

Dual-use sports centres— What to do during the school holidays—Croydon's answer

The Monks Hill Sports Centre is the first of its kind in Croydon serving both the general public and schools. It opened in September 1972, and has been provided by a joint scheme between the London Borough of Croydon Parks and Education Committees.

It is a relatively small centre, comprising a one-court Sports Hall, Gymnasium, climbing wall, weight training area, two redgra floodlit pitches for hockey and football, and outside hard areas for netball, basketball, volley-ball, and tennis.

The Monks Hill High School, which is attached to the centre, has priority of use during the day, and supplies its own teaching staff. The general public can use the centre from 6.00 p.m. - 10.00 p.m. weekdays, Saturdays 9.00 a.m. - 10.00 p.m., and Sundays 10.00 a.m. - 6.00 p.m., where we have achieved near maximum use.

We have found that as the general public are not accustomed to using the centre during the day for most of the year, we have not achieved extensive use during the school holiday, nor are we fully equipped with full-time staff to cope with such day-time use.

To ensure the centre is fully used we promote during the three main school holidays courses for children. These cater for both beginners and elite courses for accomplished performers. The cost is £3.00 including admission fee to the centre, for a five-day course, two hours a day, Mondays - Fridays in the same week of the holidays.

During the Summer of 1977, there were 28 courses, all were full, involving some 600 children, who made approximately 3,000 attendances.

Courses were offered in Olympic Gymnastics for Girls, where there is a great demand, for the Under 7 Years, Beginners, Intermediate and Advanced. For the advanced course, we set a minimum standard and in some cases girls were tested before being admitted. Other courses were in Table Tennis, beginners and intermediate, Badminton beginners and intermediate, boys' gymnastics, football, indoor hockey, indoor cricket nets, athletics, track and field, trampoline, beginners and intermediate, indoor golf, judo, tennis, climbing, and our Special 'taster' courses with five activities in five days, and finally a Toddlers' course, with an hour's imaginative play and pre-school activities for the Under 5's. In trampoline, athletics, badminton and hockey, there was an opportunity to gain nationally recognised badges and certificates.

For some advanced courses contact was made with the Croydon School Sports Association, who supplied, and in some cases, paid the course fee for promising pupils nominated by them.

All coaches were either qualified teachers of physical education, or specialist qualified coaches for a particular activity.

The courses were advertised at very little cost. Information sheets were sent to all schools, and the Deputy Manager visited all schools in close proximity to the centre, and with the co-operation of the Head-teacher spoke to the children. Information sheets were also delivered in the area by various Residents' Associations. One hundred posters were printed, and displayed in the centre, on public buildings in Croydon, swimming baths, libraries, shops, etc., and by a local private bus company, whose route passes near the centre. Every child attending previous courses was asked to forward to the centre a stamped and addressed envelope marked 'Summer Holiday Courses 1977' if information was required by post.

To try to cater for more casual use, we have for one week also experimented with daily or weekly ticket where children can come to the centre to take part in a variety of activities, table tennis, badminton, football, basketball, etc., under supervision, but without specialist coaching.

The centre does have something of a tradition in children's courses, as a large part of Saturday between 9.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. is set aside for courses, as part of our normal programme. Also between 6 - 7 p.m. on some weekdays.

Here some 650 children are involved, and we have over 500 on our waiting list. These courses are divided into three 15-week periods, and children have the opportunity to re-enrol for the next period if they wish. At the end of each period, the necessary promotions to a more advanced class are made, and the spaces filled from our waiting list. The cost is £3.50 for a 15-week period, a one-hour session, plus a weekly admission charge of 10p.

Waiting lists are not kept for the Holiday Courses and enrolments are on a first come first served basis! During the short half-terms, approaches are made to nearby Independent schools, who are often in session, and this, on occasions, makes good use of our facilities.

We are perhaps fortunate in being situated in an area where there is a great demand for such courses, but would be pleased to forward our Information Sheets to any other manager, who might find them useful, and would welcome any suggestions other managers may have to improve our courses.

JOHN ANTHONY,
Manager,
Monks Hill Sports Centre.