

Notes for Parents Relating to Participation in ESAA Events

This document answers many of the queries which sometimes arise from parents, relating to their children participating in ESAA competitions.

Constitution and Rules

All activities of any kind are governed by rules which are set from time to time by general committees which are elected in accordance with the constitutions of each institution.

It is up to individuals to choose whether or not they wish to abide by the rules of any institution but anyone not wishing to do so cannot take part in the activities of that institution.

This is the essence of democracy and applies not just to sport, but to school rules, behaviour at work places, road use, health and safety, everything to do with living. We all can only work within the rules.

The ESAA is an association of County Associations. The ESAA is an enabling body, not a controlling body, and has no say in how the rules of County Associations are set. It is the County Associations who set the ESAA rules, not the other way round.

County Association rules apply to all decisions made within the County by the County Association Committee and Team Managers.

Legal Entitlements

All extra-curricular school activities of any description are provided by the goodwill of un-paid teachers giving up their own free time and are not a **right**. It is up to individuals to decide whether or not they wish to participate in any such activities which may be offered, and to determine themselves if are fit, able, and willing to participate fully. Since participation is by personal choice, there is no legal issue of 'entitlement' to be resolved.

ESAA events have no concept of 'automatic qualification' for team selection. County team selection is performed by Team Managers appointed by each County Association Committee, National team selection is performed by Team Managers appointed by the ESAA General Committee. Team Managers can take into account performances at any event, not just County Championships, and specifically can also take into account general standards of acceptable behaviour among other things. As in any team sport, performance is not the sole criteria for team selection - willingness to participate in team activities is also essential.

As with all sports, Team Managers' decisions are for them to make, and are not open to correspondence.

Travelling with County Teams

ESAA events are school activities: attending the ESAA Championship is a school trip and is subject to the legal framework of schools, general rules relating to school trips, and the specific rules of each County Association. Under these rules, qualified teachers are in legal charge of children for the full duration of the trip.

County Associations include rules stating that County teams are under the control and direction of the appointed Team Managers who must be qualified teachers, and that selected athletes must travel with and remain with the team at all times. This rule is no different to that of many other travelling sports teams. They are there in part to provide essential time for teams to get to know each other and to encourage a good team spirit; in part to enable team managers to get to know their team; and in part to ensure that all children can be accounted for at all times.

Three commonly asked queries are:

- I'm going to the event myself anyway, why can't I take my child with me?
- Why can't my child stay at my own hotel instead of at the team accommodation?
- My child gets travel sick, why can't I take them to events myself?

The first two are answered in the points made above.

The third query is common to any school trip and is a normal part of life which cannot be considered as requiring 'special needs'. All reputable coach companies make provision for travel sickness by making arrangements to seat susceptible children appropriately, supplying sick bags, and making frequent stops on route.

Notes for Parents Relating to Participation in ESAA Events

Provision of Accommodation

In common with most sports, from local club right the way up to International level, where long distance travel and overnight stays are involved costs must be kept to an acceptable and affordable level so that everyone can participate on a level playing field (*), irrespective of their personal financial status. This is particularly so in the athletics world where money has always been particularly scarce. Unless someone can organise a massive injection of sponsorship which gives us unlimited finance, this means that overnight accommodation costs frequently dictate that team members need to share rooms in hotels, university halls, or other accommodation. This isn't restricted to pupils - team managers and their assistants also need to share rooms.

There are at least two reasons for this: there simply isn't the money available to fund single rooms, but more practically, at ESAA competitions frequently there aren't sufficient single rooms within the accommodation which is available in any particular area. Staging an ESAA Track & Field Championship requires well over 2500 beds.

There are very well defined advantages to this too: sharing rooms gives the opportunity to make new friends, learn about the tensions within each other leading up to competitions, and sharing training and racing experiences - all of which leads to a better overall picture of the sport and what is required to be the best.

Sharing rooms is a normal part of sporting life. Most athletes consider this to be one of the joys of life within their sporting environment - we find that most children can't wait for the opportunity to get away from their parents for a night or two, and be given the opportunity to compare their lives with other like-minded pupils from different sections of society, on neutral territory!

In the context of the ESAA, children get to meet with a broad range of other children from different environments, in a safe and controlled environment. Many lifelong friendships are made - that is one of the main points of sport!

(*) Note: we acknowledge that some sports may not agree with this statement. In particular, Skiing, Bobsleigh, Mountain Bike, Orienteering, and Cross Country competitors could well object if they have a level playing field!

Child protection measures

All ESAA events are school activities and legally subject to strict child protection measures. All teachers MUST be positively vetted by the police before being allowed to work with children. If anyone has any issues with a specific person they must take them up with the police - the ESAA is not an employer and has no jurisdiction over this.

Parents/family/friends/coaches however are not positively vetted to work with other people's children. It is thus not appropriate for them to try to make themselves part of school trips. This includes a specific case (which is frequently asked about) where club coaches wish to enter athlete's warming up or marshalling areas.

Photographs

Photographs of ESAA events are published in the athletics press, local media, on the ESAA website, and possibly on TV too. All ESAA photographs are taken in accordance with the guidelines relating to photos in schools published by the Information Commissioner with regard to the Data Protection Act 1998. A link to these guidelines is provided on the website.

Photographs and videos can be taken by the public from public areas for personal use only. They may not be published in any form (including personal or club websites) without written permission from the ESAA.

Photographers at ESAA events wishing to publish photos in the media or in any other form (eg. internet websites), or wishing to use them for anything other than personal use must be officially registered and accredited by the ESAA.

It is not possible to prevent photographs of any particular individual from appearing in the media. If this is a problem for you, you are advised not to take part in the event. If any parent wishes a particular picture of their child appearing on the ESAA website to be removed they can request this via the 'contact us' link on the website.