

**SAFE
& FAIR
SPORT**

Safeguarding Policy

**ACADEMIC
EDUCATION**



V1/NOV 2023

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ACADEMIC EDUCATION

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Introduction

Everyone in gymnastics has a responsibility to create a safe and uplifting gymnastics experience for all. British Gymnastics encourages formal education for social as well as academic reasons. Clubs and coaches should promote and support the equal development of academic, social and gymnastics ambitions (The Education Hub – Why is school attendance so important and what are the risks of missing a day?).

The mandatory requirements on Academic Education detailed in this document, are underpinned by the British Gymnastics Safeguarding Policy or Home Nation equivalent, which contains information about who this policy applies to, the scope and purpose. After reading this document, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Welfare and Safe Sport team at British Gymnastics or Home Nation equivalent.

The need for this document and good practice guidance is to prevent poor practices around academic education and gymnastics club training. Poor practices around academic education are those which compromise an individual's academic education in the pursuit of gymnastics ambitions. As a legal requirement, all children in the UK must be in full time formal education (<https://www.gov.uk/know-when-you-can-leave-school>) until they are at least 16 years old by the summer holidays that year, with slightly different requirements depending on where you live in the UK.

For clarity and conciseness, the term 'coaches' used in this document represents both coaches, helpers, and gymnastics activity instructors.

This document was developed for the gymnastics community following consultation with advisory groups, sports science and medicine practitioners working with British Gymnastics and the UK Sports Institute, and relevant external organisations to ensure a child's holistic development is at the centre of any decision making around missing formal education for gymnastics club training.

Regarding academic education and gymnastics, a child-centered approach should be taken. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly states that children have a right to express their opinions and views, that adults should make decisions in the best interest of the child, and there should be no discrimination.

This document also contains information about additional support and preventing poor practices, with further information about the complaints process detailed in the British Gymnastics Complaints and Disciplinary Policy and Procedures or Home Nation equivalent. Alongside the document, clubs and coaches should implement good academic education practices (Academic Education Guidance for Good Practice document).

Definitions

Formal education: This refers to any form of education (e.g., school, home-schooling, apprenticeship), that is a legal requirement.

Gymnastics club training: This refers to any form of gymnastics training occurring in a club setting. This does not refer to 'one-off' type events such as competitions.

Key responsibilities

Clubs, coaches, and support practitioners must ensure they follow the points contained in this document to ensure a child's academic education is never compromised in the pursuit of their gymnastics ambitions.

To ensure safe academic education practices are implemented in gymnastics, parents/carers, children, and formal education providers must read, understand, and act in accordance with this document.

Associated policies & guidance

British Gymnastics & Welsh Gymnastics

[British Gymnastics Safeguarding Policy](#)

[British Gymnastics Standards of Conduct for Coaches, Officials & Instructors](#)

[British Gymnastics Standards of Conduct for Registered Clubs](#)

[British Gymnastics Complaints & Disciplinary Policy & Procedure](#)

Scottish Gymnastics

[Scottish Gymnastics Child protection & wellbeing policy & guidance](#)

[Scottish Gymnastics Code of Practice for Coaches & Officials](#)

[Scottish Gymnastics Complaints: Guidance for clubs affiliated to Scottish Gymnastics](#)

Safeguarding policy: academic education

1. British Gymnastics does not believe that a child missing formal education for gymnastics club training is necessary in the pursuit of achieving their gymnastics ambitions.
2. Gymnastics clubs and coaches must ensure that the missing of formal education for gymnastics club training must not be a mandatory requirement for any child. No child or parent/carer must ever be discriminated against, for choosing not to miss formal education for gymnastics club training.
3. Gymnastics clubs and coaches must not schedule gymnastics club training during formal education time (i.e., school hours) for children under the age of 12.
4. Gymnastics clubs and coaches must only schedule gymnastics club training in formal education time under exceptional circumstances for a child who is over the age of 12. The child's academic education must never be compromised in the pursuit of their gymnastics ambitions, and the agreement on Page 6 & 7 must be signed by all stakeholders (club/coach, parent/carer, and school/formal education representative). The child must also sign the agreement on Page 8 & 9 and must be involved in any discussions concerning their academic education and gymnastics. A new agreement form must be signed by all stakeholders every academic year.
5. It is always at the discretion of the formal education provider (i.e., school) as to whether a child misses formal education for gymnastics club training. Any decision for a child to miss academic time for gymnastics club training must be child-focused. The child's holistic development (i.e., social, emotional, physical, psychological) must be at the centre of this decision to miss formal education for gymnastics club training.
6. If a child is to miss formal education for gymnastics club training, gymnastics clubs and coaches must ensure a plan is established between the stakeholders to support the gymnast without compromising their holistic development (i.e., academic, social, emotional). Regular communication and review meetings must be made between the formal education provider, parent/carer, child, and club/coach. Any training during formal education time must be adapted to the needs of the child (e.g., school exams, injury, academic progress).

Academic education & gymnastics – agreement form

All stakeholders (parent/carer, formal education provider, and coach/club) must comply with the statements below and sign the agreement before a child is to miss any formal education time for gymnastics club training. In addition, there is a separate agreement form, using age-appropriate language, which must be signed by the child. A new agreement form must be signed each academic year. If any stakeholder does not agree and comply with the Safeguarding Policy: Academic Education and any points outlined in this agreement form, a child must not miss academic time for gymnastics club training.

1. I have read and understood the Safeguarding Policy: Academic Education document.
2. I understand that British Gymnastics does not believe that missing formal education for gymnastics club training is necessary for the child in the pursuit of achieving their gymnastics ambitions.
3. I understand that the missing of formal education for gymnastics club training is not a mandatory requirement for any child. No child or parent/carer should ever be discriminated against for choosing not to miss formal education for gymnastics club training.
4. I understand that gymnastics clubs and coach(es) must only schedule gymnastics club training in formal education time under exceptional circumstances for a child over the age of 12.
5. I understand that a child's academic education must never be compromised in the pursuit of their gymnastics ambitions.
6. I understand that it is at the discretion of the formal education provider as to whether a child should miss formal education for gymnastics club training.
7. I understand a plan must be established between the stakeholders to support the gymnast without compromising their holistic development (i.e., academic, social, emotional). Regular communication and review meetings must be made between the formal education provider, parent/carer, gymnast, and coach. Any training during formal education time must be adapted to the needs of the child (e.g., school exams, injury, academic progress).
8. I understand that this decision is child-focused, and that the child's holistic development (i.e., social, emotional, physical, psychological) is at the centre of this decision to miss formal education for gymnastics club training.

Academic education & gymnastics – agreement form

Name of child

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Name of parent/carer

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Signature of parent/carer

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Date

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Name of coach/club representative

.....

Signature of coach/club representative

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Date

.....

Name of formal education
representative (i.e., headteacher)

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Signature of formal education
representative

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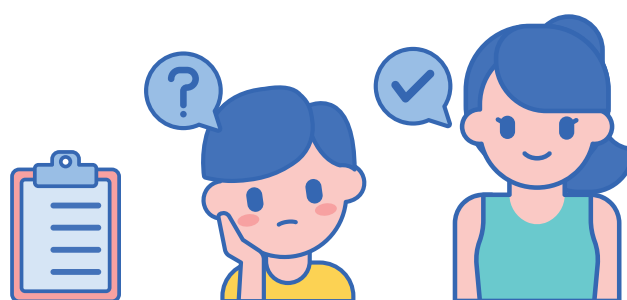
Date

.....

Academic education & gymnastics – agreement form for children

When considering if you should miss any school or education for gymnastics club training, please read the sentences below and ask your parent/carer, coach, or school if you have any questions. If you are happy with all the sentences, please sign your name in the box at the bottom of this form.

1. British Gymnastics does not believe that for you to work towards your goals in gymnastics that you need to miss any school or education time for gymnastics club training.
2. I understand that my gymnastics club must not make me miss school or education for gymnastics club training. You and your parent/carer must not be treated differently by your gymnastics club for choosing not to miss school or education for gymnastics club training.
3. I understand that my gymnastics club and coach(es) must only put on training sessions during school or education time for me if I am over the age of 12 and the decision is best for my overall development both outside and inside gymnastics.
4. I understand that my education must not suffer as I work towards my goals and ambitions in gymnastics.
5. I understand that my school or education provider has the final decision as to whether I should miss school or education for gymnastics club training.
6. I understand that a plan must be created between me, my parent/carer, my coach and school or education provider to support me without making my overall development both outside and inside of gymnastics worse. Any gymnastics training during school or education time must be changed to meet my needs (e.g., school exams, injury, academic progress).
7. I understand that my overall development both outside and inside of gymnastics is at the centre of this decision to miss school or education time for gymnastics club training.



Name

Signature

Date

Support & preventing poor practice



Query

If you are not sure or feel uncomfortable on a practice/comment you implemented, experienced or observed, it is ok to raise a query with someone you feel comfortable with. This could be with a coach, gymnast, friend, welfare officer, parent or club manager.

Reflect

Take the time to reflect on what has happened and whether anything could have been done differently. Would it be acceptable outside of gymnastics?

Seek

It is ok if you are not sure or do not know the answer, there are lots of people that can help including other coaches, welfare officers and British Gymnastics National Welfare Officer Team (welfareofficer@british-gymnastics.org), Scottish Gymnastics wellbeing and safe sport team (safegym@scottishgymnastics.org) or Welsh Gymnastics safeguarding (safeguarding@welshgymnastics.org) or the Northern Ireland welfare officer (welfareofficergni@gmail.com). You can contact British Gymnastics, Scottish Gymnastics or Welsh Gymnastics for advice at any point, this will not be taken as an official complaint.

NOTE: All home nation governing bodies have a duty of care, therefore if they have any concerns this will be escalated appropriately.

Making mistakes

It is ok to make a mistake! If this happens, take accountability for it, apologise, and learn from it to stop it happening again.

Raise

If you believe that you need to raise a concern, contact your club welfare officer. They will then be able to deal with your concern accordingly.

Recommendations

Create a psychologically safe environment for everyone in gymnastics by promoting open, honest and transparent conversations, with regular opportunities for feedback.

Encourage and promote an environment for asking questions and respectful challenge.

Regularly reflect on the day/session/event (see our Positive Coaching module).

Encourage everyone to reflect daily.



Contact information

British Gymnastics Safe and Fair Sport
Safe and fair sport (british-gymnastics.org)

British Gymnastics: 0345 129 7129
welfareandsafesport@british-gymnastics.org
or welfareofficer@british-gymnastics.org

Welsh Gymnastics: 029 2033 4960
safeguarding@welshgymnastics.org

Scottish Gymnastics: 0131 271 9733
or safegym@scottishgymnastics.org

Northern Ireland
welfareofficergni@gmail.com

Regional Welfare Officer details
british-gymnastics.org/safesport/safeguarding#14