**ISFA COMPETITIONS POLICY**

The aim of the entire ISFA programme, including events organised by both ISFA and the schools themselves should run in line with ISFA’s overarching aim of “delivering football enjoyment for boys and girls in the 21st century”.

**The Importance of Football “For All”**

There are normally three levels to ISFA football:

* Internal school football (eg house matches)
* School teams (including B teams and possibly C and below)
* Representative football (not relevant to this document)

ISFA is mindful that one of the greatest strengths of football in the independent sector is that it can be delivered to a wide range of abilities and enable a very large number of boys and girls to play and enjoy the game. ISFA believes it is very important that ISFA’s competition structure should not come at the expense of “mass participation”.

Consequently, ISFA believes that the heart of the game in the independent sector must remain the various internal matches played within each school and also the regular “block” school friendly fixtures, often played at many different age levels and often by B, C, D teams, etc.

It would be a grave error if high profile national ‘A’ Team competitions were permitted to intrude on the programme “For All” that is offered by many independent schools.

**Competitions**

ISFA often receives demands for “more competitions” from schools. However:

* There is seldom any consensus as to precisely what competitions are required and most such requests are often variations on a theme of “we want a competition that our own school can win” (ie better/bigger schools are excluded and the rules are based on that particular school’s circumstances). There are a large number of different types and sizes of schools within ISFA, all with differing circumstances and expectations and it would be impossible and unwise for ISFA to try to satisfy this demand.
* ISFA is a very small organisation, with 2 full time members of staff and substantially dependent on volunteer teachers to run its activities; it is does not have either the human or financial resources to run large numbers of different types of competitions for different types of schools in different parts of the county.
* For the reasons stated above, ISFA does not wish too much ‘A’ team competition to reduce the amount of Football “For All”.

Consequently, ISFA believes there should be two types of competition within ISFA:

* ISFA Accredited Tournaments – organised by the schools but registered and approved by ISFA and thus also affiliated to The FA\*\*\*.
* ISFA National Competitions – run centrally by ISFA

*\*\*\*NB Competitions not registered with The FA through a County FA or and FA Educational Partner constitutes “unaffiliated football”.*

ISFA Affiliated Tournaments

ISFA believes this to be the best solution to demands from schools for competitions suited to their own requirements. Groups of like-minded schools, of the same size/standard, in the same region can create their own tournament – cup or league – deciding for themselves on the time of year, age groups, etc., to suit their own requirements. ISFA will assist, advise, publicise and support these tournaments if and as requested, as well as provide affiliation to both ISFA and The FA.

The thinking is that the schools themselves will know best what their requirements and needs are in terms of formats, age groups, size of tournament, time of year, etc. and they should thus decide these questions for themselves. Schools will organise the tournaments themselves and the entry criteria, such that these tournaments will provide participating schools a competition “that they can win”.

ISFA National Competitions

National competitions stand at the pinnacle of ISFA’s competition policy – the “icing on the cake”. National competitions are aimed at raising standards; they are not aimed at providing football “For All”. Mass participation is provided for elsewhere.

ISFA operates a “less is more” philosophy towards its national competitions – ie it is better to organise a small number of prestigious, high quality and well organised national tournaments rather than to attempt to have large numbers of tournaments with less publicity/prestige and resources devoted to them.

Minimum standards of organisation and efficiency are expected in order to maintain the quality of the tournaments for all schools; schools that are unable to meet these standards may be excluded from future tournaments until such time as they are able to meet the required standards.

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 Conduc](https://isfa.org.uk/index.php/about-isfa/code-of-conduct)**[t](https://isfa.org.uk/index.php/about-isfa/code-of-conduct).

In boys’ competitions, academy players (registered under the EPPP) who attend independent schools are eligible to participate, subject to certain restrictions outlined in the Rules.  However, the primary interests of these players and the responsibility for their football development are catered for within the Academy system and are not the responsibility of ISFA.  ISFA competitions are aimed primarily at school pupils playing recreational football.

ISFA will review its competitions policy on a regular basis based on feedback received from schools.

For more information, please see the ISFA 2018 Competitions Review Report, arising from the Review Undertaken in Spring 2018.