

Junior section 2024-25 season report

We have completed our 4th season since reorganisation. We ran 29 leagues for junior players in the SC Area to compete in as well as a cross Area U18 league and cross Area post Christmas U14T1 league. Indoor competitions for U16 and U18 boys and girls. Whilst some things are running more smoothly, we continue to face challenges. The main challenge is a lack of volunteer help, there are still only 5 people running all the junior hockey activity in South Central. These people cover schools (2 people) indoor (1 person) and junior club hockey 3 people. We cannot operate a league structure that we would like with a competition that runs to a finals weekend without more support and help from clubs. We simply don't have time to chase results and therefore several of our leagues finished incomplete. Clubs must do their part by letting us know if fixtures don't get played and when they have been rearranged for. We also need results added onto GMS by 8pm on the Monday after the fixture on the Sunday. The other challenge has been clubs entering the wrong tier. We have had several clubs entering T2 and regularly winning matches 8-0 or over particularly at U14 level. This is not acceptable. I have highlighted a few clubs who may well be not challenging themselves enough. Once we have entries in for the 25/26 season we will be making sure that clubs aren't in the wrong tier. It feels like we have a race to the bottom with the largest number of teams playing at T3 level.

The junior team are here to run hockey for the South Central Area clubs but we cannot do that without volunteers from those clubs, especially the larger clubs who have a team in every age group and every tier.

In April we organised the South Central IN2Hockey Area Finals at Reading and Sonning Hockey Clubs. These are the final placings. Well done to all the teams who competed. Thank you to the umpires for making the event such a success too alongside Sophie the Junior Umpire Developer.

South Central Final Standings IN2Hockey Finals

	GU10	BU10	GU12	BU12
1	Haslemere	Haslemere	Marlow	Thame
2	Buckingham	Banbury	Haslemere	Havant
3	Winchester	Winchester	Reading	Marlow
4	Marlow	Henley	A&C	Basingstoke
5	Wallingford	Marlow	Winchester	A&C
6	Slough	Reading	Henley	Oxford Hawks
7	Reading	A&C	Oxford	Reading
8	Oxford Hawks	Slough	South Berks	Slough

State Schools Tournament Tuesday 18th March

We were very pleased to be able to run our Area state schools tournament. On a Sunny but cold March day in Reading the State Schools Tournament organised and run by South Central Hockey took place.

Chair of the Junior Committee Kate Porter and League Organiser Allan Donaldson were the prime organisers who with the support of Chair of Officiating Simon Milford garnered 15 umpires and a further 10 helpers to run a hugely successful tournament.

Speaking to the teachers who brought their school children the 10 am start they confirmed their support for the tournament and willingness to come again in future years. For some, the reason for

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this was the wider geographic competition (Northern area schools were playing Southern area schools). For others, it was to help encourage their schoolchildren to play the game (a number had only picked up a hockey stick 3 weeks ago).

The tournament was set up in 2 tiers. Tier 1 matches were 7 a side including a goalkeeper. Tier 2 matches were 6 a side and no goalkeeper. This allowed schools to take part who may not have the kit required for goalkeepers. This gave opportunities the State schools who do not currently have hockey on their curriculum but may be affiliated to a local club.

Special mention must be made to the Isle of Wight Schools who came by minibuses via the ferry to get to Reading and must have set off very early from home to arrive for the 10am start.

In all over 400 children were there on the day and thanks go to [Reading Hockey Club](#) and [Sonning Hockey Club](#) for helping us host the tournament on their combined pitches.