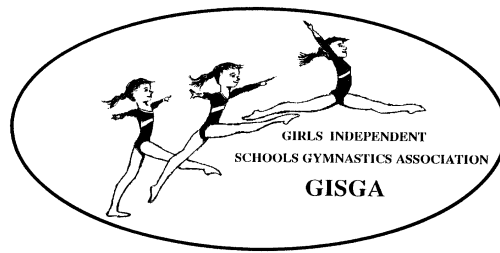


GIRLS' INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS GYMNASTICS ASSOCIATION



Welcome' from the GISGA Chairman

It is my privilege to welcome all the gymnasts, officials, parents and supporters to the 1st GISGA 4 Piece National Gymnastics Championships today. We are looking forward to seeing your children in action!

Since GISGA started in 1979 girls attending independent schools across the country have been given the opportunity to compete in floor and vault gymnastics. Today the popularity of our sport and standard of gymnastics is such that we have had to introduce a 2 Piece qualification competitions earlier in the school year for schools wanting to compete in the GISGA 5 Piece Premier National finals in November and March, which can only accommodate 16 schools in each age group. Our Under 9's championships are held in November and the Under 10's, Under 11's, Under 13's and Over 13's in March and now we have an Under 15's category pushing for full status, which leaves us with a three day championships of the highest quality.

GISGA has amongst its member schools, here at home and with British schools abroad, a wide variety of establishments: Preparatory (3-13), Secondary (11-18), and 'Through' (3 -18) schools. Some are girls' schools only whilst others are co-educational. Our largest school has a roll of 2,156 pupils and the smallest has a roll of 92. So it was decided over the summer to find a way of providing competitions for new schools joining us and also for smaller schools. Into the mix at this point came the idea of also catering for the boys within our network, as there are very few competitions for boys and our brother association BISGA has been non-operational for the last six years or so.

Hence today we trialling our national New Schools Girls' competition for which we welcome pupils and staff from St Mary's Girls School, Gerrard's Cross, Bucks, competing alongside Charters Ancaster School, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex and the Haberdashers' School for Girls in Monmouth. In the Small Schools section with girls' numbers in Years 6, 5 and 4 standing at 15 or below, we welcome Adcote Girls School from Little Ness nr Shrewsbury and Castle House School, Newport, both from Shropshire, competing alongside Brooke Priory School, Oakham, Rutland. In the Boys category we have the Haberdashers' Aske's Boys School coached by Emily Burman, who is our host organiser today and a member of the GISGA Executive committee, plus St Faith's School in the heart of Cambridge and also the boys from Castle House. These are our pioneer schools and we know that there are others in the wings, looking on to see how we fare!

We are honoured to be allowed to use Haberdashers' Aske's Boys School's splendid facilities for this event and would like to thank all concerned. My thanks are also extended to Emily and her excellent team of helpers who have made this day possible.

Some of you may already know some of the officials here today. We have the GISGA General Secretary and Competition Secretary, Linda McNally, who oversees all the GISGA championships. Her boundless energy and enthusiasm has seen many schools get involved in competitive school gymnastics. Our Head Judge, Stuart Dunkley, not only presides at all the competitions, but also makes himself available to help new teachers interpret and coach the rules correctly. Also joining us today are GISGA's Judges' Convenor, Mrs Marion Charafeddine and our Technical Director, Miss Laura Timmins.

I do hope you and your children enjoy your visit to Haberdashers School today and that this inaugural competition will become a permanent fixture on the calendar, enabling new and small schools' girls' teams to compete with confidence, giving them a gateway into qualifying for the Premier competition in the future, plus allowing our boys' teams to carve themselves a niche into the GISGA family of events.

This 'Welcome' was published in the 1st 4 Piece Competition Programme January 2015