



FROM
THE
GROUND
UP

THE RESUMPTION OF SCHOOLS' RUGBY

To whom it may concern,

I write to you with a request that schools' rugby be resumed as a matter of priority in 2021.

The recent resumption of underage sport in both the GAA and FAI is welcomed. It is impossible to overstate the importance of sport for the general wellbeing and mental health of our youngsters.

As education, necessarily, draws school-aged students closer to screens as we avail of the advantages of technology for both continuity and social distancing, inevitably a more sedentary lifestyle prevails. The value of being out in the fresh air, engaging in healthy competition, is inestimable. Outside, competitive activity sustains not just the aforementioned mental health but also it contributes to character building, resilience, decision-making, and empathy.

Participation in sport contributes to the physical, emotional, inter- and intra-personal development of youngsters. Its importance has been amplified in these disquieting times. The Leinster Branch believes that the outdoor experiences are on par with classroom activity and it is in this context that we propose that all outdoor inter-school rugby resumes.

The evidence, both anecdotal and statistical, demonstrates that schools have proven to be very safe places with Covid-19 cases at a minimum despite the inevitable crowded spaces. We believe that this low transmission level will continue on the playing fields given the track record. Schools have detailed risk assessments to cover all eventualities and we can have utmost confidence in our school administrators.

Whereas Gaelic Games and Soccer are primarily club sports, from a rugby perspective the focus is on schools. Provincial Schools' Cup competitions at junior and senior level have a deserved primacy and provide the pathway to the professional game. The Provincial Academies are heavily reliant upon these competitions for player identification and development. If there is an elite criterion for recommencement, school's rugby fulfils it. But this is not just about the elite. If a template works at cup-level, it can be extended to include all other age groups.

In addition to the above, it is welcomed that the Northern Ireland Executive, despite far more serious figures than in the Republic, has recognised the importance of school sport and has granted permission for the resumption of full training immediately and matches from January 2nd.

In conclusion, we believe that the Provincial Rugby Committees will lead safe competitions. All precautions will be taken, such as running them without spectators, using neutral venues, without changing rooms (arriving toggled out) and without contact before and after the game. There are challenges but there are also solutions. We request that you continue to trust school authorities.

Finally, we should not deny a generation, the class of 2021, the opportunity to represent their school at the highest possible level. They have endured enough.

Kind regards,

Conor Montayne
Chairman of Leinster Schools' Committee