacting with each other – something which may not otherwise happen.

The Impact

The introduction of the schools league has provided more opportunities for pupils to take part in table tennis, whilst having more competitive events to train for as a team. Table tennis participation has also increased, with 30 pupils regularly taking part every week. Chris also reflects on pupils representing the school by taking part in the league, which they may not have been able to do in others sports or activities.

“There’s a lot of pupils who want to represent the school in something, sometimes they won’t be able to represent the school in more mainstream and popular sports like football. When they’re in the table tennis team they’ve got that feeling of being part of the team and the school, knowing they have to work together to get better and succeed”.

Although communication with and across schools can be challenging, along with juggling a Physical Education teacher role with the added workload of participating in and delivering a schools league, Chris hopes to continue to increase the number of schools and teams involved in the league. Chris is particularly interested in increasing the number of players in division 2, to encourage more pupils into the sport that perhaps aren’t currently participating and providing them with positive experiences of the sport and competition.

“To create new activity in any sport requires people with a true passion and Chris Perrin displays this passion with his organisational planning of the successful Birmingham Schools Table Tennis League. It’s truly rewarding to see so many young people playing table tennis every week in Birmingham and long may it continue”.

Chris Newton
Area Manager (West) at Table Tennis
England