



The Sarsfields Way

Youth Player Pathway

2026-2028



Planning for the future : Your Club - Your Community



Introduction

Charlestown Sarsfields have a long and proud Gaelic football tradition and have enjoyed great success at both underage level and senior level since the inception of the club in 1888. The club has long been admired for the style of football played by teams in our club and this is a tradition we wish to maintain and develop with our future generations.

Our underage players will spend some of the most enjoyable days of their lives playing Gaelic games and socialising with their friends. Whether attending or playing GAA matches, they will do so during some of the most important developmental years of their lives.

Our role and our responsibility is to ensure that they enjoy and participate in our Gaelic Games in a safe and enjoyable environment and where our games are conducted in a spirit of fair play, where everyone working on our behalf emphasises respect, equality, safety and non discrimination in all aspects of our work with children and young people.

Charlestown Sarsfields Bord na nÓg have developed a new 'Youth Player Pathway Programme' - '**The Sarsfields Way**' which will lay out the clubs vision for our underage teams. Player Pathways are essentially, what clubs are all about. Starting at an early age, and helping players through the various age levels, providing learning, enriching experiences for our players, so that they are still playing GAA at the end of their youth careers and ready for the challenges they face as they progress to the adult ranks in our club.



Club Values

Our club values are critical to developing the culture that we are trying to create in our underage system and are values that we aim to instil into all players from their very first experience with the club through to senior level so we can help develop the types of characters that can go on to become senior footballers. The core values of the Charlestown Sarsfields underage section are:

- 1.HONESTY** demonstrated by what we say and do
- 2.RESPECT** for ourselves, our club, coaches, teammates & everyone we encounter
- 3.DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERSON & THE PLAYER**
recognise that its equally important to develop as people as well as players
- 4.ENJOYMENT** the reason we all play sports and join the GAA
- 5.TEAMWORK** we are all in it together, win or lose.



The Sarsfields Way

Development of a Player Pathway



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Player Pathways

Players develop at varying rates, we must be aware of that, therefore the “Pathway” as laid out here are “reference points” only, and we understand and expect that coaches will use their own valuable experiences as they shape their own particular “team” for the season/s ahead.

We are now encouraging our youth coaches to sit down at the start of each new season, under the guidance of the Clubs new youth Coaching Committee, and decide upon 3/4/5 core skills the club would like each age level to develop for the year ahead. This is only one area of development, as we all realise there is more to improving as a Gaelic player than the skills of the game, amongst others, being Games Sense and Physical Developments etc. Follow up meetings will then take place during the season to see how coaches are finding the challenge.

If we put this structure in place from U-8 to U-12, the belief is that by U-14, each player coming through club will have been introduced to, and coached in, the basic skills of the game. Research has proven, the more competent a young player is at a particular “hobby”, the higher the chances of that player continuing with the “hobby”, in this case i.e. our game. To aid the process all children aged 4-12 will receive a free football from the club to keep and practice with at home and at organised training sessions.

The aim here is to have clear goals with visible progression, through each age level, that is linked via joined up thinking within the club, and relevant to our teams needs for all coaches, and thereby our players during each season. It will assist us, if we all possess a clear vision or “Focus for all our Underage Activity” of what exactly we should be trying to achieve during a given season, to help give credence to our underage activity.



The Sarsfields Way

The 'Sarsfields Way' is our clubs vision to develop a player pathway from nursery age to Minor level and create an environment at all age levels that is both enjoyable for the participants and aids their overall development both as a player and as a person as they progress from childhood to adult level.

It is our intention that this pathway programme is used to help our team coaches, to not only teach our young GAA players new skills, but also to help assess the skills learned by players at each level, committing to ensuring that all our youth teams are as inclusive as possible.

Our aim is to provide a consistent framework that can be followed from U6 up to Minor level providing a fluid and seamless transition from one age group to the next with the intention of ensuring each player can reach their full potential throughout their underage careers and progress to represent the club at senior level.

By devising and developing our own 'Player Pathway Development Programme, 'The Sarsfields Way', we are creating the environment that all our young players "Play and Stay" with our club, not only for their playing careers but throughout their lives.

Throughout this process we will strive to ensure the longstanding values and traditions of Charlestown Sarsfields GAA club are at the core of our pathway.



Our Philosophy

Our Mission

Our mission at underage level is for our club to provide the children of our community a safe and enjoyable environment to meet friends and learn the skills of Gaelic Football

Our Goal

To create a youth player pathway with the ultimate goal of bringing our players through to represent Charlestown Sarsfields at senior level whilst creating an environment where every individual child can reach their full potential and inspire them to have a lifelong involvement with the club

Our Culture

Foster a culture and environment which is always enjoyable, developmentally appropriate and provides a holistic GAA experience where the individual persons long term development takes preference over player and teams short term success – ‘Playing time not sideline time’



The Sarsfields Way – Core Pillars

The key focus of the Sarsfields Way Player Pathway, which will be reinforced with all our coaches and players across all age grades and feed into our core club values at underage level:

- **PARTICIPATION & INCLUSION**

Participation for all throughout the underage grades during training and games,

- **HUMILITY**

Losing isn't Failure. Recognise that player/personal development comes before winning and that players develop at different rates and abilities

- **PRAISE & ENCOURAGEMENT**

We praise and encourage our teammates and players at all times regardless of age or ability. Remember **every player is important to the team**

- **PLAYER RETENTION**

'As Many as possible for as long as possible' - Retaining our players right through from Nursery to Under 18 level and onto senior level is a core pillar of 'The Sarsfields Way' Player Pathway programme



The Player – 6 attributes

Six interacting and connected attributes that sit at the heart of a GAA players DNA - all vital in ensuring they develop to their true potential. These should be developed right from U6 level up to when they move into the senior ranks

1. Learning to love the game
2. Learning to commit
3. Learning to be resilient
4. Learning to improve
5. Learning to take responsibility
6. Learning to support our team mates and others



The Sarsfields Way

The Charlestown Sarsfields player pathway programme starts at Under 6 nursery level and progresses up to Under 18 level. The below table provides a breakdown of the key stages in our underage structures.

Stage	Child				Youth		
Age Group	Age 4-11				Age 13-18		
Phase	Nursery	Early Go Games	Early Go Games	Late Go Games	Early Teenage	Mid Teenage	Late Teenage
Specific Age	4-6 Years	7-8 Years	9-10 Years	10-12 Years	13-14 Years	14-16 Years	17-18 years



The Sarsfields Way

From a coaching and player development perspective and to support the key principles which underpin the 'Sarsfields Way' philosophy - there are five key age groups / stages in the pathway which have detailed player characteristics and the practical elements that must be coached during these stages.

Stage	Approximate Age	Emphasis
Learning to master the ball	4 - 6 years	Should be about fun and participation with key emphasis on physical literacy and core movement skills with the ball
Learning to use the ball well	7 - 9 years	Major skills learning phase where all the basic skills in gaelic football are learned
Learning to play together	10 - 12 years	Emphasis on understanding how to play and work together as a team
Learning about positions	13 - 15 years	The principles of play and applying good game sense increases
Learning to perform	16 – 18 years	Combining all aspects of performance including – decision making, higher physical demands of the game and coping with competition



The Sarsfields Way

The Underage Coach



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Our Coaches

Our vision as a club is to create a coaching system which produces and supports the development of coaches and players. The GAA has developed a model of Coach Education to take account of the different playing capacities that exist between children (up to 12 years), youths (age 12 – 17) and adults (age 18+), and the competencies that a coach is required to display when working with each of these playing populations. These streams have been identified to cater for the diverse needs of children, of youths and of adults. All coaches involved with underage coaching for Charlestown Sarsfields GAA Club will be required to comply with the following requirements.

To safeguard our players, all our coaches are required to:

- Abide by the GAA Code of Conduct
<https://www.gaa.ie/api/pdfs/image/upload/ohl9oq3mbgtnoi6arn22.pdf>
- Complete the GAA/ISC Child Protection in Sport Awareness Workshop
- Vetted by An Garda Síochána
<https://www.gaa.ie/api/pdfs/image/upload/uc9zbv4tfutt2mikzh2a.pdf>
- At a minimum complete the Foundation level coaching award (The club will provide details on how to complete this)
<https://learning.gaa.ie/foundation>



Our Coaching Philosophy

As a club our coaching philosophy is centred around the importance of the **person over player approach**. At the core of underage coaching there must be quality time given to fundamental movement skills. Significant research has clearly shown that if fundamental motor skill training is not developed by the age of 12 then skills cannot be successfully recaptured. Good fundamental movement skills must be developed before we can perfect the specific skills of Gaelic football.

Our underage coaching philosophy centres around our coaches creating an environment that cultivates curiosity so that the players feel comfortable making decisions. In that way, they can cope with responsibilities and they can begin to take ownership of their learning.

In doing so our hope is that we empower players through a holistic approach, encouraging young people not just to be footballers, but to develop outside interests. We believe coaching is all about trying to develop better people, not just better players. It's important to be passionate and focused but it's also vital to enjoy the whole experience and have fun.

This becomes even more important as they progress to u-16 and minor level with exam stresses and the challenges of being teenagers! The role of the coach is much more than us pushing them to be great footballers, but helping them develop as people by asking them about their day in school and exams but more importantly having fun with them and letting them express themselves.

Care is being bothered with, showing interest in, and paying attention to people. Players quickly work out if the coach can't be bothered because they start late, or are disorganised and unprepared. But out of all these things, showing interest in people is really important. The coach who takes time to get to know the players and what they do away from training and matches are in a stronger position to help them.

Furthermore, It's proven that coaches who ask open ended questions to players and let them figure things out for themselves instead of being just told to do something develop much better footballers. Our coaching philosophy as a club will be player led to allow them to make mistakes and learn and figure things out for themselves giving our players more responsibility in everything we do, from deciding what we do in training to problem solving in training and matches.

It is our belief that player retention will improve year in year if we adapt this approach.



Key Principles of our Coaching

To create a coaching environment which supports the development of the player & individual:

- **FUN & ENJOYMENT** must be at the centre of our coaching sessions particularly at our younger age groups
- **PARTICIPATION** for all, regardless of ability. Up to U-14 level it is encouraged that children should play and participate for as much time as possible in matches. At this level, however it also recognised competition is an important ingredient for player development both within the group and on the field of play. It is our aim that where numbers are strong to field two teams at all ages to ensure maximum participation for all players
- **GAMES BASED APPROACH** to training sessions with key focus on small sided games at our youngest age groups – it's proven that small sided games maximise number of touches of the ball each child gets at training e.g. 2v2, 3v3, 4v4 compared to large sided games e.g. 7v7 9v9 etc
- **PLAYER & PERSON DEVELOPMENT** We recognise that player/personal development comes before winning and that players develop at different rates and abilities
- **PLAYER RETENTION** our aim is to keep as many children playing as possible throughout the underage system.
- **DEVELOPMENT OF CORE SKILLS** at all age groups using consistent coaching methods e.g. ability to kick with both feet and pass off both hands is a key coaching focus for 8-18 year olds to make them proficient by the time they reach senior level



As well as using our own pool of coaches, it is also our goal annually to provide our children with additional coaching activities over the course of the year, with coaches from Mayo GAA and our own senior team and other teams within the club, to provide training sessions, skills sessions and workshops throughout the course of the year to help improve the children's development.



Supporting our Coaches



- ✓ That all our coaches feel valued and supported by the club and have access to the support materials for both coaching and GAA activities and activities outside of GAA
- ✓ That we provide coaching education for all our coaches and parents involved with our club and encourage parents to complete the foundation level and level 1 coaching courses which are great resources to educate parents about coaching and what we are trying to do as a club which helps develop our club culture
- ✓ That the coaches share the vision of the Charlestown Sarsfields club and communicate this through their coaching and their actions
- ✓ That the coaches understand and appreciate the values, vision and goals of both the club and the GAA and strive to maintain, develop and improve these through their own actions and best practise
- ✓ That we develop strong links with all the schools in the local area and are complementing one another with the coaching and education of our players.



How Parents Can Help

GAA parents play a pivotal role in encouraging and supporting their child's participation, success and fun when engaging in Gaelic Games and Activities and without their input our club would cease to function effectively.

Parents are key stakeholders in Charlestown Sarsfields GAA, the contribution they can make to our games and activities is invaluable, particularly at underage level and in the day to day running of the club from washing team kits through to helping with coaching, transporting players, assisting with teams, fundraising and beyond. As part of the Sarsfields Way, we embrace parental involvement in the club in a positive way and that channels of communication between the club, its volunteers and parents are working as effectively as possible from the very start.

Children and young people take greater enjoyment from participating in Gaelic Games if their parents are positively involved. They are also more likely to continue playing for longer and have more opportunities to reach their sporting potential. It is important that parents reflect on their own behaviour when their child is participating, ensuring that their support is having a positive impact on their child's progression, development and enjoyment. Discipline is something that the club would like to try and continuously improve. It involves everybody, players, coaches and parents. It is vitally important that Children get the support of their parents when the players are young, to avoid issues in later years.

As a club we will communicate this message to the parents towards the start of every season to remind them of their responsibilities. We will resend it periodically during the season. Charlestown Sarsfields welcome the support of everybody and hope you enjoy the activities. With that in mind, we ask you to take a few minutes to read the poster and do your best to follow it.

10 WAYS TO BE SUPER SPORT PARENTS

1. Praise, encourage and support your child in training and games
2. Be a positive role model. Be aware of how you act and what you say
3. Do not instruct during games
4. Support the coaching staff and respect their decisions
5. Respect the referees and do not argue with them
6. Support your child to enjoy and have fun with their sport
7. Let your child make decisions in training and games. Promote autonomy
8. Be proud of your child's achievements
9. Do not pressure your child about winning or losing
10. Don't get angry with your child. Be patient and understanding



The Sarsfields Way

Nursery 4- 6 year olds





The Sarsfields Nursery

The main aim of our nursery is to introduce children aged 4 – 6 to Gaelic Football in a fun, safe and relaxed environment. The nursery's ethos is 'to learn skills while having fun.' This is the age at which new friendships will be formed, and hopefully, these friendships will last a lifetime. Our core Sarsfields Way 'focus pillars' at this age grade are:



- Fun is the number one priority of our nursery programme
- Develop Fundamental Movement Skills (Agility, Balance, Co-ordination) and Basic GAA Skills (hand pass, solo, catch, kick) through fun activities
- Small-sided games are encouraged, i.e. 3 v3 or 4 v 4, to maximise children's involvement and participation in games
- Coaches should encourage players, acknowledge their efforts and praise them regularly
- Children will be assigned a bib for their particular year. This is the colour they wear on arrival every Friday evening. Below is the years and colours assigned

Learning to Master the Ball (4 to 6 year olds)

Fundamental Movement Skills	Skill Emphasis	Games Types
<p>ABC & RJT's</p> <p>Agility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g. chasing games, dodging, e.g. shadow running <p>Balance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Animal walking Hop in & out of hoops Co-ordination Skipping, Ladder Work, Bean Bag toss <p>Running</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good Technique Forward, Backwards, sideways e.g. Marching, e.g. Stopping <p>Jumping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g. Takeoff & Landing Jump Jacks <p>Throwing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target Roll, Skittles, Bowling 	<p>Handling</p> <p>Throw</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bowling Ball Two handed Bounce catch One hand bounce Body Catch Pick Up stationary & moving <p>Kicking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ground Kick Dribble Punt Kick(Two Hands) (Hard foot) <p>Travelling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knee tap solo 	<p>Target Games</p> <p>The simplest form of a game which challenges players to use the technique previously learnt is to aim or target. Players have lots of time to perform the task without any distraction from other players. There is a low level of decision making. e.g. Skittles, Through the Gate, Tower Ball</p> <p>Court Games</p> <p>Court games require players to pass ball over an obstacle like a net or zone to a receiver. The level of decision making has increased but is limited e.g. Over the River, Hurling Tennis</p> <p>Part Invasion</p> <p>These games require players to complete a task with limited or direct opposition. e.g. Getting through the traffic, 4V4 (2 zones), no goalie, Up north down south.</p>

PLAYER PATHWAY

PLAY TO STAY WITH THE GAA

THE COACH

- Variation. Coach open to trial & error
- Well organised/planned sessions
- Maximise all coaching resources to increase knowledge
- Guide children. Don't tell them
- Be a role model
- Set Fun GAA activities to be played between sessions involving adults

AGE 4-6 FOOTBALL

ENVIRONMENT

- FUN is number one priority
- Coach to player ratio 1:6
- Every child has their own ball.
- Discovery/Exploration
- Trial & Error
- Variation in Equipment using colours & different sizes

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Kicking

Ground, Dribble, Stop, Bounce Kick, Kick from two hands.

Handling

Two hand catch, one hand catch, body catch, different sized balls, Two hand bounce, one hand bounce.

Pick Up

Hands Only, Hand & Toe in a stationary position. Striking, Rolling, Bowling, Throwing.

Movement

Use four steps, knee tap solo.

Decision Making

2v1 Piggy in the middle
3v1 Piggy in the middle (roll ball to pass only)

Target Games

Aim into or at a target to improve technique e.g. Knock the tower.

TACTICAL PROGRESS

PSYCHOLOGICAL FOCUS COACHABILITY OF PLAYERS

Develop listening skills – Simon Says Game

Running Marching, running forwards, backwards & sideways shuffle.

Jumping/Landing

1 leg/both legs/variety of directions

Agility

Chasing games, evasion games. Encourage sidestep & evasion. Balance Exercise – Stand on 1 leg, rope walks, 1 on 1 balance games.

Coordination

Hand Eye- cups and saucers
Eye Foot-Dribble
Eye Foot-Bean Bag Solo

PHYSICAL FITNESS

Zones

Used in games for early development of positional sense.

Stops bunching

Small sided games only. 2v2, 4v4 Max.

Premium on all players getting touches. player development – Max 7v7

TEAM PLAY

THE PLAYER

- Only goes flat out – no sense of pace
- Is self-centred – will want their own ball
- Has little concern for team activities
- Physical & Physiological state of boys & girls is very similar
- Has limited sense of time & space
- Has a short attention span

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Develop basic awareness of performance through outcomes e.g. Targets, scores,

THE GAME

- Small sided games 2v2, 3v3, 4v4 MAX
- First touch soft football
- Each child has their own Water Bottle & Gum Shield
- Have a ball per child at all sessions.
- Child brings their own ball





Key Success Outcomes

The ultimate aim of our nursery is that we create an environment which sees children enjoy themselves with their friends. The emphasis will always be on fun and involvement and then the skills. The club has been blessed with the many parents who come on board each year to help out and subsequently swell the number of mentors up through the ranks.

Our key measure of success at Nursery level we set out to achieve each year as the children move up to the next age grade are:

- ✓ Children develop an interest in the game
- ✓ Children look forward to coming to training every week and meeting their friends
- ✓ Developed the basic motor skills relevant to learning the technical skills of the Gaelic Football.
- ✓ Familiar with the use of basic equipment such as bean bags, various balls
- ✓ Developed a basic sense of game and movement concepts e.g. cooperative, small sided, invasion games
- ✓ Most importantly – Children have had fun!





Help With Coaching

To ensure the continued success of our nursery programme, parents must become involved and assist with coaching the children on Friday evenings and their development. The club will provide any required resources, such as equipment, coaching material, advice, etc..

Parents may often worry that they may not have enough knowledge or experience of Gaelic Games. This is not an issue as every year, most of our coaches begin at the very same starting point, and with the abundance of GAA workshops being run and training courses within the club, there are plenty of opportunities for first-time coaches to learn new skills.

Any assistance, whether putting boots on the children, setting up equipment, etc., would be greatly appreciated. Should parents not become involved, the future of the nursery is not guaranteed. Please talk to the team coach or any of the bord Na nÓg delegates about becoming involved or email charlestownbordnanog@gmail.com





The Sarsfields Way

7- 9 year olds





7 to 9 Year Olds

After moving from nursery, our children will gradually be introduced to organised matches and develop more advanced skills. The ethos at this age level is to continue 'to learn skills' while 'having fun' with the children starting to experience matches for the first time against teams from other towns. Our core Sarsfields Way 'focus pillars' at this age grade are:



- Fun and inclusion continues to be the number one priority
- Continue to develop Fundamental Movement Skills (Agility, Balance, Co-ordination) with an increased focus on developing the Basic GAA Skills (hand pass, catch, kick) through fun activities whilst moving slowly to more advanced skills (crouch lift, body catch, hook kick)
- Perform skills using the right and left-hand side of the body, i.e. bilateral coordination
- Small-sided groups and games during training sessions to maximise touches and participation, i.e. 4 v 4 & 5 v 5 – avoid large-sided games and drills. The target is 250 ball contacts per child per training session
- Games-based approach to training sessions
- Training & games should be enjoyable and inclusive of all players **'playing time, not sideline time'**. Teams should be mixed at all times and not based on 'ability.'
- Players are encouraged to practice the basic skills at home to aid their development
- Contribute to the development of the child's abilities by encouraging the child, reinforcing good behaviour and practice and providing feedback when appropriate



Learning to Use the Ball Well (7 to 9 year olds)



Player characteristics

- First introduction to organised games, i.e. challenge games and blitzes
- Coaches need to focus on positive feedback; this is an age where drop-outs can occur if children think they are not good enough
- This is a key age to focus on developing the basic skills of Gaelic Football, i.e. solo, bounce, handpass and punt kick
- They will have difficulty tackling opponents but will kick the ball away from them and attempt to block any shots
- Give them time to play. At practically every session, the coach will be asked –‘Are we playing a game?’ Provide activities that develop skill in a fun-filled manner- fun games and modified games, such as the Go Games, are best.
- At this age, players will try to win the game by scoring and attempting to deny the opposition the opportunity to score.
- They will also begin to understand the need to change the direction of a run or a pass to be more effective and they will begin to grasp the idea that a player may need support from behind and to the side as well as in front.
- Coaches will continue to run small-sided games at all times; one of the better games is called ‘Over the River’
- At this age, players must also get used to attacking the ball [i.e. running and not stopping] and breaking tackles

PLAYER PATHWAY

PLAY TO STAY WITH THE GAA

THE COACH

- Variation. Coach open to trial & error
- Well organised/planned sessions
- Maximise all coaching resources to increase knowledge
- Guide children. Don't tell them
- Be a role model
- Convey Enthusiasm

AGED 7-9

ENVIRONMENT

- FUN is number one priority
- Coach to player ratio 1:8
- Be sensitive to each players development needs
- Discovery/Exploration
- Actual game results are secondary

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Kicking

Punt kick
Right Hand to Right Foot
Left Hand to Left Foot

Handling

Stationary Catch – Body/Low/High

Movement

Use Four Steps,
One Handed Bounce
Solo

Tackle

Near Hand Tackle

TACTICAL PROWESS

Decision Making

Players encouraged to move into space

Devise games that require players to look up

PSYCHOLOGICAL FOCUS COACHABILITY OF PLAYERS

Ask players imagine themselves as role models to improve skills
Use trigger words to develop concentration

Running Speed Developed through Fun Games – i.e. Chasing Games

Jumping

Jump for distance & in all directions

Agility

Jump for distance & in all directions

Body Resistance Exercises

Fun Squat performed through "laying an Egg" game Balance & Strength improved through Fun Tug of War Games

PHYSICAL FITNESS

Zones

Use zones for basic positional understanding

Players play all positions to experience attack & defence

Small sided games crucial for individual learning

Basic Communication

Call for the ball

TEAM PLAY

THE PLAYER

- Only goes flat out – no sense of pace
- Need approval from coach/parents
- Like to show off individual skills
- Small group activities are vital for improvement
- Imagine themselves as inter county players to improve skills

THE GAME

- Small sided games. 3v3, 4v4, 6v6, 7v7 MAX
- Zones can be used to stop bunching of players.
- Player fouled takes Free
- Players sample all positions.
- Every child has their own ball at home. Play against a wall, with a friend, with group of friends.

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Develop basic awareness of performance through outcomes e.g. Target scores in a minute



Learning to Use the Ball Well (7 to 9 year olds)

Fundamental Movement Skills	Skill Emphasis	Games Types
<p>ABC & RJT's</p> <p>Agility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g. zig zag relay, <p>Balance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g. One leg hopping e.g. hop land on other leg <p>Co-ordination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skipping, Ladder Work, <p>Running</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g. On the spot e.g. Relay races e.g. Hurdle running e.g. Stopping <p>Jumping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g. leap frog, Donkey kicks <p>Throwing</p> <p>Target Roll, Bowling, Dodgeball</p> <p>Conditioning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner Resistance e.g. Tug of war, e.g. Push & Pull partner, e.g. The bridge, whole body exercises, introduce basic flexibility 	<p>Handling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Body Catch Low catch High catch Fist pass Hand pass Crouch lift (stationary ball) <p>Kicking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Punt kick(Front foot) Left & right hook Kick(one hand) Pick up foot <p>Travelling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High bounce Toe tap(stationary) Soft foot Roll <p>Tackle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Near hand tackle Shadowing Frontal Tackle Block Down 	<p>Target games</p> <p>Coaches should start with games that have very little decision making and contact. Have target games where players simply aim at or through targets e.g. 2 markers, Through the gate</p> <p>Court games</p> <p>Aim in these games to pass e.g. net or middle zone marked out. (No mans land, 4 ball battle, Over the river)</p> <p>Progress onto:</p> <p>Field games</p> <p>Rounder type games, more tactical decisions needed e.g. where to kick, when and when not to run. If you intend to play invasion games try: Go Football Court games - aim in these games to pass a ball over an obstacle e.g. net or middle zone marked out. (No mans land / 4 ball battle)</p> <p>Progress onto:</p> <p>Field games</p> <p>Rounder type games, more tactical decisions needed e.g. where to kick, when and when not to run. Progress onto Invasion games - part or full invasion games 'Go Games'</p> <p>Small sided games 4 v 4 or 5 v 5, two touch football, ie one solo one hope then pass</p> <p>Pitches should always have a line up the middle to practice for go games whereby defenders cannot pass the line or forwards cannot come back over the line to avoid strong players dominating</p>



Key Success Outcomes

The main aim at 7 to 9 year old age grade is that we continue to create an environment which sees children enjoy themselves with their friends. The emphasis will always be on fun and involvement and then the skills. At this age grade our focus on skills will increase as we look for children to continue to develop their ability mastering the basic skills of the game, whilst for the first time gaining experience playing matches against other teams.

Our key measure of success at this age level we set out to achieve each year as the children move up to the next age grade are:

- ✓ Children should be starting to be comfortable with the basic skills of the games i.e. solo, hand pass, bounce, punt kick and starting to develop both left and right hand and foot
- ✓ Should be accustomed to playing with teammates and be comfortable in a team environment
- ✓ Begin to develop decision making when on and off the ball within open patterns of game play.
- ✓ Have a greater awareness of space and be encouraged to play with their 'heads up'
- ✓ Children should have gained experience playing in all positions on the field and have enjoyed plenty of game time during matches e.g. minimum of two quarters in every game
- ✓ Praise and encouragement for Children at all times

REMEMBER: We recognise as a club that its important that children are not pushed too hard too soon as drop outs can be common at this age grade as some children can be self conscious and feel they are not good enough or not enjoy the first introduction to physical contact with other teams. It is important as a club we strive to ensure children maintain their interest and continue to develop as players and people whilst enjoying the environment.



The Sarsfields Way

10- 12 year olds





10 to 12 Year Olds

Children at this age level are starting to get stronger and take instruction more. This is a key age when children become more self-conscious about their ability level and in learning new skills. It's a critical time for coaches to ensure children of all ability levels are given due consideration during training and matches. The club's ethos is to continue 'to learn skills' while encouraging children to learn more advanced skills and basic tactical elements of the game. Our core Sarsfields Way 'focus pillars' at this age grade is:



- Fun continues to be important, and player and personal development takes priority over results
- Developing more advanced skills putting a greater emphasis on the use of both hands and both feet and encouraging children to play with their 'heads up' during game-based activities
- Encourage players to practice skills at home, particularly on the non-dominant side
- Games-based approach to training sessions and maximise the number of ball contacts per child per session, e.g. **250 ball touches per child per session**
- Small-sided games at training sessions continue to be encouraged
- Participation of all children in matches & training activities – **'Playing Time, not Sideline Time'**
- Where numbers permit, the club will enter two teams in all competitions to maximise player participation
- Praise and encouragement for Children at all times

Learning to Play Together (10 to 12 year olds)

Fundamental Movement Skills	Skill Emphasis	Games Types
<p>Introduction of flexibility/stretching Balance</p> <p>Speed mechanics: correct arm and leg action Speed</p> <p>Warm up games incorporating the A.B.C's of athleticism (i.e. agility, balance and co-ordination)</p> <p>Multi directional runs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • game based runs. <p>Ladders and hurdles are useful aids here.</p>	<p>Hook kick</p> <p>Side step and feint: without the ball initially then introduce the ball</p> <p>Free kicks, 45's and penalties</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact • Direction • Power • Kick to a player <p>1 ball between every 2 to 3 players</p> <p>Small sided games: 2v2</p> <p>Practice uneven teams in small sided games: 3v5. etc</p> <p>Drills with small numbers that are game related</p> <p>Conditioned games: e.g. no hop, no solo, only score with non dominant foot</p>	<p>Court games</p> <p>Field games</p> <p>Full Invasion games</p> <p>Conditioned games</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal walks • Donkey push • 1 arm tug of war • Rugby push and pull • Wrist boxing • Stubborn donkey • Stamp • Parcel

Learning to Play Together (10 to 12 year olds)

Fundamental Movement Skills	Skill Emphasis	Games Types
<p>Speed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further development of speed in warm ups (Efforts less than 6 secs) e.g. quickness and change of direction and reaction sprints <p>Strength</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce Core strength e.g. twist with partner • Own body strength exercises e.g. Pull ups press ups etc.... • Introduce plyometric training e.g. bounding and hopping <p>Stamina</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endurance related activities: e.g. • Relay running • Small sided games & ball drills • Circuit training with the ball <p>Flexibility & Co-ordination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • Dynamic stretching & mobility Exercises • Warm up & cool down concept 	<p>Handling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High catch • Hand passing (using both hands) • Movement jump and catch Kicking: shooting for goals and points <p>Kicking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Punt kick left & right • Punt kick outside foot • Crouch lift moving ball • Toe lift • Hook kick left & right • shooting for goals and points <p>Travelling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solo Run left & right • Low bounce • Dummy solo <p>Tackle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Near hand tackle • Shadowing • Shouldering • Frontal tackle • Block down <p>Scoring: With the feet and the fist</p> <p>Blocking Part 2: Make contact with the ball</p>	<p>Court Games</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over the river • Hit the corners <p>Field Games</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crazy kicks • Batter bonanza <p>Part Invasion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4v1 (Grid) • Pass and Attack <p>Full Invasion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4v4 (Split ends) • 5v5 • Go Games

PLAYER PATHWAY

PLAY TO STAY WITH THE GAA

ADULT

18+ YRS

LATE TEENAGE

16-17 YRS

TEEN TEENAGE

14-15 YRS

EARLY TEENAGE

12-13 YRS

LATE JUNIORS

10-11 YRS

EARLY JUNIORS

7-9 YRS

COLEEN

4-6 YRS

TURAS

THE COACH

- Simple Tips
- Cheer & Praise
- Organised/Planned coaching sessions
- Check if players have their own ball at home
- Recognise that player development comes before winning.

THE PLAYER

- Have a short attention span
- Enjoy team games
- Compete with greater intensity against each other
- Can be self-conscious in learning new skills

AGED 10-12

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Kicking

Hook Kick on both sides of the body. Shoot for points & goals.
Punt Kick outside of the foot.
Punt kick for distance pass.

Handling

Hand pass using both sides of the body.
Reach catch moving towards the ball.
High catch with feet off the ground.

Movement

Solo & bounce maximising four steps

Tackling

Shadowing, block down & shoulder.

Body resistant exercise

Performed through FUN games incorporating Push, Pull, Squat, Lunge movement patterns. E.g. Leap Frog

Evasion

Encourage use of side step & feint in possession of the ball

Continue to develop principles of Running & Jumping

Decision Making

When in possession challenge the players to scan options – Pass, Travel or shoot.
Off the ball – Who to mark.
How to be an option.

Coach to question players during session and in games on decision making.

Coach to place conditions on training games to challenge decision making e.g. No play, Kick pass only, Left/Right foot only.

Support Play

Support Play – Support your team makes in attack & defence. Coach to praise off the ball support runs.

Coaching sessions are game based to improve team play. Training Games have a variety of focus – Scoring, defending, keeping possession, use width.

ENVIRONMENT

- FUN is number one priority
- Coach: Player Ratio – 1:8
- At least 1 football for every 2 players
- Players enjoy practice. Coach sets FUN tasks between sessions.
- Player enjoy game experiences rather than results



THE GAME

- Small sided games 5v5, 7v7, 9v9, 11v11 MAX
- Size 4 smart touch football
- Continue to allow players to explore all positions
- Limit plays of the ball in coaching sessions to mirror that of match day rules.
- Has their own ball at home

PSYCHOLOGICAL FOCUS OF PLAYERS

Outline the link between practice and improvement.

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Develop basic awareness of performance through outcomes e.g. 5 points in a row from 10 meters out.

PHYSICAL FITNESS

TACTICAL PROWESS

TEAM PLAY

PLAYER PATHWAY

PLAY TO STAY WITH THE GAA

THE COACH

- Get to know your players individually
- Well organised and planned sessions
- Games Based Coaching
- Set Individual skill Challenges to do away from the field

AGED 10-12

ENVIRONMENT

- FUN is number one priority
- Coach: Player Ratio = 1:10
- At least 1 ball for every 2 players
- Players development takes priority over results
- Fun & Enjoyment are a major theme of all sessions

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Kicking

Emphasis on accuracy. Kicking on the move & Kicking for distance. Free taking (hands & ground)

Handling

Low, Chest & High Catch in pressured situations

Movement

Dummy Kick/Solo, feint & Sidestep. Attack ball at full pace. Chip lift.

Tackling

Shadowing player in possession both on & off the ball

Decision Making

Play conditioned games to create pressure on players decision making

Activities focus on building skills to gain & maintain possession of the ball under pressure

Learning to work in team environment, individual decisions now has more impact on team outcome.

PSYCHOLOGICAL FOCUS COACHABILITY OF PLAYERS

Players aware of how activities are used to improve specific skills. Look for feedback from players to question this.

Body resistant exercise

Performed through FUN games incorporating Push, Pull, Squat, Lung movement patterns. E.g. Leap Frog

Evasion

Encourage use of side step & feint in passion of the ball

Running

Challenge players to stop suddenly to develop deceleration

Team Play

Encourage and support team mates vocally

Work on teams ability to create space when in possession

Work on teams ability to deny space when not in possession



THE PLAYER

- Begin to see relationship between effort & outcome
- Potential changes in maturation rates due to a change in school environment
- Become very self-conscious in front of group
- Lack of confidence may be a barrier to development

PHYSICAL FITNESS

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Using imagery ask players to mirror recent pieces of play by their hero's

THE GAME

- Small sided games 5v5, 7v7, 9v9, 11v11 MAX
- Size 4 football
- Continue to allow players to explore all positions
- All players experience game time in matches
- Limit plays of the ball in coaching sessions to mirror that of match day rules.



Key Success Outcomes

The main aim for 10 to 12-year-olds is to continue creating an environment where children enjoy themselves with their friends. At this age grade, our focus on skills will increase as we look for children to continue to develop their ability to master the basic skills of the game whilst, for the first time, starting to play on bigger pitches and with increased numbers.

Our key measure of success at this age level we set out to achieve each year as the children move up to the next age grade are:

- ✓ Children should be able to master the basic skills of the game and begin to show signs of being comfortable using the non-dominant side. Target of 250 ball contacts per player per training session
- ✓ Be gaining plenty of experience in playing matches with two teams representing the club at this age group
- ✓ Start to be familiar with tactical instructions & positional sense during games
- ✓ Be able to take instructions from the coach and give feedback
- ✓ Have a greater awareness during matches of space
- ✓ Children should have continued to gain experience playing in different positions and not be confined to one position or area on the pitch
- ✓ The club will aim to field two teams at this age group to ensure maximum playing time for all
- ✓ Developed a respect for discipline and playing and training environments.
- ✓ Demonstrate respect for officials and decisions made by them
- ✓ Learned to deal with success, disappointment, mistakes and/or failures through continued positive involvement





The Sarsfields Way

13 - 15 year olds





13 to 15 Year Olds

At this level kids are now starting to enter structured league and championship type matches on a fully competitive basis. The emphasis should continue to be on participation, player and personal development and ensuring we retain as much as much of our player base as possible.

Our core Sarsfields Way ‘focus pillars’ at this age grade are:

- Participation continues to be important and player development should continue to be primary focus
- First introduction to strength and conditioning programmes
- Increase focus on developing the players non dominant side
- Understand the fundamental principles of attack and defence
- Develop communication and support play skills through pre defined patterns of play e.g. open play and set piece play
- Games based approach to training sessions
- Where numbers permit the club will enter two teams in all competitions to maximise player participation
- Winning is becoming an integral part of their psyche. This competitive edge must not be blunted, but only encouraged in an age appropriate manner. However coaches must be aware that some player’s are still there to enjoy the experience of participating with their friends, learning new skills etc.



Learning About Positions (13 to 15 year olds)

Player characteristics

- While players in this stage may have the same chronological age, they may differ significantly in terms of biological age, i.e. one may be more physically developed than another
- The onset of puberty usually occurs during the early stages of this cycle. Aerobic and strength programmes should be individualised or grouped according to their Peak Height Velocity (PHV) N.B. Only trained coaches to undertake this training
- Broad base skills and sports specific skills
- Advanced technical skill development/skills developed under pressure.
- Fitness with the ball in skills and drills
- Gain an understanding of the principles of attack and defence through grids and small sided games
- Increased emphasis on development of the players non dominant side and continued focus on developing skill base in this regard
- Players can be introduced to moderate anaerobic and strength training through ball work
- Players should be introduced to psychological training through games that promote concentration and better decision making

Learning About Positions (13 to 15 year olds)

SKILL EMPHASIS

- ✓ Team group skills
- ✓ Basic teamwork skills
- ✓ Full game rules

PERSONALITY

- ✓ Ready for concentrated and specific training programmes
- ✓ Better able to work together –easier to develop teamwork now
- ✓ Begin to notice differences in abilities

THE CHILD NEEDS TO...

- ✓ Become a team player
- ✓ Become coachable
- ✓ Become competitive
- ✓ Develop an appreciation of, and responsibility for, ones own actions and their consequences for self and team
- ✓ Develop the responsibility to prepare fully for training and competition

REMEMBER: The emphasis for the player at this stage is age appropriate, balanced (left & right), general physical conditioning through games related activities.

Learning About Positions (13 to 15 year olds)

Fundamental Movement Skills	Skill Emphasis	Game Skills	Conditioning
<p>Speed mechanics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • correct arm and leg action <p>Warm up games</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • incorporating the A,B,C*s of athleticism (i.e. agility, balance and co-ordination) <p>Multi directional runs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Game based runs. • Ladders and hurdles are useful aids here <p>Running Guidelines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0-8 seconds • 10-30 seconds • 30-90 seconds • 90 seconds 	<p>Match Pace Games</p> <p>Conditioned Games</p> <p>Support Play</p> <p>Overlap</p> <p>Keeping Possession</p> <p>Breaking Ball</p>	<p>Developing a style of play</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defensive play • Forward play <p>Games for better team play</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team 2000 <p>Speed of Thought and speed of play</p> <p>Simple Tactics</p> <p>Understanding Space</p>	<p>Introduction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core stability • Intro body weight circuit training • S& C

Learning About Positions (13 to 15 year olds)

Skill Emphasis	Game Skills	Game Specific
<p>Handling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ball feint • Fist pass for distance • Overhead tap on • Catching at speed <p>Kicking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Punt kick to moving target • Long Kick pass • Scoring from angles • Assisted Chip lift • Penalty Kick <p>Travelling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swerve • Change of pace with the ball <p>Tackle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Near hand tackle • Delay opponent & Shadowing • Frontal Tackle • Dive block • Hand off 	<p>Speed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi directional (Efforts less than 20 secs) • Quick footwork and agility • Acceleration and deceleration e.g. go go stop • Game related reaction exercises • Relay racing e.g. crazy ball drill <p>Strength</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body weight Circuit training Upper body, legs, and back • Develop core strength e.g. plank • Learn correct weight lifting techniques e.g. squat, clean, snatch • N.B. Only qualified coaches to undertake this training • Introduce free weights and medicine balls • N.B. For upper age range group only Plyometric e.g. multi directional jumps <p>Stamina</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3v1games • Drills incorporating the ball <p>Flexibility & Co-ordination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain flexibility exercise • Dynamic warm up 	<p>Part Invasion Zone games</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide man • Zone to zone <p>Full Invasion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backs v Forwards • 15 v 15 • Possession Games • One rule games e.g. Give and Go 4 seconds 2 touch

PLAYER PATHWAY

PLAY TO STAY WITH THE GAA

THE COACH

- Well Organised/Planned Sessions
- Allow players to make their own decisions on the pitch
- Accept that mistakes are a big part of player learning & development
- Set example by showing respect to match officials & opponents at all times
- Use simple language

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Kicking

Continue development of kicking with increased emphasis on accuracy, movement, distance. Introduce free taking from ground & hand to all players.

Handling

Low/High/Body catch in pressured situations

Movement

Dummy kick/solo, Feint & Sidestep. Attack ball at full pace.

Tackle

Shadowing player in possession and off the ball. Near hand tackle

Flexibility

through static stretching and dynamic mobility activities

Speed

multidirectional, between 5M -25M with complete recovery in between. Built into warm up.

Strength

Improve core strength through own body weight exercise e.g. Plank

PHYSICAL FITNESS

THE PLAYER

- Popularity influences self esteem
- Tend to be self-critical, rely on the coach for positive reinforcement
- Huge difference in physical development between players.
- Players do not make connection between physical development and loss of form

PSYCHOLOGICAL FOCUS COACHABILITY OF PLAYERS

Players can fully recognise the improvements made through individual practise

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Question players individually on decisions made on and off the ball. Highlight recent examples of good play at senior level and question players on

ENVIRONMENT

- Coach to player ratio 1:10
- At least 1 ball for every 2 players
- Enjoyment and fun for players is still a key consideration when planning sessions.
- Match results are secondary to player development

TACTICAL PROWESS

Decision Making

Understand the specific responsibilities of the various position through playing experience and minimal direction from coach
Small sided games 5v5 7v7 are crucial in players developing decision making

Appreciate the space of a full size GAA pitch i.e. Use of width & depth.

Attacking play

Implement principles of attack – possession & support play

Maintain possession

Moving the ball as a team.

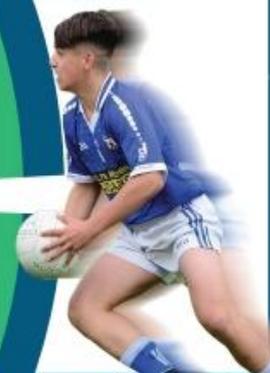
Defending

Implement principles of defend – Delay, Deny, Dispossess, Deliver

TEAM PLAY

THE GAME

- Players beginning to become accustomed to specific position but must still be challenged to playing a variety of positions.
- All players experience game time in matches
- Aim to provide at least 16 games in a season for your team.
- Size 5 football





Key Success Outcomes

The main aim at this age grade is to continue developing our players. Working on improved decision-making and mastering the essential skills in pressure situations is an important focus in this age category, combined with a continued emphasis on using both sides of the body. Our key measure of success at this age level we set out to achieve each year as the kids move up to the next age grade are:

- ✓ Kids should be beginning to be more than comfortable using non-dominant side
- ✓ Be able to develop relevant decision-making in a variety of positions
- ✓ Understand positional awareness
- ✓ Demonstrate the ability to communicate with officials, players and management in a non-confrontational manner
- ✓ Start to understand & appreciate the correlation between playing Gaelic Games and a healthy lifestyle
- ✓ Develop the skills to be able to integrate oneself and all members of a squad in all aspects of team activity
- ✓ Where numbers permit the club will enter two teams in all competitions to maximise player participation
- ✓ Be able to react and adjust to appropriate patterns of play based on environmental situations e.g. how many players aside



The Sarsfields Way

16 - 18 year olds





16 to 18 Year Olds

At this age level kids are now young adults and should be able to perform the skills of Gaelic Football to an autonomous level in an open environment incorporating team mates and/or opponents.

Our core Sarsfields Way ‘focus pillars’ at this age grade are:

- Participation continues to be important and player development should continue to be primary focus
- Increased focus on developing the players non dominant side
- Games based approach to training sessions
- We recognise that players can be under exam pressure. Be aware that players can be facing life-changing events – college/socialising etc.
- We watch for late developers. Here “late developers” can pass out the former “star”. Be aware of this, from both players perspective.
- We encourage positive lifestyle choices for the players
- Where numbers permit the club will enter two teams in all competitions to maximise player participation
- We recognise there should be a clear connect between the U-16/Minor team in terms of the development of a consistent style of play with the U20 and senior grades



Learning To Perform (16 to 18 year olds)



Player characteristics

- During this phase players begin to reach their physical peak and those slow developers begin to catch up with their peers.
- Encourage ideas of self-awareness and self-help within players
- At this stage a Functional Movement Screening (conducted by a Physio) should be carried out on each player and the results along with their Critical Success Factors (CSF's) identified by each player in their Self Assessment Profile should form the basis of their Personal Development Plan. (PDP)
- As a result of the above, each player should have a PDP, a component of which should be an individualised conditioning programme developed and delivered by a Strength & Conditioning coach. Every player should be committed to their programme as they will have had an input into their Self-Assessment Profile
- Advanced technical skill development/Skills developed under pressure
- Understand the principles of game play, tactics and game sense
- Accept that the team is paramount and their role within the team structure
- Instil concepts of mental toughness and calmness under pressure (winning behaviours)
- Encourage flexibility and fine tune the generic skills to play in a variety of positions
- Players should be encouraged to embrace positive life-skills, i.e. time-management and to take control of their own athletic development.

Learning To Perform (16 to 18 year olds)

SKILL EMPHASIS

- ✓ Develop and improve athleticism
- ✓ Improve teamwork skills
- ✓ Develop specific position skills

PERSONALITY

- ✓ Ready for individual programs to help work on weaknesses
- ✓ Will respond well to praise and challenge
- ✓ Develop mental fitness

THE CHILD NEEDS TO...

- ✓ Become capable of self-evaluation (need to be taught how)
- ✓ Become better equipped in the decision-making process
- ✓ Develop a winning mentality
- ✓ Remain humble

REMEMBER: Understand principles of game plays, tactics and game sense. Encourage a positive lifestyle and build concepts of teamwork and leadership. Instil concepts of mental toughness and calmness under pressure (winning behaviours)

Learning To Perform (16 to 18 year olds)

Fundamental Movement Skills	Skill Emphasis	Physical Focus	Game Specific
<p>Speed mechanics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • correct arm and leg action <p>Warm up games</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • incorporating the A,B,C*s of athleticism (i.e. agility, balance and co-ordination) <p>Multi directional runs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Game based runs. • Ladders and hurdles are useful aids here <p>Running Guidelines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0-8 seconds • 10-30 seconds • 30-90 seconds • 90 seconds 	<p>Game Plays</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to play with & against a sweeper • Man Marking • Zonal Marking <p>Kicking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagonal ball • Percentage plays when shooting <p>Keeping Possession</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the ball player • Breaking the tackle • Change direction of play 	<p>Speed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi Directional • Quick footwork & agility • Planting the foot • Running mechanics & technique • Strength work to improve speed <p>Strength</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional movement • Core & weights programme • Technique & control <p>Stamina</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small sides games <p>Flexibility & co-ordination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain flexibility exercises • Dynamic warm up 	<p>Intense small field</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Across the line • Total Football • Break, ball & kick • 4 goal option <p>Full invasion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backs v forwards • 15 v 15 • Deploying a sweeper • Defending the zones • Deploying the big man • Various conditions

PLAYER PATHWAY

PLAY TO STAY WITH THE GAA

THE COACH

- Well Organised/Planned Sessions
- Allow players to make their own decisions on the pitch
- Accept that mistakes are a big part of player learning & development
- Set example by showing respect to match officials & opponents at all times
- Use simple language

THE PLAYER

- Strong connection with admired adult (role models)
- Ability to mix socially with all teammates & adults
- Commitment to individual practice away from coaching session/matches.
- Personally responsible for Hydration/Nutrition
- Manage rest and recovery e.g. Foam Rolling
- Manage time effectively between school & sport

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Handling

Low/High/Body catch in pressured situations

Movement

Dummy kick/solo, Feint & Sidestep. Attack ball at full pace.

Tackle

Shadowing player in possession and off the ball. Near hand tackle

Flexibility

through static stretching and dynamic mobility activities

Speed

multidirectional, between 5M -25M with complete recovery in between. Built into warm up.

Strength

Improve core strength through own body weight exercise e.g. Plank

PHYSICAL FITNESS

PSYCHOLOGICAL FOCUS COACHABILITY OF PLAYERS

Players can fully recognise the improvements made through individual practise

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Question players individually on decisions made on and off the ball. Highlight recent examples of good play at senior level and question players on

ENVIRONMENT

- Coach to player ratio 1:10
- At least 1 ball for every 2 players
- Have awareness of games schedule for others teams your players may be representing.
- Enjoyment & Fun for players still a key consideration when planning sessions.

TACTICAL PROGRESS

Decision Making

Using questioning, vary your coaching style to improve players decision making:

Guided Discovery

"show me when its best to solo ball or pass it long"

Trial & Error

"try to decide to support in front of the player or behind the player"

Observation & feedback

"let's watch this and then..."

Players are challenged to adapt to a number of team playing styles throughout the season.

Use questions to help players problem solve "in game" when playing against opposition with a particular playing style.

Reflect on these scenarios in the training sessions that follow using conditioned games.

TEAM PLAY

THE GAME

- Players beginning to become accustom to specific position but must still be challenged to playing a variety of positions.
- Aim to provide at least 16 games in a season for your team.
- Size 5 football





Key Success Outcomes

The main aim at this age grade is that we continue to develop our players as we prepare them to move to senior level. During this phase, high intensity individual-event and position-specific training is provided to players/athletes year round. Players/athletes, who are now proficient at performing both basic and sport-specific skills, learn to perform these skills under a variety of competitive conditions during training. Special emphasis is placed on optimum preparation by modelling training and competition. Our key measure of success at this age level we set out to achieve each year as the kids move up to senior level are:

- Players leaving these age grades should be able to monitor and evaluate an opponents decision making, style of play and technical ability and utilise this information to greater enable one's own decision making process.
- Should be capable of emerging as a role model and leader
- Utilise team and opposition playing facts to improve development and performance
- Be able to undertake self evaluation to maximize potential
- Develop an individually appropriate fuelling routine around training and competition
- Manage study, part time work, career and sport options to ensure a healthy life balance
- Player should be in position to take ownership of the need to work on individual practices to stay within the team structure or to get himself in a position to the move to the next level of the game. (adult/underage Inter County) – some will embrace this, others might not.



The Sarsfields Way

Schools Coaching & Off season Activity



Planning for the future: Your Club : Your Community



Schools Coaching

As rural clubs continue to struggle for numbers, the players the club will rely on over the next 20 years are all now at school. It is from this group of children that the future players, coaches and officers of our club will come; therefore, establishing strong club-school links and encouraging these children to become club members is vital for our club's long-term sustainability. We want all the schools in our locality to know that the Charlestown Sarsfields club is open and welcoming.

With this in mind, the club aims to develop closer links between the schools in our community and the Charlestown Sarsfields Club with the aim of supporting schools through the provision of coaches from the club to provide training sessions in schools for children which will provide consistency with what the club are trying to achieve with our underage teams and further reinforce the values and objectives of the Sarsfields Way Player Pathway.

This has multiple benefits for both the club and the school and will help provide familiar faces for children when both in school and when attending the club's activities.



Off Season Activity U-8 to U12

For our youngest teams (Under 8s to Under 12's) the off season, typically January to March, is traditionally a period where there is no GAA activity but represents a good opportunity to develop children's basic skills and fundamental movements ahead of the following season restarting.

It is our aim that that the club will run small sided 'little leagues' and skills workshops for our youngest teams, utilising the complex and the new Astro facility in Carracastle for these activities and where possible the new Colm Horkan memorial Pitch once completed and floodlights installed



Off Season Activity U14-U18

For our older teams aged U-14 to U-18 the continuation of our Athletic Development Programme in partnership with Healthquarters Gym will be an essential part of our pathway to improve our players mobility, athletic development and strength

This will be an invaluable programme to prepare our players for senior football in the years to come and to compete with the strongest teams from around the county.



The Sarsfields Way

Club & Team Communications



Planning for the future: Your Club : Your Community



Communications

The main method of communication with parents will be through WhatsApp groups set up for each age group from Nursery upwards. Each team coach will set up a group for their particular age group. The use of WhatsApp groups will be closely monitored, and only approved club admins will be allowed to put messages in these groups to ensure strictly club-related content is posted in groups.

The Charlestown Bord Na nÓg social media channels will be updated on a weekly basis also, with fixtures, results and some match highlights over the course of the season.

Each week, our coaches will send out a reminder about the week's activities. We ask that parents and guardians check the Whatsapp group in case of any changes in times or venues or training etc.

Should you have any queries regarding club communications you can contact the club at charlestownbordnanog@gmail.com



The Sarsfields Way

Player Retention & Playing out of age



Planning for the future: Your Club : Your Community



Player Retention

Retaining our players right through from Nursery to Under 18 level and onto senior level is a core pillar of 'The Sarsfields Way' Player Pathway programme.

Our aim is to maximise the number of players that graduate to play at adult level and to have as many of those players, and former players, coaching within the club as possible. A key element in achieving that goal is ensuring player's have a positive experience of playing for Charlestown Sarsfields teams. If they do, they are more likely to continue playing into adulthood and return as coaches in the future. Coaches are also likely to repeat what they learned themselves, so a positive environment today is important for the future.

Our coaches play a critical role in helping the club achieve these aims. They create the environment in which our players develop. It is therefore important that our coaches set the values and expectations of the club, for our players, as this greatly affects the development of every player. Players will be afforded the opportunity to develop at their own pace, while assisted in achieving their full potential. While we strive to win, player development and retention is the number one priority and should never be compromised.



Player Retention

WHY Children PLAY IN THE FIRST PLACE

Identify where I'm from

To learn new skills

To be part of a team

To make friends

Social aspect

To build self confidence

To have fun

“Don't wait until the player is walking away”

Steep Dropout between the ages of 12 and 21 (58%)



Playing out of age group policy

The Charlestown Sarsfields Player pathway guidance on 'playing up' is that players 'playing up' should not deprive players who are 'at age' of game time.

Playing up' is where a player plays and/or trains with an older panel of players; for example, an under-12 player plays with an Under-14 team and includes all juvenile age categories across the club. It is commonplace and necessary at times, but it is important that the club does not unintentionally demotivate 'at age' players to the point where they will eventually give up playing, and they must get playing time in matches. The club policy on this issue is to foster and develop both weak and strong players.

In team selection, preference where possible should be given to players who are at age', i.e. those who will be overage the following year. This is club policy for all teams up to the U-14 level. Coaches may deviate from this policy if there is good reason not to select a player, e.g. indiscipline or poor attendance record. In such cases, the player should be informed of why he/she is not playing. The intention is to play two teams at the underage level at all ages where possible. This will ensure maximum participation for all kids regardless of ability, provided kids attend training and show an interest in developing and improving their Gaelic football skills.

The Club Executive will monitor these new guidelines and ensure that fairness and equity are applied. When a player plays up, the coach of his/her own team should be consulted by the mentor of the team for which he/she is playing. The parents must also be consulted with regarding their child playing up. The health and well-being of all our underage players is paramount in all decisions regarding the impact of players 'playing up'. The Club will, however, facilitate 'playing up' where players are required to make up a team due to a shortage in numbers. If issues arise with the implementation of these guidelines, parents should first discuss the matter with a team mentor privately and not during organised training or games. The club wishes that common sense, fairness and good communication between mentors, players and parents will resolve most issues/disputes.



The Sarsfields Way

Code of Conduct



Planning for the future: Your Club : Your Community



Code of Behaviour

Charlestown Sarsfields GAA club has always had a strong and proud tradition and reputation from a code of behaviour perspective and this is something we are very proud of as a club.

This GAA Code of behaviour policy brings together the collective good practice experiences of the Association and seeks through the implementation of an agreed and joint policy document, that while promoting our games amongst young people we also seek to provide a safe environment in which we can develop children, under 18 years of age, in a caring and respectful environment. This Code applies to all persons under 18 yrs. of age who participate in our games or other activities and to those who work with them and assist them in any capacity on our behalf.

The Code of Behaviour provides statutory guidance that governs our work with young people and children. This will assist and direct our members and units in our work and provide a platform and support for those working with young people and children at all levels in our Associations.

We ask that all parents/guardians/coaches and players within our club familiarise themselves with the Code of Behaviour Document. The document can be found here

<https://www.gaa.ie/api/pdfs/image/upload/ukepuvlq3qhyie10jfqy.pdf>

Throughout the season we will reinforce the code of behaviour and the values associated with same to ensure we uphold the longstanding club tradition in this regard.





Code of Conduct (Coaches)

Team Coaches involved with our underage teams can ensure that sport has a beneficial impact when they adhere to the following guidelines:



- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person and treat each one equally regardless of age, gender or ability.
- Ensure that nobody involved with the team acts towards or speaks to another person in a manner or engages in any other conduct which threatens, disparages, vilifies or insults another person on the basis of that person's race, religion, colour, descent, nationality, ethnic or socio-economic background.
- Ensure that each player observes a high standard of personal hygiene.
- Make adequate provision for First Aid and do not encourage or allow players to play while injured. Keep an adequate record of each injury and ensure that the appropriate treatment is sought
- Ensure that another official – referee/team mentor – is present when a player is being attended to and can corroborate the relevant details.
- Ensure players are safely attired and that proper insurance arrangements are in place.
- Be positive during coaching sessions so that participants always leave with a sense of achievement and an increased level of self-esteem.
- Plan and prepare appropriately for each session and ensure proper levels of supervision.
- Be punctual, properly attired, and lead by example; avoid smoking or the consumption of alcohol in the presence of young people.



Code of Conduct (Coaches)

- Don't shout at or lecture players or reprimand/ridicule them when they make a mistake. (Children learn best through trial and error. They should not be afraid to risk error to learn)
- Set realistic – challenging but achievable – performance goals.
- Praise and reinforce effort/commitment and provide positive feedback.
- Recognise the developmental needs of young players (avoid excessive training or competition) and ensure that they are matched on an individual or team basis.
- Rotate the team captain and the method used for selecting teams so that the same children are not always last to be selected.
- Develop an understanding of the OTú Coaching Model and ensure the appropriate level of coaching accreditation has been attained.



Code of Conduct (Players)

Those involved in our activities shall accept the roles and responsibilities that they undertake as we, as a club, commit ourselves to maintaining an enjoyable and safe environment for all where the safeguarding of our members will always be paramount.

Young Players can benefit greatly from sports in terms of personal development and enjoyment. Our players are encouraged to realise that as a result of their participation in our Gaelic Games that they also have a responsibility to treat other players and officials with fairness and respect. With rights there will always be responsibilities. The term young players also refers to children i.e. any person who is under 18 years of age, regardless of what team or age group they play with.

Inevitably, there will be issues with discipline from time to time and whilst we will always look to protect our players and coaches, where there is clear evidence of repeated breach of our disciplinary standards as a club we must address this. The following guidelines are the Charlestown Sarsfields Policy in dealing with issues that may arise.

Through this, we hope to be consistent and fair to all players. Should a fine be sanctioned by the county board, the offending player will be required to pay it.

WHEN A PLAYER TURNS OUT IN THE CHARLESTOWN SARSFIELDS COLOURS THEY ARE REPRESENTING NOT ONLY THEIR CLUB, BUT THEIR TOWN, THEIR COMMUNITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES





Code of Conduct (Players)

The below is a guideline for coaches where expected standards of conduct are not adhered to

Offence	U-8's to U-10's	U-12's – U-14's	U-16's to U-18's
Continued criticism of team mates, opponents	Loss of game time (escalating from 2,5,30 mins, full game)	Loss of game time (escalating from 2,5,30 mins, full game)	Immediate substitution & misses next game
Critical of coaches or referee	Loss of game time (escalating from 2,5,30 mins, full game)	Immediate substitution and misses the next game	Immediate substitution & misses next game
Refusal to allow coaches to talk to the group Refusal to follow coaches instructions in training/games	Loss of game time (escalating from 2,5,30 mins, full game)	Loss of game time (escalating from 2,5,30 mins, full game)	immediate substitution, miss next game if repetitive
Refusal to shake hands with team mates, opponents, coaches, referees when requested	Loss of game time (escalating from 2,5,30 mins, full game)	Starts as a substitute in the next game	Starts as a substitute in the next game
Failure to keep a balanced attendance at training / games when playing other sports	Loss of game time (escalating from 2,5,30 mins, full game)	Start as a sub for next game, but brought on ahead of players who are subs because of indiscipline	Start as a sub for next game, but brought on ahead of players who are subs because of indiscipline
Failure to turn up to training /games without a valid excuse	Loss of game time (escalating from 2,5,30 mins, full game)	Start as a sub for next game, but brought on ahead of players who are subs because of indiscipline	Start as a sub for next game, but brought on behind players who are subs because of indiscipline
No valid excuse for poor time keeping for training / matches	Loss of game time (escalating from 2,5,30 mins, full game)	Start as substitute for next game	Not allowed to train. Dropped for next game
Starting a fight at training / match	Loss of game time (escalating from 2,5,30 mins, full game)	Immediate substitution and misses the next game	immediate substitution and misses the next game
Breaking team rules on social life expectations	Not applicable	At Discretion of Coach	At Discretion of Coach
Sent off for violent conduct	Misses next game	Punishment by County Board	Punishment by County Board

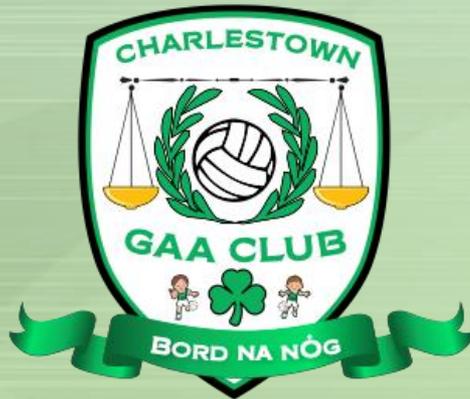


As a club we ask that parents/guardians uphold the principles of FAIR PLAY and RESPECT for all and to remember that our coaches are volunteers who give up their time to coach our teams and help our children develop to the best of their abilities – without our coaches and volunteers there would be no club.

Code of Conduct (Parents)

In common with Coaches and Club personnel, the Parents/Guardians of underage players should act as role models for their children as they participate in Gaelic Games and lead by example at all times.

- Adopt a positive attitude to their children's participation in our games
- Respect officials' and coaches' decisions and encourage children to do likewise
- Do not exert undue pressure on your child
- Never admonish your own child or any other child for their standard of play
- Be realistic in their expectations and show approval for effort, not just results
- Avoid asking a child or young person, 'How much did you score today?' or 'What did you win by?' or 'What did you lose by.' Ask them 'Did they enjoy themselves'
- Never embarrass a child or use sarcastic remarks towards a player
- Applaud good play from all teams
- Do not criticise playing performances. Identify how improvements may be made
- Do not seek to affect a game or player unfairly
- Do not enter the field of play unless specifically invited to do so by an official in charge
- If a parent has any issues to raise regarding their child's participation or performance in a team, they may raise this with the team coach(es) but should do so in a constructive and non-confrontational manner and not in the company or vicinity of young players or other parents
- Complaints about the conduct or practice of a coach should be brought to the attention of the relevant Club Children's Officer
- Show appreciation to volunteers, coaches and Club officials
- Respecting the rights, dignity and worth of every person and treating each one equally regardless of age, gender, ability, ethnic origin, cultural background or religion
- Not entering team dressing rooms unless deemed necessary by the team coach(es) to protect the privacy of other underage players
- Never ridiculing or scolding a player for making a mistake during games or competitions
- Showing respect to our Club's opponents. Without them, there would be no games or competitions



Committee Members

The Charlestown Sarsfields GAA Bord na nÓg committee members for the 2025 season are.

Chairman:
Donal Healy

Secretary
Neil O'Connor

Treasurer:
Michael Doherty

Coaching Officer:
Kiefer Craig

Schools Liaison Officer
Brian McDermott

Children's Officer
Donal Healy

If you are interested in joining the committee and helping shape the future of our underage club, please get in touch at charlestownbordnanog@gmail.com or message us through the Charlestown Bord Na nÓg Facebook page



The Sarsfields Way

Thank You



Let's ensure our future is as bright as our past!