

# Staffordshire School's Football Association

## Information for Trialists/Squad Members



E S F A



The information in this booklet **must be read and understood** by **ALL** prospective SSFA players.

Anybody who acts outside of the rules/protocols set out in this document will be removed from any SSFA trial process or squad, and will not be eligible to trial/play for SSFA again. In some cases of extreme misconduct/breaches of these rules, players may not be eligible to represent their SCHOOL in SSFA/ESFA competitions.

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# Letter To Trialists

Dear Trialist,

The fact that you are reading this letter means that you firstly deserve my sincere congratulations; to have been selected for County trials is an honour, and only a huge amount of talent and respect would have got you this far – well done.

Staffordshire School's FA (SSFA) prides itself on providing elite-level opportunities for talented student athletes within Staffordshire. Playing at County level is not just a privilege – it can be an opportunity. I'm ecstatic to be able to say that in my last 2 3-year cycles coaching SSFA sides, that we have one back-to-back English National titles and 3 league titles. 7 of the players from those teams achieved scholarships with Burton Albion, 5 with Port Vale. 3 achieved professional contracts at Burton. The chances are there, and so are the contacts.

We also offer the chance at U16/U18 for our top players to trial for the International England Schoolboys side. This year we made history by selecting our first ever U16 boys to trial for the England U18 side. Beyond 18, we have wonderful relationships with Sports Recruiting USA, who are the global leaders in providing scholarship opportunities at US colleges and universities.

We also offer the opportunity to play at some fantastic venues and experience top facilities. The most impressive of which is St George's Park in Burton – the home of England football. We use several semi-pro grounds for our league/cup games such as Stafford Town FC (our home venue).

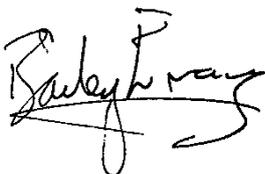
County football can also be a route into Academy football – put yourselves in the shoes of an Academy scout; would you rather go and watch 5 games a week of grassroots football to maybe see one player, or attend one game where the best 32 players from 2 counties will be on display? The answer is simple, and is the reason why we have so many scouts attend our games.

As with all privileges, we require something from you to, which is why we wrote this booklet. Unlike other football teams you may have been part of, we don't ask you to pay "subs"; we ask for your commitment, communication and for you to be a positive representative of yourselves, your schools and us. Schools' football has a unique blend of footballing opportunities and the high personal standards expected in school; something I believe is a perfect combination for young people starting out in the game - like you.

Please read this booklet carefully, I personally believe that in exchange for giving us a few fundamental commitments that you really can get a lot from us.

I look forward to working with you,

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bailey Evans', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Bailey Evans – Chairman/U14 Manager 2020/2021

## Expectations: All Trialists/Squad Members

- 1) All trial information is posted on the website ([www.staffordshireschoolsfa.org.uk](http://www.staffordshireschoolsfa.org.uk)) – it is YOUR responsibility to check the website periodically. We do not send individual emails out to players giving trial dates/venues etc.
- 2) You should bring kit that you are comfortable training/playing in. Kit is not provided for trials. Any player without football boots and/or shinpads will not be permitted to participate and no further trial will be offered.
- 3) You should bring with you plenty to drink and any medical items you need e.g. asthma inhalers, epipens etc.
- 4) We would expect you to have a high level of fitness. County football is a high standard of football, and the physical demands match the technical ones.
- 5) All trialists/players (and their parents) must accept that decisions made regarding who is successful in making it through to the next trial/playing squad/any matchday squad are **absolutely final, and are down to the coaching staff alone to make.**
- 6) Trialists/parents must understand that no SSFA staff are obliged to enter into any dialogue – electronic or verbal – regarding the decisions outlined above. The nature of trials means that people stand out and are selected; we do not offer individual feedback/reasons and will not respond to challenges/requests on this subject. There is always next year to try again! The same applies to challenges regarding squad selection.
- 7) Players are expected to treat all SSFA staff and match officials as we would expect them to treat their own teachers/coaches; with respect and courtesy.
- 8) **Relax** – all of the staff for the U14 team this year have a current/previous Academy background at various clubs; if you are doing well we WILL notice - don't think we need 38 stepovers and a 50-yard volley in the top corner if you don't normally do it; play **your** normal game!
- 9) **Any trialist who turns up to a trial having not been nominated by a member of PE staff at their school will be turned away** – a nomination is the only way to get a County Trial. Some schools are better than others at this – if you think you are good enough then ASK your teacher to do it!
- 10) In terms of communication, we do not send out individual emails giving details of trials/fixtures etc; we expect the players to routinely check our website, where all details are posted.
- 11) *\*applies only to those selected for the squad\**: You will be expected on a matchday to arrive promptly at the time stated on the website. You are also expected to demonstrate/maintain high standards by arriving in a shirt/tie, trousers and **smart** shoes. County ties are available to purchase if wanted, but school/plain ties are acceptable. This dress code also applies post-match.

## **Expectations: Parents/Spectators**

- 1)** You provide us with **YOUR** email address as soon as the trial process begins.  
Unfortunately, due to the sad times in which we live, it is wholly inappropriate and against legal protocol for staff to have the personal contact details of any child. If we believe we are communicating with a child and not a parent, we will have no choice but to block the email and withdraw that trialist/team member. The email address you provide should be one that you actively use/check regularly. Not communicating regarding attendance could result in future exclusion from the squad.
- 2)** As stated within the Player's Expectations, parents/carers are not expected to challenge or contest any decision made by SSFA coaching staff; the coach's decision is final. Anyone found to be bothering staff will have to have themselves and their child withdrawn from the SSFA setup, whichever stage of trial/selection they may be at.
- 3)** That you uphold the ethos that we expect from our players; high standards of behaviour, whether that be in school, on the football pitch or anywhere. If we find that players are not making the right choices at school (or with us), we will make the right choice in withdrawing them from this optional privilege/opportunity.
- 4)** That you support us! We LOVE having a stand full of parents/friends/family at our games – it is proven to bring out the best in the boys (and is often a great photo opportunity!).
- 5)** In the event of trials/fixtures, we post details on the website. Whilst it is your son's responsibility to check the website, as previously stated we can only receive emails from you. Usually the coach will set an "Availability Deadline", by which time any squad player/trialist who doesn't confirm their availability/attendance will be withdrawn/replaced.
- 6)** Staff cannot – for child protection reasons – be responsible for transporting players to/from matches. Own transport must be arranged except for rare circumstances where we may need/provide a coach (very rarely happens).

## Our Commitments To You

I know that the last few pages sound like a lot of rules, but if you look back over them again there really aren't that many; 99% of them are probably things that already do or would do. We put this out there now so everybody knows where they stand and what they are committing to.

However, it's not just you guys signing up to following rules; we do too. So below are our commitments to you:

- 1) The staff that coach you will always be:
  - a. DBS checked (previously CRB)
  - b. First Aid trained
  - c. Hold an FA coaching qualification
  - d. From either a current/previous educational background i.e. Teachers/ex-teachers.  
**AND/OR**
  - e. From either a current/previous professional coaching background i.e. Pro-club Academies.
- 2) The staff will speak to you in the same respectful and professional manner that we expect from you.
- 3) The staff will always be professionally turned out; in shirt/tie pre-match, and in SSFA coaching kit during the game.
- 4) We will aim to provide as many opportunities for friendlies/additional training days as we possibly can; on average we have a County game once a month (twice maximum). If we think enough people will commit to something additional, and we have the funding for facilities, we will always try to arrange something.
- 5) We will provide your shirt numbers/names to all/any scouts in attendance (if you would prefer us not to do this please let us know).
- 6) We will aim to develop you as footballers and as young people.

## **A note to Academy players/parents:**

At SSFA, we are fortunate to work with several pro-club Academies who are incredibly supportive of what we do. Sadly though, these clubs are still in the minority.

The short version is this:

if selected, and you wish to play for County, **YOUR ACADEMY CAN NOT STOP YOU.**

What they can do and some sadly choose to do though, is make things difficult for you with them. Some choose to exclude you from their next game/training session, some will claim you're being "overplayed" so they "can't" select you or let you train. This is wrong, unfair and strictly not allowed. Generally, we ask you for one weeknight a month, maybe two. It's not much time.

My advice would be to approach your Academy Manager prior to trialling and ask them their stance on playing for the County. If they are not keen on you doing so, but you are, then **DO IT** – we are able to contact the FA if you are unfairly treated as a result of playing for County. Too many Academies will try to convince you that they hold all of the cards in terms of your position with them. The secret is that they don't, and it's you/your parents who have the final say. We have had several players with us who have played District, County, Academy and in some cases International football side-by-side without a problem.

What we ask of you though, is that if you know you'd rather do as you're told by your Academy, and are going to be governed by them, that you don't trial.

Last year we selected 5 boys from Academy clubs who said "Yes I'm going to play" then failed to be available once when selected, as pressure from their club stopped them. This is unfair to coaching staff and other trialists who would've killed for their place in the squad.

**We welcome Academy players with open arms; provided they are going to be committed.**

This note is intended to enlighten you to the fact that you are actually entitled to say no to them sometimes – they just don't want you to know it!

## **Contact Details**

Hopefully you can appreciate the intentions and information within this booklet, and have realised that for very little commitment we can offer you some fantastic opportunities.

If you have any queries, please contact through one of the options below:

1) Through the “Contact Us” button at:

[www.staffordshireschoolsfa.org.uk](http://www.staffordshireschoolsfa.org.uk)

2) Directly via email at:

[baileyevans.ssfa@gmail.com](mailto:baileyevans.ssfa@gmail.com)