

8<sup>th</sup> October 2025

Dear Parents and Carers

**Spectators No Longer Permitted at Merton School Sport Partnership Events**

It is after much deliberation that we will no longer be able to permit spectators at the sports events we deliver to our affiliated schools during the school day. Over the years we have sadly observed an increase in safeguarding concerns when parents/carers come to support their children at our competitions.

The MSSP team are a very small non-statutory body and funding is becoming more and more limited. As such, we are not able to provide the staffing or security required to facilitate spectators at school sports events.

We appreciate how disappointing this will be for so many parents/carers, especially when the majority of adults conform so well to our expectations around safeguarding and positive behaviour. This decision has not been made lightly.

Unfortunately, we have observed too many concerning behaviours to be able to continue to accommodate spectators (where we were once able to on public sites).

These behaviours include:

- taking photos of children and posting online without parental consent
- coaching children (when not the coach) and shouting instructions whilst they are performing
- abuse towards officials (often secondary school students) and other children taking part
- challenging organisers and officials around rules and decisions
- creating a stressful environment for the participants, with too much pressure around performance and winning at all costs
- encroaching the field of play such as cutting across finish lines (physically impeding runners) and running alongside children during their races

In addition we do not have the spare staff available to inform adults of the expectations on arrival nor to open and close gated areas so that spectators can come and go at their leisure throughout the events.

At all of our events our priority is that the children and young officials have a fun and positive learning experience, performing in the safest environment possible. Our [REFSPECT](#) programme seeks to support this approach.

We hope you will appreciate that our decision is in the best interest and for the safety and welfare of all the children taking part. It will also make optimum use of the funding and resources available to us to deliver over 70 events per year to around 9,000 primary school children.

Yours sincerely,



**Nicola Ryan**  
**Director**  
**Merton School Sport Partnership**