

## Southampton Athletic Club Academy - frequently asked questions

### 1. What is the Southampton Athletic Club's Academy?

It is an athletic training group specifically set up to coach young athletes across a range of athletic disciplines from school year 4 upwards. The coaching group is run by Southampton Athletic club and membership of the club is compulsory to join the Academy.

### 2. Can my child join before year 4?

I am afraid not. This is a reasonable age to begin athletics coaching. Unlike other sports such as gymnastics, tennis or swimming, there is no need to be at a certain standard at a young age. Athletics is a late development sport and we want to coach children for the longer term rather than to be a fantastic performer at 8 years old. Our competitions do not start until school year 4 and our new year 4's can be inducted from the first training session of the autumn term which is the first Wednesday in October. You cannot join most athletics clubs until school year 4.

### 3. How does this work? School year 4 upwards is a large age range?

Because of the age range, the Academy is split into two sections. The Fundamental Academy which is for school years 4 and 5, and the Foundation Academy for school years 6 and upwards.

### 4. What are the differences between the two?

One of the principle values of the Academy is that of athletic progression. In the Fundamental Academy, young athletes learn the basic athletic disciplines of running, throwing and jumping in a safe and fun environment. Training takes place on a Wednesday with competitions at the weekends. They represent the U11 age group.

In the Foundation Academy, young athletes continue to learn the basic athletic disciplines but across a wider range of events. Training is still fun but it is harder and more emphasis is placed on the more traditional athletic events. They represent the older age groups of U13 and U15.

### 5. Why is everything multi event?

As already stated, athletics is a late development sport and whilst children may be good at a specific event when they are younger, this may not be true when they have grown and are older. We want to avoid children specialising in a certain event too young and instead give them the opportunity to try a wider range of events. The basics they learn will stand them in good stead in later years.

### 6. What happens after the Academy?

At Southampton we have a fantastic set of specialist coaches. Children will graduate from the Academy and move to a specialist group when it is right for them to do so, normally from school year 7 onwards but this is dependent on the child. There will be a transition into the specialist coach perhaps on a shared basis with the Academy to begin with before a complete handover.

## 7. When and Where does the Academy train?

Athletics is split into two seasons – spring/summer and autumn/winter. The spring/summer season runs from April to September and the autumn/winter season is from October to March.

The Fundamental Academy, train outside in the spring/summer, on the track at Southampton Sports Centre, from 6-7.30 pm on Wednesday evenings. In the autumn/winter they train at the same time and day inside the Sports hall at Wyvern School in Fair Oak.

The Foundation Academy also train on Wednesdays, on the track at Southampton Sports Centre in the spring/summer season but at the different time of 6.30-8 pm. In the autumn/winter training is at the 'J' track at Wyvern School on a Wednesday but at the same time as the Fundamental Academy 6-7.30 pm.

There is also a Saturday morning training session at Southampton Sports Centre for members of the club in school years 4, 5 and 6, from 9.30-11.00 am. The training is focused on athletes that are preparing to enter club competitions and represent the club in league meetings. Numbers are restricted please contact Mark Wharton at [Wharton\\_m@sky.com](mailto:Wharton_m@sky.com) to register your interest.

## 8. My child hasn't tried athletics before.

Southampton Athletic Club is completely inclusive and there is room for everyone in the Academy from novices to the best children in the country. As coaches we learn to differentiate coaching needs to suit children of all abilities. We encourage children to compete for us but this is not compulsory.

## 9. My child has a disability.

As an inclusive club we encourage young athletes with disabilities to join the group. Depending on the disability, we try to include them with the other children and differentiate the activity accordingly. All our coaches are trained in disability awareness.

## 10. How does coaching work?

The children are split into groups to keep the coach to children ratio healthy. We don't place children in groups by ability, it will usually be their school year and gender. The same coaching format is followed in both areas of the Academy.

There is a fun warm up at the beginning of the training session for the whole group, they are then split into smaller groups as above, and are coached across the range of athletic disciplines and then at the end will be back as a whole for the cool down. Play, work, play.

## 11. Who are the coaches?

We have a group of coaches who work within the Academy. Each coach is DBS checked, and qualified and registered with UK Athletics. Michelle Talent is head coach of the Foundation Academy and Mark Wharton is head coach of the Fundamental Academy.

All coaches carry a photo ID licence with accreditation from UK Athletics. You are welcome to ask to see this or confirmation of a DBS check upon request.

We are always looking for more coaches, and parents provide by far the biggest source of these, so why not come forward and help. It is great fun!

#### 12. What do the children need to take part?

Athletics is a very simple sport, they just need sports clothing and a bottle of water. For the Foundation Academy we recommend that the children have some athletic spikes, although this is not compulsory. For the Fundamental Academy, these are not necessary but they should wear them if they have them. Athletics is an outdoor sport and doesn't stop for the weather. If it is wet and or cold the children will need to dress appropriately.

#### 13. Can my child start immediately?

There is currently a waiting list to join either the Foundation or Fundamental Academy. This is mainly due to the legal requirements for adult to child ratio. If you wish your child to be added to the waiting list please email [academytrainingenquiries@gmail.com](mailto:academytrainingenquiries@gmail.com) with their full name, date of birth and school year. When there is space for your child to join us we will email you with full joining details.

We recommend that new or novice athletes come along for a couple of trial sessions to see if they like it. If after a couple of weeks, they wish to continue, they will need to become members of the club and enrol in their respective Academy.

#### 14. What does it all cost?

At Southampton Athletic club we want to make athletics as inclusive as possible and this is reflected in our membership fee (for current rates please see the Membership page of the website). This is payable in March each year and valid from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> March (there is a pro-rata amount payable when joining later in the year). Athletes are unable to compete without an England Athletics number which is issued when membership has been paid and must be valid at the 1<sup>st</sup> April.

After a few trial sessions, children are expected to join the club, if not they will be advised that they cannot train any longer, this enables us to take children from the waiting list. Our membership fees are one of, if not the cheapest for any athletics club and also compare extremely favourably with any other sport at a cost of approximately £2.00 per week. We encourage children to compete for the club and when they do in team competitions, this is free and is included in their membership fee.

#### 15. How do the children get picked for competitions?

We have team managers for every age group U11, U13 and U15, and split into gender. The team managers select the athletes for team competitions. In addition there are many local clubs, including Southampton who host 'Open' meetings and children/parents can enter these directly as individuals. There is a cost for entering these and any Championship events.

The club selection policy is clear and transparent and available from the team managers. An athlete's availability is first established and then the team managers will pick the team from those that have advised they are available to compete. For some of the top league competitions

your child may not get picked even if they are available, as the best athletes will be chosen based on their personal bests in any chosen event.

We encourage children to compete regularly against each other and other clubs, learning to race, jump or throw under completion rules is an important part of their development.

16. My child also does other sports.

We encourage young athletes to take part in other sports. Athletic ability is behind virtually every other sport and the coaching they receive in the Academy will help improve your child's ability in whatever sport they do, as well as in athletics.

17. My child can't come to every session.

We understand that young athletes are often busy with other activities and there is no compulsion to attend every session. However the coaches are at every session and a reasonable amount of commitment is required in order to maintain athletic progression and development.

18. Can I get more involved in the club?

Yes please? Like many sports clubs we rely completely on volunteers for coaching, administration and officiating. Please contact [academytrainingenquiries@gmail.com](mailto:academytrainingenquiries@gmail.com) if you would like to help in any of these areas. We are very grateful for any help and support.