

State school cricket scheme teaches pupils “the three Fs”: Fitness, Friendship and Fair play

Cricket is improving the ‘social well-being’ of thousands of state school pupils, according to new research.

The report by the Institute of Youth Sport (IYS) found that pupils involved in the *Chance to shine* initiative displayed increased fitness levels, greater social skills and improved sportsmanlike behaviour.

There is also evidence that cricket is improving the behaviour of young people both on and off the field, particularly in deprived areas; while the so-called “gentleman’s game” is helping girls to ‘overcome restrictive gender beliefs’ and gain confidence in playing sport.

It may be helping to cut down truancy, too, as significantly more pupils look forward to and enjoy attending school when *Chance to shine* is taking place - 53% - compared to 36% when it is not.

Chance to shine is the Cricket Foundation’s campaign to bring cricket and its educational benefits to at least two million children by 2015. The cricket charity commissioned the IYS, part of Loughborough University, to look at the impact that *Chance to shine* had on the 3,000 state schools and 350,000 pupils that took part in 2009.

Dr Ruth Jeanes, who led the research, says: “Whilst *Chance to shine* is undoubtedly having a positive impact on general cricket provision and the development of opportunities for young people, its contribution to improving the social well-being of many of its participants illustrates that it is much more than just a cricket development initiative.”

The potential of cricket for supporting young people in developing friendships and support networks was illustrated by one of the cricket coaches cited in the report. He describes how a child had been severely bullied all his life to the extent that he was ‘quite psychologically damaged’ and required a psychiatrist. It was only when he joined the local cricket club, through *Chance to shine*, that he started to make friends and according to his consultant ‘cricket had been his saviour’.

The research describes how the cricket sessions have contributed positively to the development of pupils’ social skills, like teamwork, as one Year 5 pupil explains: “We’ve all, like, bonded a bit more. We’ve realised that we’ve got to work as a team...because there’s no point in just trying to be selfish and barging other people and catching the ball so you get all the pride, but if someone catches it’s the whole team’s pride”.

'Fair play' was a reoccurring theme in the report with pupils saying that winning is not the most important thing when playing cricket and that they just enjoy participating in cricket as it is 'fun'.

"You learn sportsmanship, you can work together and help people out" says one Year 5 pupil; while a Year 6 female pupil interviewed says that cheating in cricket was uncommon: "With football they (the boys) sometimes kick you and things but with cricket no one really tries to trick you and cheat. And we clap when someone does well".

Earlier this year the charity teamed up with Marylebone Cricket Club, guardian of the Laws and Spirit of Cricket, for a nationwide drive to encourage fair play by introducing a two-hour "MCC Spirit of Cricket" session to 3,000 state schools during the summer term.

Teachers highlighted how taking part in the programme has encouraged positive changes in pupils in the classroom. They say the cricket sessions have been effective for reducing disruptive behaviour during class and encouraging pupils to act more responsibly.

"For children with behaviour difficulties, you know they're wanting to turn themselves around", says one teacher in the report, "...and we take them out of school and I know that I can trust their behaviour within those situations to play the cricket matches...a lot of our best players are the ones who do have some behaviour difficulties."

Benjamin Graham and Ethan-James Knight, both aged 10, from Ling Bob Primary in Halifax are two pupils to benefit from the cricket sessions.

Benjamin says: "Cricket's taught me to respect and cheer on my team mates. And now if someone hacks me down on the football pitch I will offer to shake hands or walk away rather than arguing or retaliating."

Ethan adds: "If someone in cricket miss-hits and gets out we'll encourage them, rather than put them down. We don't argue or disagree with the umpire and it helps us to respect the teachers in class."

Dorian Brooksby, Deputy Head teacher at Ling Bob says: "I've been very pleased at how well the children have taken to cricket and the impact is felt beyond the playground with the life skills that they learn. There have been quite a number of pupils at school who have been good at sport but also have challenging behaviour. Cricket has helped them to turn things around at school."

The IYS report found that *Chance to shine* was having an impact on pupils' fitness levels as they were continually involved and active in various activities throughout the sessions. It also improved pupils' involvement in PE and increased their motivation, especially those that tended to dislike sports giving them 'a new lease of life' and 'an opportunity to be successful'.

The value of the cricket sessions for improving girls' confidence was notable and they were especially successful at encouraging Asian girls to become involved in cricket.

Chance to shine has even helped some girls to gain a new-found status in school: "It's like everyone says girls can't do cricket, they are no good at boys sports but we are doing it and we are really good. We keep winning all the time and it has made the boys realise we can be as good as them." (Year 6 pupil).

One 13-year-old, Caitlin Byrne from Durham, had never played cricket before *Chance to shine* arrived at her school. She discovered she was a good left-arm seam bowler, developed further at South Shields Cricket Club and now plays at her age-group for Durham County.

Wasim Khan, Chief Executive of the Cricket Foundation says: "The news that *Chance to shine* is having a major impact on our schools, teachers and pupils is fantastic. We will continue to strive to give as many young people the opportunity to play and be educated through cricket."

Ashes hero and *Chance to shine* Ambassador Andrew Flintoff adds: "I think it's massively important for kids to get involved in cricket for a number of reasons. First and foremost, it's a lot of fun. But it can also teach you a lot of good things – respect, self-confidence, discipline, all things you need to grow up as a good person."

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Notes to editor

- The Institute of Youth Sport's '*Chance to shine* evaluation' can be read at www.chancetoshine.org
- A range of generic images are available to download from our online *Chance to shine* Flickr gallery. Please contact us for further details.
- **About *Chance to shine***

Chance to shine is the single biggest grass-roots sports development programme ever undertaken in Britain. The campaign aims to establish regular coaching and competitive cricket opportunities in a third of state schools - 5,200 primary and 1,500 secondary schools - by 2015. To date, around 750,000 girls and boys in 3,000 schools have participated in the programme since its launch in May 2005. The charity needs to raise £25million through private donors, which the Government, through Sport England, has pledged to match-fund.