



# Karate in Schools

## **New investment**

The government has announced a £150 m a year boost for sport in primary schools. An extract from the announcement gives the following details.

“London 2012 gave Britain a once in a lifetime opportunity to inspire a nation to enjoy sport and the government wants to embed that into the school day from an early age.

The new sports funding aims to improve the quality of provision in every state primary school in England. This means:

A lump sum for each school, with a per-pupil-top up.. A typical primary school with 250 primary aged pupils would receive £9250 per year. This is the equivalent of around two days a week of a primary teacher or a coach’s time, enough to make sure every pupil in the school can do sport with a specialist.

‘Ring- fenced’ funding – only to be spent on sport – will go directly into the hands of heads and teachers who will decide what is best for their children’s needs. This could vary from specialist coaching and teacher training to dedicated sports programmes, change4life sport clubs and support for after-school or weekend competitions.

A greater role for Britain’s best sporting and voluntary organisations, including National Governing Bodies who will increase the specialist coaching and skills development on offer for primary schools.

Tougher assessment of sport provision via Ofsted to ensure the funding is bringing the maximum benefit for all pupils with schools held to account for how they spend the money.”

Sport England investing £1.5 million a year of lottery funding through the County Sport Partnerships to help primary schools link up with local sports coaches, clubs and sports governing bodies.

The government have linked this initiative to health –

“primary school years are crucial to tackling obesity and physical inactivity. One in three children leaving primary school are overweight or obese. Regular physical activity, not just competitive sport, is proven to reduce the risk of more than 20 chronic conditions including heart disease, cancer, diabetes and obesity.”

## **An opportunity for karate**

We in the English Karate Council know the benefits of karate to young and old:

Karate is a great form of exercise which provides a whole body workout with an emphasis on balance, co-ordination and aerobic fitness.

The complex movements required by karate also challenge the mind and fully engage the young student as they try and master the stances and blocks, punches and kicks, plus Japanese terms and language.

A key benefit, in many ways unique to karate is the code or 'Do'. This promotes self control, self-respect and respect for others. Importantly for head teachers and their staff, karate teaches non-violence and is anti-bullying.

Karate is recognised by the teaching profession – it can be practiced as part of the GCSE syllabus at 'O' and 'A' level, so is part of the PE curriculum. Unfortunately karate is not prevalent in many primary schools at the moment but this could change.

Some of the reasons and solutions are given below:

- A lack of understanding not just in the teaching profession but in the public as a whole about what karate is and how it is different from other martial arts.
- As part of this misunderstanding, some prejudice because karate is perceived as dangerous or violent.
- Karate is 'below the radar' in the sport world and is often (mistakenly) seen as a minority sport whereas it is bigger than other sports such as Judo, boxing and some team games such as volleyball (Active people survey)
- Karate has no recognised National Governing Body and has suffered as a consequence. The lack of any Sport England approved regulatory body has led to some poor teaching of karate and a loss of reputation.

## **What can we do about this?**

- i. Promote good karate by arranging demonstrations and taster sessions in schools, inviting sports administrators and teachers to see quality karate and also explaining the benefits to young people. As part of this, dispel the notion that karate is dangerous (we have an excellent safety record) or teaches violence. Use quotes from parents and teachers about the effect karate has had on children. Also quotes from children themselves on why karate is enjoyable.
- ii. Engage with the County Sport Partnerships who have been given the task of co-ordinating coaching, clubs and schools.
- iii. Work with the Sport and Recreation Alliance to argue the case for a recognised Governing Body with Sport England.

## **Working with schools**

Head teachers will not find themselves short of offers from coaching organisations in the current financial climate. It will be a challenge for them to know which sports and which coaches to choose. This is where the County Sports Partnerships come in. CSP's will be working with Governing Bodies of sport in their area to create a quality offer to their primary schools. This offer is likely to include not only sports coaching in specific sports such as football and rugby but a link to a local club, or an offer to build a club in the school or a cluster of schools.

Karate needs to work with the system and build good relationships with County Sports Partnerships, local authorities and schools. We have great assets in our instructors and their young students – many of whom are of primary school age. Our instructors will need a DBS (formerly CRB) check and be part of a well established Karate Association/Federation. Above all they will need to be excellent teachers of karate – not only the technical moves but also the etiquette – the Do.

If we can take this new opportunity it will benefit schools, pupils and help build a positive future for karate.