Working with schools - Top Tips

If you are planning to build links with your local schools, we know there are often obstacles to overcome. It can take perseverance and a range of different approaches.

To support your school club link here are some ideas and possible next steps.



Engaging the school

Try to **find a connection** at the school, such as a current player or parent of a player.

If you are sending emails to schools take the time to personalise each message to the relevant person. In the first instance we recommend contacting the Head of Sport/PE for secondary schools and Head of School for primary schools.

If you want to link with a number of schools – for example, host a local girls' festival – a **School Games Organiser** may be able to help. They may already have rugby events planned which you can support. A quick search for School Games Organiser and your area should bring up the Active Partnership webpage with the School Games Organisers contact details.

Your local **County Schools Union** (CSU) may also be able to put you in touch. "Cold calling" can be less effective for initial contact, so you might need to persevere.

Remember, rugby union is one of many sports trying to engage with schools and school staff will prioritise their curriculum. Think of how you can **sell the benefits of rugby** union, how you can meet what the school needs are and make it easy for the school to work with your club.



Why rugby union?

Schools will focus on activities which helps their students develop social skills, get physically active and engaged. Think about how you communicate our core values **Teamwork**, **Respect**, **Enjoyment**, **Discipline and Sportsmanship**.

We have some fun videos on our <u>Love Rugby webpage</u> that shows girls playing rugby at different ages.

Bear in mind that contact rugby may be a concern for staff, but we have a **great non-contact offer** which is easy to teach and play and often used to introduce schools to rugby. You can see Touch Union information for teachers here.



What can you offer?

What can you as a club offer the school? Think about what the schools will be looking for

- How can you support with curricular or extra-curricular sessions
- Can the schools use your facilities?
- Are there volunteering opportunities for students with access to training such as first aid or introduction to refereeing?
- Do you have any equipment that the schools could use?
- Are you able to offer school staff places on rugby courses being run by the club?
- If they have opportunities within the school, can you run a pitch up and play for the girls who have been playing rugby in school.

If you go with a list of possibilities hopefully you will find something that interests them.



Transitioning players to the club

If you are running sessions within the school, we recommend hosting a final session or even better, a festival for a number of schools, at the club's facility. This allows the **girls** to experience and be familiar with the rugby club facility. This can take perseverance and organisation so talk to the school from the offset about how you can achieve this.

Think about some of the **barriers the young person may have**, travel, cost, perception and if there is any that the club can do to support them.

Parents play a key role in a young person going to a club – ensure they have a great welcome and you show off the club and it's girls facilities!

Players are **more likely to come as part of a group** rather than an individual – think about a specific training, or incentivising friends to come.

If the young people only have done non-contact at school, how can you **offer a non-contact option** at the club until they are ready to transition to contact rugby.



Finally...

Try to think from the point of view of the teacher, player, school, or parent and what else they have going on.

What is important to them and how can you offer it?

What might be some of their barriers and preconceptions and how can you address these?

Remember developing a link can take time and perseverance and even though the club may do everything right there still might not be any interest from the school... yet.



