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# THE PHOENIX ACADEMY

Every time a new athlete joins a club training session, they are assessed. Often this is informal, with the intention of seeing where the athlete fits within that session and training them appropriately. This is designed to ensure the athlete enjoys their training, it stretches and improves them, and coaches know where to pitch their training.

However this approach has drawbacks. Particularly with young athletes, performance is rarely consistent, and it can take many sessions to accurately gauge competence and development. More importantly though it only focuses on the area of the athlete's development being addressed by the particular session. This means that weaknesses can be disguised as progress in other areas, and the development of athletes is sacrificed for the development of specialisms.

The development of young athletes should focus on core skills such as stability, coordination, strength and awareness of body and mind, and learning how to apply these skills to sport rather than simply practicing the application. Through observation of school sports and the Medway Sporting Academy, it is clear most schools and clubs are failing to provide this developmental background. This leads to the development of athletes who have one or two specific skills, with many others lagging behind. Consequently, such athletes soon reach a development plateau from which they find it very difficult to progress.

The usual cause of this is the lack of a key athletic skill without which further progress is nullified. For example, a footballer without flexibility is going to incur increasingly severe injuries beyond a certain level, as the body becomes unable to cope with the stresses demanded on it. Yet how many football coaches train squads for agility and flexibility to maintain the high levels of each found in young children, and how many young footballers understand the importance of such sessions?

Our answer to this is the Phoenix Academy. It is aimed specifically at our youngest athletes to help develop the knowledge and habits that will become important in later life, whether that is in a sport, or childbirth, or the bid to run a marathon during middle age. The sessions should be fun but focussed on the development of core skills, with sport specific practices added in as the athletes progress. That progress is tracked by an award scheme based on rating and improving the areas of weakness to meet areas of strength, creating a rounded athlete ready to take on any physical challenge. The details of the Phoenix Academy follow over the page.





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# PHOENIX ACADEMY STRUCTURE

The Phoenix Academy is designed to provide a structure for young athletes, up to school year 8 across the club, and give them both the confidence and competence to join Medway Park Phoenix's senior teams. Sports Development will be taught in the skill specific sessions, such as those at the track and pool. Athletic Development will be taught at the Junior Gym session. Being An Athlete should be taught by all coaches across all sessions.

The Academy will have 3 areas of focus:

## ATHLETIC DEVELOPMENT

- Based on UKA 365 Academy sections 1-12 (physical conditioning) and Sports Coach UK MultiSkills

## SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

- Athletics
  - UKA 365 Academy sections 13-25

## BEING AN ATHLETE

- Based on UKA 365 Academy sections 26 (lifestyle and support) and 27 (psycho-behavioural)

An award scheme will be run throughout the Academy in order to set goals and track progress. The awards will be based on differently coloured T-shirts and swim hats, with colour corresponding to the different levels of award. The colours bands start with red and progressing through yellow, green, purple, blue and black.

Membership of the Academy will be encouraged for Primary school aged members, and Junior sessions will be based on the Phoenix Academy template.

## SESSION FEES

Academy members would pay the same session fees as would be expected for non-Academy members.

## SESSION ATTENDANCE

Academy members will be encouraged to attend Medway Park Phoenix training sessions based on their development and chronological age. Initially, the Gym session will be available for athletes from school year 2/3. Track sessions will be available from Academy level yellow.





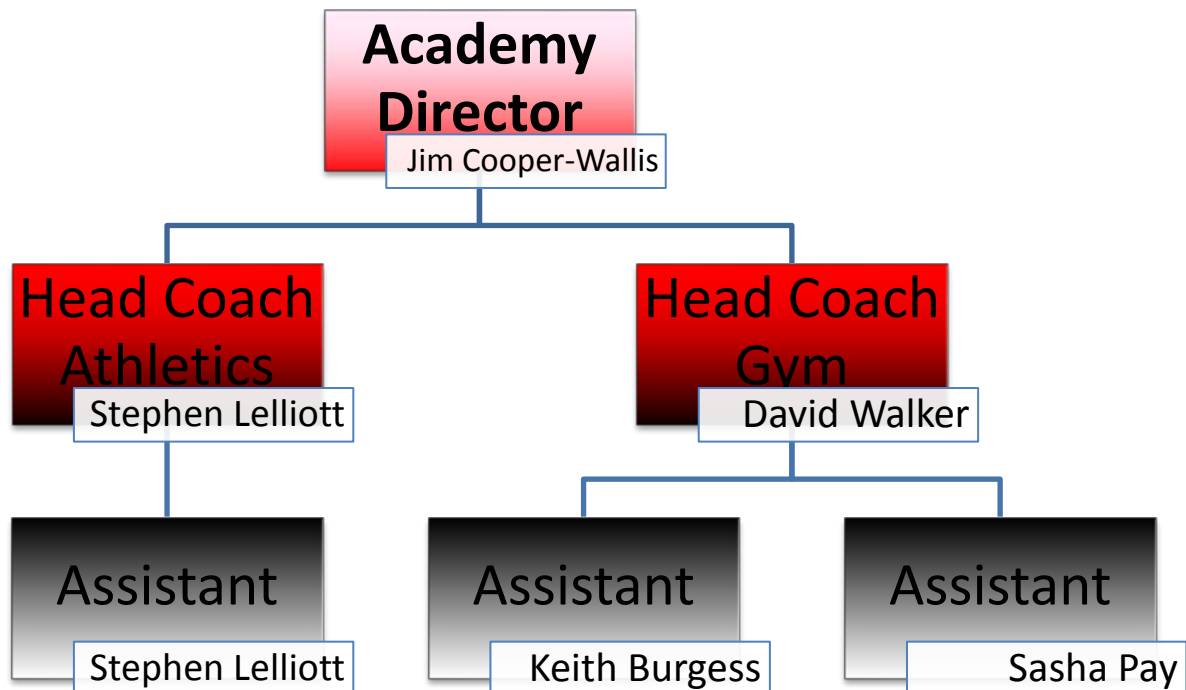
Three sessions per week is the maximum allowed attendance for Academy members until they reach senior competitive age, at which point their training situation will be reviewed by the Academy Director and potential club Head Coach.

Whilst this will have a small impact on our track sessions, it fits much more closely with a sustainable athlete development model in the early years.

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## PHOENIX ACADEMY COACHING

The Phoenix Academy will have a coaching structure similar to Medway Park Phoenix, but will be a distinct entity. It stands as follows:



All Academy sessions will be led by a fully qualified coach in a discipline appropriate to the session.

