

Primary School Handbook

Season 2025/26



Welcome,

Ulster Hockey are delighted to welcome you to another exciting season of Primary School hockey! This handbook is designed to guide teachers, coaches and school staff through everything they need to know about participating in our school hockey programme.

Inside, you will find all the key information about our Blitz events, McCloy and Pearson Finals Day, rules and much more.

Message from Ulster Hockey's Youth Development Officer, Jack Kyle

Dear Teachers and Parents,

Last year was a fantastic success, with the highest number of teams entering our events since pre-2019. It was great to see so many children out on pitches enjoying the game, representing their schools, and developing both their skills and their love for hockey. The enthusiasm shown by pupils, teachers, and parents made the season special.

This year, I am pleased to welcome back our returning schools who continue to support and grow the programme, as well as to extend a warm welcome to new schools joining us for the first time. It is fantastic to see the hockey community expanding, and I am excited for all the pupils who will be experiencing school hockey for the very first time.

As Youth Development Officer, my goal is to continue building on the momentum from last season. We are aiming to improve and expand the programme even further, creating more opportunities for young players to play and learn in a fun environment. Hockey is a sport that not only develops physical skills but also builds teamwork, confidence, and friendships. These qualities will serve the children far beyond the pitch.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the support shown by schools and staff in making hockey such a positive experience for the children. I wish every team the best of luck for the season ahead.

Blitz Events

Our Primary School Hockey Blitzes are fast, fun and friendly mini - hockey festivals designed to give young players a great introduction to the game. Each Blitz is a 6-a-side, non-competitive event focused on enjoyment and participation. We run three Blitzes per council area each year, giving every school multiple opportunities to get involved.

There are no scores, no tables and no pressure - just lots of touches on the ball, teamwork and excitement. These days are about building confidence and creating a love for the game at a young age.

Over the years, we've seen fantastic success stories of children who got their first taste of hockey at a Blitz event and have gone on to join local clubs, represent their province and stay involved in the sport for years. Primary school hockey is about opening the door to lifelong participation in the sport.

How to Enter (Affiliation & Invoice Forms)

Getting involved is simple! To enter a Blitz event:

1. Visit our website: <https://ulsterhockey.com/youth-hockey/primary-school/>
2. Complete the Blitz Entry Form
3. Select which Blitz(s) you'd like to attend – once affiliated, you can attend as many blitzes as you would like in any area
4. Schools can enter more than one team if they like. When submitting teams, please fill out the form in the following way:

“School Name – Girls or Boys - Team 1 or 2”

eg. If I was submitting 2 Girls and 1 Boys team:

Ulster Hockey Primary School – Girls – Team 1.

Ulster Hockey Primary School – Girls – Team 2.

Ulster Hockey Primary School – Boys – Team 1.

5. Submit the form and wait for confirmation email.

You will receive an email with event details, what to bring and any additional information closer to the day. Some places are limited and often fill up quickly, so we recommend booking early to secure your spot. (Entries are confirmed on a first-come, first-served basis.)

Deadline for entries is 1 week before each Blitz

Why We Require Affiliation Forms

To ensure we can run a safe, well-organised and inclusive programme, all schools must complete an Affiliation Form before taking part in our Blitz events.

The affiliation fee:

- Covers the whole school (boys and girls) for the entire year
- Allows any school who has affiliated with us to compete in any or as many blitzes as they would like (we will hold over 30 different blitz dates this season).
- Entry into our McCloy and Pearson Qualifiers.
- New schools' affiliation fee will be £70 this year and returning schools will be £90.

Invoices for payment will be sent upon registration.

This form helps us:

- Keep track of participating schools across the region.
- Share important updates directly with key school contacts.
- Ensure appropriate safeguarding and emergency procedures are in place.
- Plan equipment, staffing and resources fairly across events.
- Affiliating your school also shows your commitment to developing hockey in your area and it helps us continue to grow the programme with support from local councils, clubs and coaches.

Blitz Events – What to Expect

On the Day:

- Arrive 20–30 minutes before the first game hits off – this gives enough time for teams to complete warm-ups.
- Register your team with an Ulster Hockey staff member.
- There will be a 2-minute meeting with all teachers/coaches and Ulster Hockey staff before the first games. This is to confirm if there have been any last-minute changes to match schedules.
- Have fun!

This year we will be trialling a new system (Tournify) for our blitz match scheduling. All schedules will now be digital and can be found via the following link:

Google Play Store: https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.tournifyapp&hl=en_GB&pli=1

Apple Store: <https://apps.apple.com/sg/app/tournify/id1504284547>

Teachers, coaches and parents can download the app or closer to the time a link will be sent out with the schedule on it. This can be followed live on the day of blitzes.

Please note, all Primary School blitz's run from approximately 10:30 – 12:30 unless otherwise stated.

What to do if you can't make it?

When possible, please notify Ulster Hockey at least 48 hours in advance

(Jack Kyle – Youth Development Officer – jack.kyle@ulsterhockey.com – 07521777525 or

Harry Templeton – Schools Activation Officer – harry.templeton@ulsterhockey.com - 07805765039).

This allows us time to update and change match schedules.

How many Blitzes can you attend:

Once affiliated, schools are encouraged to attend as many blitzes as they would like, regardless of region/area. *

*Please note, for qualifiers only, teams must attend their local blitz.

Qualifiers and Finals Day

Our Qualifier Events are held once a year in each council area, designed to determine which schools will progress to our Finals Day. While these events run in the same fun and friendly format as our regular Blitz days the key difference is that scores will be recorded to help us identify the 1st and 2nd placed finishing teams. Each council area will host one qualifier, usually around March and the top two teams from each area will earn a place at Finals Day. It is a great opportunity for schools to enjoy competitive hockey in a positive, encouraging environment.

Finals Day is the highlight of our primary school hockey season - a special event that brings together the top teams from each area to celebrate a fantastic year of hockey. Schools qualify through our Qualifier Events, with the top two teams from each area earning their place.

Unlike regular Blitz days, scores are kept and there is a little more structure and competition, while keeping the emphasis on fun, fair play and enjoyment. The format may include slightly modified rules or longer games.

Finals Day is a great opportunity for pupils to showcase their development, represent their school with pride and enjoy the buzz of a bigger event with over 1000 spectators. Full details - including the schedule, venue and rules - will be shared closer to the time.

For Qualifiers and Finals Day, some games may end in a draw which means Run Ins are required.

Run Ins

Run-ins are a tiebreaker used when a match ends in a draw to determine the winner.

Instead of penalty strokes, players will take 1 v 1 shootouts against the Goalkeeper.

The attacker starts with the ball at the top and the middle of the scoring zone.

The goalkeeper starts on the goal line.

The attacker has **8 seconds** to score a goal.

The attacker can dribble, shoot and play rebounds within the 8 seconds.

The goalkeeper can move freely inside the scoring zone and attempt to stop the attacker.

3 players from each team will alternate.

The team that scores more goals after the set number of attempts wins.

If the score remains tied after 3 attempts per team, a sudden death round begins (teams take one attempt each until one team scores and the other doesn't).

If the Goalkeeper commits a foul during the run-in, the attacker may be awarded a retake.

A shot from a hit, reverse sweep or slap must be backboard height. A flick is allowed to be raised.

Rules

RULE 1 – AGE QUALIFICATION

Players **MUST** be in Primary 5, 6 or 7 as of the day of the blitz / tournament. Players in Primary 4 or below should not be playing in U11 Blitz's unless approved by Ulster Hockey Youth Development Officer.

RULE 2 – TEAMS

The game is played between two teams. Each team shall have a maximum of six players on the pitch at any one time.

Teams are encouraged to play with a Goalkeeper; however, Goalkeepers are not compulsory at Regional Blitz's.

For Qualifications and Final's Day, Goalkeeper's are compulsory.

Teams are permitted to play with six outfield players.

Squads are made up of no more than 10 players to allow for sufficient game time.

Teams should be separated by gender at Super 6s.

RULE 3 – SUBSTITUTIONS

Substitutions are unlimited throughout the game.

RULE 4 – DURATION OF GAME

Games will be played for 8–12-minute durations. There will be no half time or changing of sides.

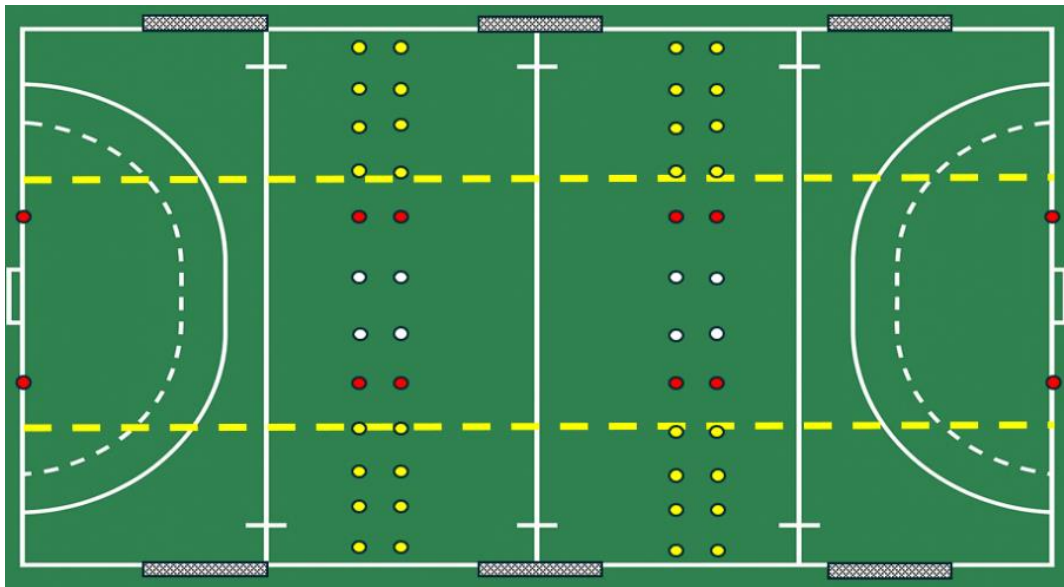
RULE 5 – THE PITCH

For U11 the pitch should be split into thirds, with run off space between pitches. (pitch can be split into 4 smaller pitches to accommodate for many teams at one event)

Scoring Zone* Markers (in yellow in below image) should run the length of the pitch from the Penalty Corner injection mark.

The white lines in image below are for teachers, coaches and players only. Ideally, these lines should be set out using white and yellow cones. Yellow cones from baseline to scoring zone and white cones from scoring zone to scoring zone.

Long corners will be played from the scoring zone line coinciding with where the ball went off the pitch.



RULE 6 – REVERSE HIT

Reverse hit is not allowed inside the scoring zone at Under 11 age groups.

Reverse sweep is allowed in the scoring zone*.

Reverse hit can be used in the middle of the pitch.

RULE 7 – SHOOTING

Hits and slaps must be kept low and where available, backboard height. If no backboard is available, the goal is determined by Umpires discretion.

The ball can be flicked into the net. There are no height restrictions for flicks.

The ball can be deflected into the net. There are no height restrictions for deflections.

RULE 8 – LONG CORNERS

If the attacking team win a free inside the scoring zone, the ball is taken back in line with the red cones. The defending team must be 3 metres away from the ball until the ball is touched by the attacker. The attacking team is permitted to run with the ball straight into the scoring zone and then shoot.

The ball can be hit straight into the scoring zone from a long corner, however there **MUST** be an intended passing target.

All other rules of Hockey apply according to FIH rules: <https://www.fih.hockey/static-assets/pdf/fih-rules-of-hockey-June23-update.pdf>

*Scoring Zone = players must be in the scoring zone area to score a goal. There are no “circles” at Primary School level Hockey.

Recommended Equipment List

Essential Kit

Playing Top

Skort / Shorts

Hockey Socks

Shin Guards

Mouthguard – *must be worn to play*

Hockey Stick (correct size for player)

Shoes

Weather Protection

Base Layers / Thermals

Waterproof Jacket / Raincoat

Warm Hat & Gloves (if cold)

Sunscreen (if sunny)

Health & Hydration

Full Water Bottle

Healthy Snack / Small Packed Lunch

Any Personal Medication (e.g. inhaler, EpiPen)

Towel (optional for wet weather)

Other Helpful Items

Small Sports Bag or Rucksack

Change of Clothes (for after matches)

Plastic Bag (for wet gear)

Young Umpires

Young Umpires play a vital role in the success of our events. Just like players, they are learning and growing and developing their confidence with every game they officiate. They can also make mistakes.

We believe in giving these young leaders the same support, respect and encouragement we offer to players on the pitch. They are the future of our sport and their involvement is essential to helping hockey thrive at every level.

Any negative comments, abuse or disrespect shown towards any umpire—especially our young officials—will not be tolerated. Such behaviour will be dealt with seriously and swiftly under the full force of our disciplinary procedures. We are committed to creating a positive environment where everyone, including our umpires feels safe and respected.



Teacher Education Courses

This year, we are offering a teacher education course on the fundamental coaching of hockey for primary school children, specifically designed for teachers who are new to the sport or have limited experience.

The course will focus on building confidence in delivering fun and engaging hockey sessions, covering the essential skills, rules, and safety considerations. Participants will gain practical knowledge through simple tips and easy to deliver drills that can be adapted for different age groups and abilities.

The aim is to equip teachers with the tools they need to introduce hockey in a positive and accessible way, helping pupils develop skills while enjoying the game.

Dates will be sent out to all schools on our contact list throughout the year.

Respect For All



Clubs and schools must take active responsibility for the behaviour and actions of **"participants"** during and after matches.

The term **"participants"** includes:

- Players
- Team Officials
- Spectators
- Teachers
- Pupils
- Umpires
- Parents
- This list is not exhaustive

The following is regarded as conduct that is improper, unfair and unacceptable:

Participants must not :

Verbally/physically abuse or be hostile towards any other participant, person or member of the public.

Dispute, protest or react in a provocative or disapproving manner towards any decision made by an umpire/official or otherwise act in an inappropriate way.

Use rude, abusive, racist, sectarian or sexist language inappropriate gestures.

Spectators must NOT :

Encroach on to the playing area or, where there is a fence around a pitch, go inside it.

Watch matches from the team dugouts or team officials benches.

Retaliate if they are subject to provocative behaviour by an opposition spectator or player.

Enter umpires' or team dressing rooms unless by invitation or to provide assistance.

Public Statements

Public statements (including those made in the press, websites, e-mail, social media, radio or television) must be fair and reasonable and must NOT involve a personal attack on another player, umpire, official, club/school or any other person or body which could bring the game into disrepute.

Useful Contact Information

Role	Name	Email	Phone Number
Chief Executive	Marc Scott	marc.scott@ulsterhockey.com	07889363477
Head of Development	Jonathan McMeekin	jonathan.mcmeekin@ulsterhockey.com	07912320225
Youth Development Officer	Jack Kyle	jack.kyle@ulsterhockey.com	07521777525
Schools Activation Officer	Harry Templeton	harry.templeton@ulsterhockey.com	07805765039
Inclusion and Diversity Officer	Eamonn McFerran	eamonn@ulsterhockey.com	07562688989
Workforce Development Officer	Michelle McMillan	michelle.mcmillan@ulsterhockey.com	07562953263
Designated Safeguarding Children Officer	Hilary Reid	hilaryreid@talktalk.net	07802381444