

Tigers JFC following The England DNA

The Under 5-8 Foundation Phase Experience

The England DNA wants to inspire coaches to become excellent teachers of the game through a deeper understanding and knowledge of the young children they coach. We also want coaches to engage children in a way that makes them feel good about themselves, their capabilities and their worth. This can start with the experience we give them during our training sessions and matches.

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The best teachers show you where to look, but they don't tell you what to see.

A.K. Trenfor

1. Allow Enjoyment

Children of this young age come to football for a whole variety of reasons that will include a love of, or fascination with, football. It is very important that this first experience of football, physical activity and “coaching” is an enjoyable one, as it could lead to a lifelong love of being healthy and active.

The England DNA acknowledges the importance of how young children feel and how this can affect their attitude towards sport and physical activity. A coach who is skilled at engaging the children in an enjoyable and age-appropriate way is likely to create an environment that children will enjoy and develop within.

2. Be Positive

When working with the children, try to notice when they do things well, when they quickly do what you ask, listen well, help each other and get better at things. You might say that this has nothing to do with being a football coach – you couldn't be more wrong. It has everything to do with working effectively with young children, and shaping their behaviour and attitude for the future.

The England DNA asks parents and coaches to be positive where possible. This comes from focusing on what children CAN do instead of reminding them of what they CAN'T do... YET!

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A healthy attitude is contagious but don't wait to catch it from others. Be a carrier.

Tom Stoppard

3. Smile a Lot

Children are likely to form a stronger bond and relationship with people who smile (and make them smile). Their development leading up to 5 years of age has been driven mainly by their sensory motor system. How they “feel” is significant at this stage of their development and, if we want the

children to develop a lifelong love of sport and physical activity, then this first introduction should be memorable, exciting and enjoyable.

The England DNA asks coaches to connect with each individual child so that they feel valued, safe and ready to learn.

“ *Laughter is the shortest distance between two people.* **V Borg** ”

This all sounds very basic, but the approach of the coach must be enthusiastic, supportive, positive, caring and kind. The England DNA encourages coaches to provide exciting, challenging and enjoyable activities for the children they coach. We must try to make their Foundation Phase experience a memorable one.

This is how we begin to prepare our youngest players to play, enjoy and develop through football.