

An example of a third-party sports organisation block booking a school's sports facilities

Essex Champions Academy, Brentwood, Essex

EssexChampions Academy is a basketball organisation, set up as a community interest company based in Essex. It has 13 teams playing as Brentwood Fire in national and local league competitions

The academy was established in 1989 by James Potter. It employs three coaches, two part time support staff and over 30 paid junior coaches, all of whom have come through the Champions Academy ranks.

Its contract with Brentford's Shenfield School gives it sole use of a five-court sports hall after 5.30pm during the week and all day Saturday and Sunday.

Aside from use of the sports hall, the academy has access to its own office and storage areas and has been able to refit and use a shared communal social area for both participants and spectators.

It has created its own small cafe/kitchen which provides a source of valuable secondary income. The academy has also fully funded or contributed to many of the school's sports hall improvements, such as new hoops and improved lighting - to the benefit of both parties.

Sports development strategy, programmes and costs

The Academy's sports development strategy begins with a focus on local primary schools:

- Teaching basic skills acquisition
- Developing a competition structure
- Ensuring that basketball rules and coaching reflect pupils' needs. This

coaching culminates in a once a month central inter-school competition which is attended by over 60 local primary school teams.

Coaching follows the bottom-up approach principles of Long Term Athlete Development, which are designed to help prepare players to reach elite levels, but are equally valid for a healthy lifelong participation in sport.

Strong school links have resulted in success for local secondary schools such as Shenfield High, where three different age group teams have reached the national schools finals and, in the case of the under-fifteens, winning.

The model outlined in table one on page 5 is replicated across a number of primary schools running throughout the academy's annual programme. This transfers into a full post curriculum programme at Shenfield School, with the primary school participants developing their skills and attending training and club nights during the week after school and at weekends.

Weekday session cost £3.50 or a term fee of £50. The under 12 to under 18 teams pay a monthly fee of £15 to £30 to train and play depending on their involvement. As a result, over 1,200 individuals aged 18 or less take part at least once a week.

To ensure there is a player pathway into adult participation the Champions Academy is linked to a local senior basketball team – the Essex Pirates who also use the sports hall.

Contracts and other costs

The academy pays an annual rent of £30,000 which covers all spaces and utilities. It is responsible for its own insurance - which covers damage to both the property and injury to participants. As a separate organisation to the school the academy is also responsible for its own surpluses or deficits.

Through the key-holding agreement with the school, one of the biggest financial barriers that prevent a local community using a school facility, the costs of a caretaker, are negated.

This enables the club or organisation to keep costs to a minimum, which in turn keeps the charges low for participants and allows any surplus cash to be reinvested into sports development.

The Champions Academy has managed to achieve a sustainable sports development programme, which provides a revenue stream that covers facility hire costs, eliminates the need for a caretaker and requires limited marketing spend.

Questions and answers

How did the academy persuade the school to give it a contract?

As the academy was already established (but at a different location) it was able to make a strong business case based on its past record.

It was able to meet the school's needs for a guaranteed income but also prove itself to be a responsible tenant that could engage with the school and local community.

What happens if the school requires more time in the sports hall?

On a number of occasions there have been times when the school has wanted to use the sports hall outside of the agreed hours. Clearly stating explicit times of use in the

signed contract gave Champions Academy a strong negotiation position with the school.

How can the academy support the school financially?

The academy has been set up as a community interest company. This means it can access funding that the school cannot.

For example, the academy has successfully secured a number of grants from the Essex Youth Bank which has helped it contribute towards new lighting and flooring for the sports hall.

What happens if there is damage to the facility during their use of the hall?

The academy has taken out sufficient insurance both to cover any damages that may occur and to cover injury to participants. The insurance is comprehensive and costs around £1700 per annum. The insurance covers contents owned by the Academy as well as public and employer's liability.

What happens if damage is caused to the facility after a third-party has locked it up?

A recurring issue with third party facility use, especially for key holders, is responsibility and accountability if something happens when both parties are not present.

For Champions Academy this issue is further complicated as the school contractors enter the facility late at night and after the academy has left and set the alarm.

This does raise an issue over responsibility should the facility become damaged, or equipment stolen when the academy has left the building and the school re-enters it in the morning. This has not been addressed by the academy but will be investigated.

How are equipment purchase, sharing and renewal dealt with? Does the academy use its own equipment or share it with the school?

Whilst the initial arrangement with the school involved sharing the equipment, a number of issues arose and the club now has its own

equipment. It does however help finance permanent school and academy fixtures such as basketball hoops.

How important is storage?

Having sufficient bespoke storage is important for sports equipment, café or marketing equipment.

Initially the Academy shared storage space with the school, but found that equipment was becoming mixed up, suffering increased wear and tear, and was put back in the wrong place. The Academy also grew too large for the shared storage available – its specialist equipment and perishable café supplies needed their own space.

The academy therefore arranged to have its own storage facilities, which can only be accessed by the school for equipment with prior agreement. This ensures that the academy's equipment is kept in appropriate condition and items bought to create revenue such as sports kit and food can be accounted for against income and expenditure.

The importance of adequate storage should not be overlooked for convenience, protection of valuable equipment and avoidance of potential issues with the host and their equipment.

Table 1: An example of a primary school programme currently being delivered (the school has 251 pupils)

Year	Numbers	Output
Year 2	18	Tournament
Year 3	25	Tournament
Year 4	22	Competition -central venue, once a month in a league
Year 5	18	Competition -central venue one a month in a league
Year 6	14	Competition - central venue once a month in a league

These sessions take place before school, at lunchtime and after school over a 35 week period at a cost of £2.50 per session, generating approximately £10,000 a school year.

Further information

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