

School Sport Debates

Introduction

This paper highlights two recent parliamentary debates on school sport and Olympic Legacy. The first discussion occurred on Monday 20th May at the House of Lords during the Parliamentary questions session under the initiative of the Baroness King of Bow and gives useful insight on the current government school sport strategy. The second debate was held by the Education Committee and led by Baroness Grey-Thompson, Dame Tessa Jowell and Baroness Sue Campbell.

House of Lords

The Lords that participated in the debate were:

- Baroness King Of Bow (Labour)
- Baroness Grey-Thompson (cross-bench)
- Lord Addington (Liberal-Democrat)
- Lord Higgins (Conservative) – He is notably Patron of Herne Hill Harriers a Community Sport club
- Baroness Billingham (Labour)
- Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall (Labour)

Lord Nash, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of Department for Education answered questions in the name of the Government.

Key highlights of the debate

Baroness King of Bow triggered the debate by expressing her concerns regarding the fact that elite sport is dominated by private education. State schools do not have the infrastructures and funding to reach the same level of excellence. According to her and Baroness Billingham, the former school sport partnership model enabled a pooling of resources and a narrowing of the gap between private and public education.

Lord Nash took the opportunity to recall the last funding published by the Government:

- The school sport partnerships were expensive and patchy in their delivery;
- The Government are providing £150 million for each of the academic years 2013-14 and 2014-15 to be distributed to every state-funded school with primary age pupils. The funding is ring-fenced and must be spent on improving the provision of physical education and sport. Ofsted will review the schools using this funding;
- The Government will spend up to £166 million on the School Games;
- The Government will release £65 million to hire more PE teachers.

He also announced that:

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- The Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference is working on a scheme for co-operation between private schools and public schools whereby they will share resources for activity;
- King Edward's School in Birmingham is developing a scheme and looking for other schools to do the same

Further, Lord Nash restated some ongoing policies:

- Answering a question from Baroness Grey-Thompson on sport provision for disabled children, Lord Nash pinpointed that the Government has provided £300,000 to Sport England for disability sport to encourage wider participation in sport among children and the School Games are open to all participants.
- Answering a question from Lord Higgins on encouraging children to continue sport after school, Lord Nash recalled that the Department of Health has funded the Change4Life sports clubs, which aim to establish 13,500 clubs in schools by 2015 and have 6,000 partnerships between schools and local sports clubs by 2017 by providing funding for the national governing bodies of the various different sports.

Education Committee

The Education Committee held a second evidence session in its aimed inquiry into School Sports following London 2012 on Tuesday 21 May. The inquiry focuses on:

- The impact and effectiveness of current Government policy and expenditure on increasing sports in schools;
- The scope, appropriateness and likelihood of success of the Government's plans for a school sports legacy from London 2012 and the impact so far of London 2012 on the take-up of competitive sports in schools;
- Further measures that should be taken to ensure a sustainable and effective legacy in school sports following London 2012.

One of the pannels of the Committee was composed of Baroness (Sue) Campbell, Chair of Youth Sport Trust, Baroness (Tanni) Grey-Thompson and Dame Tessa Jowell. They discussed the extent to which the Olympic and Paralympic legacy has been and will be delivered in the context of school sports.

- Both Dame Tessa Jowell and Baroness Sue Campbell regret the suspension of the School Sport Partnerships.
- In particular, Baroness Campbell pinpoints that the school sport partnerships even though imperfect, were a real sports strategy and also a very strong education and health strategy.
- She also refers to her own experience and insight saying that the delivery of physical education was a challenge for primary schools teachers as they have a very limited amount of training on physical education. She said that teachers are afraid of physical education per se, but certainly of physical education that is inclusive of young people with a range of disabilities.



- Baroness Grey-Thompson expressed her concerns regarding physical education provision for disabled children. In particular, she pinpointed that:
 - Fewer disabled children are competing than before the word “Paralympic” was invented and notably few girls take part to competition;
 - PE teachers often do not integrate disabled children during the PE lessons as they do not feel equipped or able to do so;
 - Whilst obesity and welfare bills keep rising, sport and physical activity could help halt the trend and save money to the State.