It has been obvious for some time that if you attend Fallibroome Academy or have a member of your family involved in Orienteering then there is a clear pathway for you to progress in the sport. Having been involved in the Schools Sports Partnership events I know that we can have 400 primary school students attend an event and get a lot of enjoyment and display some good skills when Orienteering. Seventy five or so people attended a MDOC family fun day for Orienteering, so why aren’t people flocking to join MDOC to continue an interest in Orienteering?

I know we are a friendly bunch, but that it seems is not enough! I suggest, with young people having so many opportunities for activities, we perhaps have to go and get them whilst they are young instead of waiting for them to come to us; and so I started with Macclesfield Primary Schools.

1. Make contact with all Macclesfield Primary Schools.

I contacted all primary schools and offered them free lessons in Orienteering on a fortnightly basis ( there is only one of me!) Seven schools were keen to start and lessons were organised for pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 from absolute beginners to those with some skills. I devised age appropriate fun exercises, building up to map work, and running a simple course as well as understanding basic symbols.

The children loved it, and more groups of students became involved and teachers worked alongside me to develop their own skills and confidence in teaching Orienteering.

And so I asked for feedback, here is what one school said – all schools wanted to be involved in a Primary School League.

Hi Pete,

Thank you so much for your sessions the children made excellent progress with them.

Things that went well:-

* Using the hall and outside spaces
* Building up from simple maps up to using a map of the school grounds
* Variety of activities - the funny faces game, finding the letters using the equipment in the hall, games around the compass points etc

For the future – more of what you have been doing building up to more complex courses around the school grounds would be great!

We would be interested in joining the league if at all possible!

A huge thanks for coming into school, it has been fantastic, and we would love to have you back if you decide to in the future.

1. Map Individual Schools.

One primary school had already been mapped and had the facilities and space to be a venue for a Primary School League event after Easter ( oh dear!) I made simple maps for other schools that wanted them, and passed on details to Michelle Riley MDOC member who is a professional mapper.

1. A Mascot!

A Club Mascot of a large bee was purchased. The Primary School children were invited to name the Bee with the winning School to receive small bee themed prize for the students.

OLLIE was the name chosen, but schools shut before we could have a presentation and press announcement.

1. Develop a simple Award Scheme to keep interest.

I know that the Explorer badges exist but I wanted something that the youngest children – aged 4 could get an instant reward for their participation. I therefore purchased Bee stickers and devised a honeycomb card. Once a simple stage or course was completed in the summer term the a sticker would be given on a students own individual Hive card. As this was due to take place in the summer term from Easter to July, Ollie and worker bee stickers are now in hibernation until it is safe to come out!

1. Junior Representatives on the Committee.

At the heart of my approach is to have young people involved in shaping the development of a Junior pathway. You may remember that I sent out an advert for Junior Rep and Catriona Benyon and Dominic Wathey have been appointed. They have so far attended by Zoom two committee meetings and I am excited by their enthusiasm to develop new ideas across various media.

1. Re-vamp of the Junior section of the MDOC site.

I floated the idea of a more colourful page aimed at the Juniors and for them rather than the existing page which reports on the individual achievements at events. In essence, I want young people to own their page and contribute to it. Julie has set up a new Junior page and I hope that Quizzes, puzzles, interviews and articles and training tips will begin to appear on this page.

Once we return to Orienteering in the real world I want a Junior of the month slot and I will work with Catriona and Dominic to look at the best way to develop this work.

1. THE SUMMER TERM - NOW CANCELLED!

The establishment of a primary school League and a prestigious event for Juniors at an exciting new venue (not Fallibroome) were at the planning stage. They will be back! I planned to introduce mentoring for Juniors and this may still be possible in the virtual world. Once we can all meet again I want Juniors to be much more high profile as members of the club and for younger Juniors to become involved in family fun events perhaps after Park runs or at school sports days or fairs.

1. WHERE DO YOU FIT IN WHATEVER YOUR AGE!

If we are to develop as a club then we have to embrace change. We are brilliant at organising events, but we are behind most clubs both big and small in developing young Orienteers. To be blunt we are years behind our neighbouring clubs and other more high profile clubs such as South Yorkshire.

Before joining the committee I looked at every Orienteering club in the country (I do know how many there are!) I will feed through ideas for development when we start Orienteering again.

**BUT YOU COULD DO THIS NOW!**

1. Let me know what you think we should be doing to encourage young juniors who are still at school.
2. Send me an email about what and who first got you interested in Orienteering! Do you have a photo to send to me of you as a young Orienteer? And perhaps now.
3. Share with me coaching tips, Orienteering puzzles or fun challenges that you have seen. What advice would you give to a young Orienteer?

AND FINALLY

We have made a start.....274 students from age 4 to 10 have been involved. There have been over 80 lessons. It was wonderful to see a boy with autism insist on completing an Orienteering course on his own. This is the first time he had the confidence to do anything individually his teacher said.

BUT.... I can't get out of my mind a comment from a Junior.... we turn up regularly to events and do quite well but nobody ever speaks to us and I am not sure they want us to be part of a club or what we get out of being a member of MDOC ....

MAKES YOU THINK! WE HAVE TO HAVE JUNIORS AT THE HEART OF THINGS IF WE ARE TO PROGRESS.

Please send comments to me by Monday 22nd June.

Thanks

P. Hayes