

CLUB-SCHOOL LINK PROGRAMME

*** Building Partnerships between Clubs and Local Schools***

OVERVIEW

- The **Club-School Link Programme** is designed to support and **strengthen connections** between schools and clubs to **increase participation**, improve **player development**, and promote **lifelong involvement** in physical activity and GAA Handball – A Sport For Life!
- The programme will be provided by the GAA Handball Club, by a qualified club coach to the local School, either primary or secondary. A **6-week coaching block** will be provided for support provided for up to 2 hours per week in school. On completion of the school coaching, the club must provide a “**Club Day**” for the students and parents to attend to provide the **pathway into club** membership. A follow-up block of coaching within the club can be provided to give the juveniles further opportunity to give GAA Handball a go, and access club facilities.
- All successful clubs will be required to complete the necessary checklists to ensure compliance, and review process to help gain feedback on this *pilot programme* (Sept 2026).

The programme creates structured opportunities for:

- ✓ Students to access quality coaching and pathways into their local club and community.
- ✓ Clubs to recruit and retain juvenile members (primary school & secondary school).
- ✓ Schools to enhance extra-curricular sport provision.
- ✓ School competitions (Cumann na mBunscol & 2nd Level)
- ✓ Creates a pathway to 3rd Level, for National and International competitions. Also, opportunities for further education in Ireland and abroad.
- ✓ Communities to improve health, wellbeing, and social inclusion.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

- Increase participation in **GAA Handball** and **physical activity** among children and young people.
- Develop **partnerships** between schools and local clubs, **supporting the progression** from school sport into community/club participation.
- Support the **physical, social** and **emotional development** of young people.
- Provides **access to the GAA community** via alternative code – GAA Handball.
- Provides a **pathway to 3rd level** participation locally, nationally and internationally as an amateur, as well as coaching opportunities.



By the end of the programme:

Schools will:

- Develop formal links with local GAA Handball clubs.
- Increase student participation in physical activity
- Improve awareness of local club and GAA Handball.
- Provide opportunities for students to progress into leagues, events and club competition.

Clubs will:

- Deliver regular, high-quality coaching within schools.
- Establish clear pathways from school participation to club membership.
- Increase engagement and provide opportunities for the potentially underrepresented groups (e.g. girls, teenagers, children with disability or SEN, younger children age U6-U10).
- Develop future coaches, volunteers and young leaders, while strengthening club governance.

Overall outcomes:

- Increased juvenile club **membership, participation** and **retention**.
 - **Greater visibility** and awareness of local GAA Handball clubs.
 - Sustainable school–club **partnerships**.
 - Increased opportunities for **lifelong participation** in physical activity.
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PROCESS:

1. **Creating the link**
2. **Delivery of programme**
3. **Evaluation**

HOW THE PROGRAMME WORKS?

The core delivery model is:

School → Coaching → Club Experience → Club Membership

- Club identifies a local school.
- Club and school agree a programme timetable (day/time) and responsibilities.
- **6 weeks of coaching delivered in school** by a qualified club coach.
- Club hosts an **Open Day** for children and parents. Participants are provided with a clear pathway into ongoing club activity, facilities and membership.
- Participants are then encouraged to move into **4 weeks of coaching at the club**.
- Club details should be provided, e.g. facilities, location, coaching schedule, contact person.

Options – Target Groups:

- Primary or secondary school pupils (4-18)
- Nursey (3-6)
- TY students [ROI] & A-level students [NI] (age 15-17/18)

PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

Below is an outline of how the programme will operate over four phases, with positive collaborations between both school and club throughout.

Phase 1 – Partnership & Planning

- Club to identify school.
- Confirm roles, timetable and delivery arrangements.
- Complete safeguarding and risk requirements.
- Establish communication with school staff and parents.

Phase 2 – School Delivery (6 weeks)

- Introduction to GAA Handball (taster session).
- Fundamental skills & strokes.
- Fun games and competition.
- Club details should be provided via school platforms, e.g. texts, apps or newsletters to direct interested members to the local club(s).

Phase 3 – Open Day

- Club Open Day for children and parents at club facilities.
- Demonstrations & fun games.
- Information on membership and future coaching.
- Meet the coaches and other juvenile/social members.
- Trial opportunities for new participants (bring a friend).
- Follow-up with participants after the programme on club activities.

Phase 4 – Club Transition (4 weeks)

- Introduce school pupils to the club environment.
- Continue skill development.
- Provide opportunities for games/competition (e.g. internal club league/blitz).
- Engage parents and existing club members, opportunity for upskill training or recreational activity.
- Encourage ongoing club participation.



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CLUB REQUIREMENTS

To participate, clubs should:

- ✓ Be a registered club with the relevant annual registration fees paid to GAA Handball, Croke Park.
- ✓ Have a designated Children's Officer.
- ✓ Meet required safeguarding and governance standards.
- ✓ Use appropriately qualified and vetted coaches.
- ✓ Have appropriate insurance and risk-management procedures, completing necessary checklists.
- ✓ Appoint a programme co-ordinator.
- ✓ Commit to delivering the full programme, from school to club transition.
- ✓ Identify at least one partner school.
- ✓ Have a plan for retaining participants after the programme.
- ✓ Provide opportunities to recruit new volunteers, such as parents and TY students.
- ✓ Clubs should not that all persons who willingly participate in any physical activity do so at their own risk and accept by their participation that there is a risk of accidental injury. Clubs should ensure safe delivery by using appropriate facilities, equipment and eye protection used in line with GAA Handball guidelines.



SUPPORT PROVIDED

Successful clubs will receive a grant to support delivery. The grant can contribute towards:

- Coach hours
- Equipment, e.g. handballs & goggles *(For nonpersonal use, and is recommended to be stored within the club for all ages to access)*
- Promotion and other programme materials
- Club Open Day costs
- Access to resource hub

(checklists, session plans/templates, coaching support)

Budget Breakdown:

Item	Cost
Coach – 6 weeks × 2 hours	€360
Handballs	€100
Goggles/Equipment	€100

TIMELINE

This programme will take place over 3-6 months. The timeline may vary as clubs and schools work together to implement the coaching during school, and transition to the club coaching, with the Open Day/Club Taster sessions also provided mid programme.

The 2026 programme will commence in November (*WC 2nd or WC 9th*), after the mid-term break. The school coaching should be completed before the Christmas break, to allow an unbroken 6-week coaching block where possible.

Stage	Activity
Sept	Programme launch & applications open
Sept–Oct	Clubs confirmed
Sept–Oct	Partnership setup and school engagement
Nov–Dec	6-week school coaching programme
Dec–Jan	Club Open Day & Taster Sessions
Jan–Feb	4-week club coaching programme
Jan–Feb	Club transition (school to membership)
Feb–Mar	Evaluation and reporting

Pilot Year – Sept 2026.

** The exact delivery window can be adjusted to suit the school calendar, and club coaching season.



PROGRAMME BENEFITS

- Strengthen **school–club partnerships** and communication between coaches, teachers and students.
- Increase awareness and participation in **GAA Handball** and **local club opportunities**.
- Attract and retain new **juvenile, adult and social members**, as well as coaches and volunteers.
- Provide **funding support** for equipment and coaching hours.
- Strengthen club structures and promote compliance with **safeguarding, child protection** and **governance requirements**.
- Increase club visibility and recognition through successful programme delivery.
- Provide a flexible sporting opportunity for **schools with limited space** or **access to facilities**.

Short-Term Benefits

- Increased student participation and engagement in sport/physical activity.

- Greater awareness of GAA Handball and pathways into club sport.
- Increased recruitment of players, coaches and volunteers.

Long-Term Benefits

- Sustainable **school-club partnerships** and stronger community connections.
- Improved membership retention and lifelong participation in physical activity.
- Opportunity to recruit more volunteers (coaches, administrators, referees etc.)
- Positive impact on **health, wellbeing** and **social development**

APPLY NOW

1. Complete the application form.
2. Deadline: **12th October at 5pm.**
3. Successful applicants notified by 16th October.
4. Applicants will accept place on programme by **21st October 2026.**
 - Form: [Application - Club-School Link Programme](#)
5. Clubs must commit to the full programme to be eligible for the grant
6. The club should provide proposed arrangements, expected number of participants, and how the club will support participants after the programme, and be prepared to complete monitoring and reporting.
7. Clubs are encouraged to provide sessions to a new age group/class, to provide an intro to GAA Handball to new players, or provide sessions in another local school who may not already have access to GAA Handball sessions.

Overall – A successful Club-School Link Programme creates meaningful partnerships that benefits students, schools, clubs, and the wider community. By providing structured opportunities and clear participation pathways, the programme can increase engagement in sport while supporting health, inclusion, and community development.

Information & Resources

For further information, programme resources and GAA Handball updates,

Visit www.gaahandball.ie



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EXAMPLE – STRUCTURE:

Below are some ideas on how to structure sessions.

60 Minute Session

Time	Activity
0–10 mins	Registration & warm-up
10–20 mins	Fundamental movements & skills
20–40 mins	Skill intro / technical development
40–55 mins	Mini games / conditioned games
55–60 mins	Cool down & feedback

Weekly Themes

In addition, each week may have a theme/activities such as,

Week	Theme	Focus
1	Welcome to GAA Handball	Introduction, basic rules, movement, hand-eye coordination and strokes
2	Strokes & Movements	Simple serving, returning and rally-building games
3	Court Awareness & Positioning	Developing an understanding of court space, positioning and movement through simple games and activities
4	Game Play – Singles & Doubles	Applying basic skills, positioning and movement through fun and social singles and doubles games
5	Games– Just Play	Putting skills into practice through fun, relaxed games with a focus on enjoyment, participation and social interaction
6	Mini Blitz	Fun school or inter-school event to celebrate the programme and use the skills learned.

Other focus points may include,

- Intro & Taster Sessions
- Skill Development
- Teamwork & Engagements
- After-School
- Club Pathway Awareness/Transition
- Competition Experience
- Inter-School Competition
- Inclusion sessions
- Celebration and Evaluation

Additional Activities

Clubs can also provide further opportunities for engagement, e.g.

- Guest athlete visits
- Social media challenges/promotions
- Family participation evenings
- CPD workshops/training

Monitoring Activities

Each week should also include:

- Attendance tracking
- Student feedback
- Coach recap/review