Strathearn Schools Project Report

Background
In 2018 the Physical Education and Physical Activity and Sport (PEPAS) group for the Crieff Schools Cluster decided to promote orienteering as a school sport in the lead-up to the 6 day orienteering event being held in Strathearn in the summer of 2019.
The group includes representatives from each of the local schools alongside the Active Schools Co-ordinator. The cluster includes 6 primary schools and the secondary school.

A funding application was successfully made to SOA and the Orienteering Foundation.

Aims and objectives
The overall aim was to increase the participation in orienteering in the run-up to the Scottish 6 days which were being held in the Strathearn area.
The objective of this project was to give all P5-7 primary school children in the area an opportunity to try orienteering within school curricular time and then to offer opportunities to participate further in the sport through setting up a block of after-school club sessions.

Planned outcomes from the project were:
1. Train up to 15 teachers / school staff through hosting an Introducing Orienteering course
2. Train up to 10 young leaders through hosting a Scottish Orienteering Young Leader course
3. Provide an opportunity for 100 local youngsters to participate in the sport
4. Generate enough interest such that at least 10 youngsters will choose to participate in after-school club sessions.

Headlines:
- ✓ Teacher training for 10 teachers (7 certificated) representing 5 out 7 schools
- ✓ Scottish Orienteering Young Leader course delivered to 12 youngsters
- ✓ 350 P5-P7 participated in an orienteering festival
- ✓ 36 took part in after school sessions
- ✓ 15 took part in a summer camp (12 for 2 days)
- ✓ 9 pupils enter the Sprint competition as part of the 6 day orienteering event
- ✓ Tayside Orienteers membership increased as a result of project

What happened?

Teacher training

Applications were received from 17 teachers to participate in the twilight sessions run in March 2019. In the event fewer turned up with 10 present the first week and 7 completing certification.

Figure 1 Certificated Teachers

Despite head teachers agreeing to the dates and supporting teacher participation – one school proceeded to hold their parents evening at the same time as the second twilight training session and one teacher was unable to attend the second session due to illness. Two schools in the cluster were not represented due to internal decisions within the schools about capacity to deliver.

Those participating included staff from both Primary and Secondary schools, the Active Schools Coordinator and a PE specialist.

Training ran a little later than anticipated – being in mid-March rather than Feb as originally planned. This had a knock-on effect on both curricular delivery and the running of after school clubs.

Impact

All schools participating ran orienteering sessions in curricular time as a result of the training. This was for P5-7 age group in the Primary schools and S1 in the secondary school. As the training was run in mid-March, the sessions in school didn't start until after the Easter break. For most schools this meant it was towards the end of April before they did anything so no after school clubs were run at this point.

I enjoyed the Orienteering course and learned many new practices and games to use while teaching Orienteering to school pupils. These were fun to use and my pupils loved learning a new activity. It was great to see pupils having the confidence to go off into the park during the festival and navigate safely to the points on the course Kirsteen Macgregor Teacher Crieff Primary .

Young Leader Training
A group of 12 young people attended and were certificated for the Scottish Young Orienteering Leader course. Pupils were all in S3/S4. Only two had any experience beyond playground orienteering when they were at Primary School.
Training took part over a school day.
We had foul weather in the morning so more time was spent indoors than is desirable. Despite this, participation was enthusiastic and they are an able group.

Figure 2 Young leader navigating indoor maze

Impact
Due to the delay in running the teacher training sessions, the after-school sessions were delayed. In the end two Crieff based schools ran a block of after-school sessions after the Primary Schools Festival (see below). A further after-school club ran in a school where an orienteering parent organised the input. Input wasn't possible from young leaders in this situation as there was no transport to take young leaders to this school in a more rural location. The timing also meant they would be unable to get there in time to make a useful contribution as this was soon after primary school finished.

After schools clubs were supported by 8 out of the 12 youngsters who had attended the training. 36 pupils attended the Crieff based sessions.

There are plans for a block of after-school sessions in the secondary school in the next academic term where the remaining 4 young leaders will lend support.

Most of the Young Leaders also assisted at the Primary Schools Festival putting on some warm up activities based around their training. This was very positively received by schools.

It is anticipated that the young leaders will also support after –school clubs next year and possibly the year after that too.

Figure 3 Young Leaders at the Festival

After school clubs supported by teachers and young leaders

Figure 4 Practice in setting the map

Figure 5 Checking they know what they are doing

For one young leader in particular, participating has encouraged him to attend school when this had been an issue for him before.

Opportunities to participate in the sport for 100 local youngsters
The local orienteering club Tayside Orienteers ran a festival for the schools cluster supported by the Active Schools Coordinator and the Scottish Orienteering Regional Development Officer . There was also a follow up summer camp held over the holiday period.

Impact
The festival was attended by 350 P5-P7 pupils from all the Primary schools who had taken part in the in-service training and one primary school who had not had teachers at the training. Some pupils returned in the evening with parents to participate in an event at a nearby venue which was part of World Orienteering Week.

Orienteering Festival

Finding the way in MacRosty Park

Pupils from 2 schools also took part in the Scottish Schools Festival with one coming 5th in his age category and second place for a boys team in the secondary schools event which included two of the young leaders. Another school entered but felt in the end they had not had enough practice beyond the school gates to bridge the gap.

Figure 6 Fifth place at Scottish Schools. Third from the right - one chuffed pupil!

Figure 7 Strathearn Primary Pupils at Scottish Schools Festival

Summer Camp

The summer camp was run as a non-residential two day event on two successive days in early July with 17 pupils from P5- P7signing up.

The aim of the camp was to get youngsters confident to be able to go out on their own in a competition. We also decided to use the Star Award system to measure progress and award to them as appropriate at the end of the camp. There were 15 pupils attending the first day. Twelve youngsters returned for the second day. We were pleased with this as it had rained all the first day and one child clearly didn't want to be there at all and was 'sent' by a parent.

Feedback from parents was very positive:

- They thoroughly enjoyed themselves
- They were exhausted! but still managed a game of badminton later....endless energy!!
- Thanks again for the last couple of days, they loved it!
- X really enjoyed his 2 days of orienteering last week. Thank you for the opportunity!

From the camp and after school clubs – 9 youngsters signed up and participated in the Sprint race at the 6 days and 3 attended some of the other days too. Not all who wanted to can attend due to holidays, however, they and their parents are keen to be kept informed about future opportunities to orienteer locally. At least 2 local families have joined the club bringing in 4 juniors and at least one other family is looking to join the club.

Figure 8 Checking the map is set...

"The Crieff cluster schools Orienteering project has been a huge success. This success has been built on the partnership, which has been developed, between Tayside Orienteers, Scottish Orienteering and Active Schools Perth and Kinross. This project has seen local school volunteer's and Secondary pupils trained and delivering Orienteering to local school children. As a result of the hard-work and dedication of the local club, NGB and Crieff cluster Primary PE Specialists, Orienteering has been re-established in the area within schools. I hope and envisage that Orienteering will continue to go from strength-to-strength in this area as a direct result of this fantastic partnership and project."

Nick Keilllor Active Schools Coordinator Crieff Cluster

Figure 9 .Star course. Practising skills in a wood

Figure 10 Preparing for competition!

Lessons

In-service Training for Teaching Staff

A long lead in is required to ensure the dates are ring-fenced.
In-service over a full day rather than two twilight sessions is best in that it is ring-fenced time allocated to training making it easier for staff to commit to and avoid being pulled into other activities.

Planning for in-service needs to start before the end of an academic year to ensure it is realistic to include it in the appropriate academic year.
Working through Active Schools is an effective way forward. They have direct contacts with schools and teachers and also parents.
There is scope to look at widening who accesses the training beyond teaching staff to volunteer parents and support staff who are interested.

Scottish Young Leaders Award

This is an effective way to encourage involvement of young people not actively engaged in the sport to become interested and active. The award itself could be more challenging and this is being raised in appropriate places.

Having a follow-up plan for pupils to use skills is important so they can embed and reinforce what they have learnt. Both the festival and after-school clubs helped in this respect. A system to encourage active reflection that is simple to record would enhance the learning and provide valuable feedback for the future.

Additional opportunities to engage

It was important for there to be more than the experience of orienteering in the school playground. The schools festival provided that opportunity leaving a positive experience and generating an interest both in pupils attending an after school club and also the summer camp.

Bridging the gap between schools orienteering and club level orienteering is tricky. Using a local park is a good step up. This then provided a further step to a local wooded area much closer to the experience of mainstream orienteering. Both of these local areas now have a fully operational permanent course which is a real bonus.

Having a clear aim for the summer camp and system to start to assess progress led to a successful couple of days that left youngsters enthusiastic for more. All except one person made considerable progress and were given the one star level award. The remaining youngster appeared to enjoy being outdoors but not really interested in progressing. We felt he would not be safe on his own whereas the others all improved skills and confidence and all had a go a white level course with more than half completing a yellow level course and two attempting orange level. Drop outs from the first day were due to children being ‘sent’ along rather than more actively choosing to be there.

Conclusions

Overall the project was a considerable success with a large number of young people being left with positive memories and experiences of orienteering. For a smaller group, their skills have been further enhanced and they are ready to take up orienteering as a sport should they choose to do so. Feedback is that at least 4 youngsters and their families intend to join the local club. One has already signed up to the local club and attended club coaching.

The longer term sustainability looks promising as there is now a pool of teachers trained along with young leaders. This provides a means to deliver sessions in a school setting over

the next couple of years at least. Involvement of the Active Schools Coordinator has been pivotal to the success of the project.

Tayside Orienteers are positive about hosting a festival again and replicating the model in other parts of their area. Consideration is being given to follow up coaching, training and events.

It is important that what has been started is built on and followed through. It is recommended that a survey is put out to all young people and parents who have taken part in after school and summer camp activities to see what will work to keep engagement and sustain interest generated. This to be complemented by speaking directly to parents and to include the option of coaching for parents and the opportunity to train in basic coaching skills. It is recommended that the option of setting up a very locally based group of Strathearn juniors and their families is also explored to see what may work. Links to the local Harriers club that have a strong juniors section and to the recently started junior Parkrun should also be explored.

Fran Loots

Scottish Orienteering

Regional Development Officer West