

ETHOS

ISFA's competitions run in line with ISFA's overarching aim of "delivering football enjoyment for boys and girls in the 21st century". The aim of this competition is to provide high quality competition for school pupils attending independent schools. Schools that participate are reminded that education and the school's ethos should continue on the football field as in all other areas of school life and thus participating schools must abide by the ISFA Code of Conduct. ISFA competitions are aimed at school pupils who are in full time education studying for recognised public examinations (eg A level, B-tec, GCSE) and take part in football as an extra-curricular activity; ISFA competitions are not aimed at those for whom academic study is an addition to a programme aimed primarily at football.

RULES

Changes to rules for the 2025-26 season in bold.

1. CONTROL. The competition shall be managed and controlled by the Committee of the Independent Schools Football Association.
2. ELIGIBLE SCHOOLS. All school recognised as fee-paying Independent Schools shall be eligible to enter.
3. QUALIFICATION OF PLAYERS. Any girl born between **1st September 2010 and 31st August 2012** who is in full-time education at a competing school shall be eligible to play.

Registration of Players

1. Schools must register all players with ISFA indicating their full name, date of birth and, if the player is contracted to an Academy, the name of that Academy. If a player becomes, or ceases to be, contracted to an Academy after registration, ISFA must be informed within 7 days
2. Schools may register up to 30 players in the first instance
3. Schools may register additional players at any time during the season, up to a maximum of 35 registered players
4. All players should be registered no later than midnight on the day before the match takes place
5. Where a school needs to register a player on the day of the match, this must be done by e-mail (mitchelldunstan@isfa.org.uk), including the player's date of birth, at least one hour before kickoff. A late registration administration fee of £25 must be sent to ISFA to arrive within seven days of the match. Failure to submit an email and/or pay the £25 fee will result in the player being deemed unregistered and will result in further sanctions (including a £50 late registration fee)

Match Report Form

1. A school naming on the team sheet and/or playing a player who is outside the permitted age range for the tournament will be expelled from the competition and may be subject to further sanction
2. A school naming on the team sheet and/or playing a player who has not been registered with ISFA will be subject to an administration fee of £50 and may be liable to further sanctions e.g. expulsion from the competition or suspension from future ISFA competitions/activities.
3. A school submitting false information on the teamsheet will be expelled from the competition and may be subject to further sanction
4. *SAFEGUARDING OF PLAYERS: In all inter-school football, including matches played in this tournament, the safeguarding of the children involved is the responsibility of the relevant school's governance. Safeguarding in school football is underpinned by the Department for Education 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' 2025.*
5. ORGANISATION OF THE TOURNAMENT: The competition shall be played on a knock-out basis with all matches to be decided on the day, with no replays. The team drawn first in each tie, with the exception of the Final, will have home advantage.
6. ARRANGEMENT OF MATCHES. Teams must agree on a date and kick-off time for their match and must inform the Tournament Secretary of the details by the stipulated date. Teams unable to agree a date by the deadline should submit their position and proposals in writing to the Tournament Secretary. The Tournament Secretary will consult the Chairman of I.S.F.A. who may appoint a Disputes Committee to arbitrate and decide on the date (and kick-off time) for the match. The decision of the Disputes Committee will be final and binding.

ISFA may expel any school from the tournament if, in its opinion, that school has made insufficient attempt to agree a date or has indulged in unnecessary delaying tactics. Except in exceptional circumstances, any school refusing or failing to fulfil a fixture will be suspended from future participation in the tournament for a period of not less than one year.

Matches should always be played on the ground of the home school unless specific permission is given by ISFA. In certain circumstances, if mutually agreed by both schools, ISFA may grant permission to play at an alternative venue.

Except where floodlit facilities are available, all matches must kick off no later than two hours before the published sunset time.

The home school is considered responsible for ensuring spectators do not encroach on to the pitch and are well back from the field of play.

7. POSTPONED MATCHES: In the event of a match being postponed, it must be rearranged before the closing date for the round. However, in the event of a postponement taking place after the away team have travelled, ISFA will decide on the venue for the rearranged match.

In the event of the pitch conditions preventing the playing of the game by the closing date for the round, the game must be played during the following midweek period or on the next available day that pitch conditions permit (whichever is the earliest). In the event that the home school pitch is unavailable, then the match will be played on one of the following, the final decision resting with ISFA:

(i) the ground of the team drawn away (ii) a neutral ground arranged by I.S.F.A.

8. DURATION OF MATCHES. All matches will consist of 35 minutes each way. In the event of a draw after 70 minutes play, an extra time period of 10 minutes each way will be played. If the match is still drawn at the end of extra-time, then penalties will be taken (as laid down in the Laws of Association Football) to determine the winning team.

9. PITCH DIMENSIONS. The minimum dimensions for pitches to be used in this tournament are 100 yards in length and 60 yards in width. Any complaint relating to the dimensions of the pitch, the goals or the safety of the playing surface should be lodged with the referee before kick-off or, if a problem arises after the match has commenced, within 30 minutes of the end of the match. ISFA must be informed of all such protests within 48 hours unless satisfactorily resolved. All matches will be played on a grass pitch or on a well maintained 3G football turf surface.

10. OFFICIALS. Unless advised to the contrary, the home school in each match shall be responsible for arranging for a fully qualified youth registered independent referee to officiate. A member of staff or parent at the home school or any school with a formal connection to it (e.g. junior/senior school, school under the same ownership/endowment/foundation) should not referee, even if he is a fully qualified referee.

The home team shall also be responsible for the payment of the referee (and assistant referees if appropriate). The home school will be responsible for ensuring that the referee is provided with a

Match Report Form and is fully aware of the rules of the tournament relating to the duration of matches and substitutes.

Each team will then be required to provide an assistant referee. The precise role of assistant referees and their duties will be determined by the match referee. In the event of the home team encountering difficulties in appointing match officials, then they should contact the Tournament Secretary for advice, preferably at least one week in advance of the fixture. In the event of an appointed official, whether referee or assistant referee, not arriving at the ground for a match, both schools should agree on a mutually acceptable replacement.

11. PLAYING COLOURS. In the event of a clash of colours, the away team must change unless competing schools agree a mutual alternative. In the final tie, both teams must wear numbered

shirts. In the event of a clash in the final tie, the teams will toss a coin to determine which team will change.

12. **SUBSTITUTES.** Teams may nominate up to five substitute players who may be used during the match. The names of the five nominated substitutes must be declared to the referee before the start of the match.. In all matches, the principle of “repeated” substitutes will be used. A player who has been substituted during a match then becomes a substitute and may, in turn, replace another player at any time, subject to the substitution being carried out in accordance with Law 3 of the Laws of the Game

13. **REPORTING OF RESULTS.** The winning team shall be responsible for reporting the result of the match to the tournament secretary (tel: 07449572225 or email mitchelldunstan@isfa.org.uk) by 6.30pm on the day of the game.

14. **MATCH REPORT FORM.** People in charge shall be responsible for completing accurately the match report form, to be presented to the referee before the start of the match. Any team giving inaccurate information will be liable to penalty including, in extreme cases, disqualification from the tournament. The referee shall enter the score, scorers and details of any disciplinary offences and shall return the form to the ISFA Disciplinary Secretary.

15. **DISCIPLINE.** a) The referee will report to the Disciplinary Secretary all cautions and dismissals. b) Any player receiving two cautions during the competition will be suspended from the round immediately following the second caution if her school has progressed. Where the school has been defeated, this suspension will be carried over to the following season. c) Any player who is sent from the field of play for serious foul play, violent conduct, spitting or offensive/insulting/abusive language will be suspended for the next two matches in the competition (to be carried over to the following season if not fully served). A player sent off for any other reason will be suspended for her school's next match in the competition (to be carried over to the following season if not fully served). d) Should the referee report a particularly serious offence, then the Disciplinary Secretary, after appropriate consultation, may increase the automatic suspension. e) Any misconduct by a player, substitute or team official which occurs off the field of play at any time before, during or after the match shall be reported to the Disciplinary Secretary who will, after appropriate consultation, take whatever action is deemed appropriate. f) Each school is responsible for the conduct of its players, staff, other officials and spectators. ISFA reserves the right to take action (including expulsion of an individual or a school from the competition) where a player, substitute, member of staff, other official, team or spectator is deemed guilty of conduct liable to bring ISFA or the ISFA Cup into disrepute. g) Should the need arise, a Disciplinary Panel shall be appointed and their findings shall be final.

16. **FINAL TIE.** The venue and date of the final tie will be at the discretion of the Independent Schools Football Association whose decision will be final. The Independent Schools Football Association will have the responsibility for the appointment and payment of the referee and assistant referees at the final tie. In the event of admission being charged at the final tie, gate receipts will be retained by the Independent Schools Football Association.

17. **TROPHY OWNERSHIP.** The trophy shall be the property of the Independent Schools Football Association. The school winning the tournament shall be responsible for the safe keeping of the

trophy whilst under the care and custody of that school and shall be responsible for its return to the Independent Schools Football Association by 1st February in the year following their victory. The trophy should be returned in the same condition as that in which it was received.

ISFA reserves the right to deal with any matters not specifically provided for in the Rules of the Competition and to take whatever action they deem to be appropriate.