



OLYMPIC HANDBALL

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

FESTIVAL

2026/27

INTRODUCTION

The Olympic Handball Schools Festival introduces a new approach to primary school handball for the 2026/27 season.

The new festival model has been designed around three simple principles: PLAY. ENJOY. BELONG.

Our aim is to create an exciting, inclusive and professionally organised day where children can play handball, represent their school and enjoy being part of the wider Olympic Handball community.

Participation is at the heart of the Festival. Every team will have the opportunity to play multiple matches during the day, regardless of results. Qualification to the next stage remains an exciting part of the pathway, but it is an additional achievement within a much broader festival experience.

Olympic Handball Ireland will take responsibility for organising and delivering the Festival events, including venues, schedules and the overall running of the day. This removes the organisational burden from teachers and allows schools to simply register, arrive and enjoy the experience.

Play

Every team will play a minimum of three matches during the day.

Enjoy

Every team will play a minimum of three matches during the day.

Belong

Every team will play a minimum of three matches during the day.

Participation at the Heart

Every team will play multiple matches during the day, regardless of results. Qualification to the next stage remains an exciting part of the pathway, but it is an additional achievement within a much broader festival experience.

Organised by Olympic Handball Ireland

We will organise and deliver all Festival events, including venues, schedules, referees and the overall running of the day – allowing schools to simply register, arrive and enjoy the experience.

1. REGISTRATION

1.1 Registration Process

- Registration for the Olympic Handball Schools Festival will take place through the GameDay platform.
- Schools must complete their affiliation and register the number of teams they wish to enter.
- Places at each Festival are limited and will be allocated according to availability. Schools are therefore encouraged to register as early as possible.
- Once the maximum capacity of an event has been reached, further registrations may be placed on a waiting list.

1.2 Festival Locations

- Olympic Handball Ireland will organise Festival events across participating counties and regions.
- Where demand is sufficient, more than one Festival may be organised within the same county.
- Schools will register for an available Festival appropriate to their location. OHI reserves the right to amend Festival allocations where necessary due to capacity, venue availability or operational requirements.

1.3 New Counties

An interest form will be in place for schools from new counties. The organisation of an additional Festival will depend on sufficient demand, venue availability and operational feasibility.

1.4 Entry Fees

For 26/27 Season, OHI is introducing the School Affiliation, which is mandatory to take part in the competition. The affiliation gives you the following:

- School Competition Entry
- 20% discount on equipment (while stock lasts)
- Learn Handball App License for 1 year
- Free educational workshop (1 per province on a date to be confirmed).
- Insurance

School Affiliation	Republic of Ireland	Northern Ireland
School Affiliation	€25	£30
Team Entry	€45	£30

Entry fees are per Festival and per team entered and include all Festival organisation, referees, and event delivery.

1.5 Registration Dates

All registrations will be closed on the 25th of October to all events in the calendar. Registration for individual Festival events may close earlier where the maximum event capacity has been reached.

1.6 Refunds / Withdrawals

- Refunds will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. To request a refund, schools must submit a written request to schools@olympichandball.ie as soon as possible.
- For organisational reasons, refunds will only be possible up to 4 weeks before the event.
- Where a team withdraws after the Festival schedule has been published, entry fees will not be refunded.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION



Play

Register early to secure your place at your preferred Festival.



Limited Places

Each Festival has a maximum number of teams to ensure the best possible experience for every participant.



Accuracy

Please ensure all registration details are complete and accurate to avoid any issues on the day.



Communication

All Festival information, schedules and updates will be communicated via GameDay and official OHI channels.

YOUR ENTRY INCLUDES



Organisation & delivery of the Festival



Qualified referees & officials



A fun, safe & inclusive Festival environment

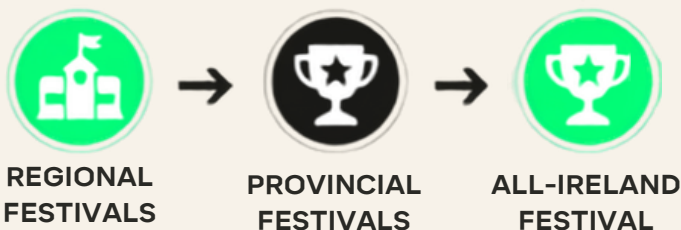
2. FESTIVAL FORMAT

OUR APPROACH

The Olympic Handball Schools Festival is built around participation, enjoyment and player development. Every team will play a minimum of three matches in a professionally organised festival environment.

2.1 FESTIVAL PATHWAY

The Schools Festival pathway for 2026/27 is:



The previous Local Regional Group Stage will no longer operate. All Festivals are organised and delivered by Olympic Handball Ireland.

2.2 FESTIVAL PHILOSOPHY

The Olympic Handball Schools Festival is built around participation.

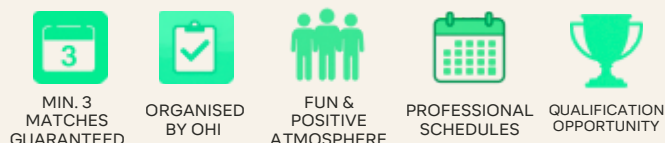
Every team will:

- ✓ Play a minimum of three matches.
- ✓ Participate in an organised Festival environment;
- ✓ Receive equal opportunity to participate regardless of results;
- ✓ Be part of the Play, Enjoy, Belong, experience; and
- ✓ Have the opportunity to progress through the Schools Festival pathway.

2.3 COUNTY / REGIONAL FESTIVALS

- County and Regional Festivals form the first stage of the Schools Festival pathway.
- Festivals will be organised and delivered by Olympic Handball Ireland.
- Teams will be placed into schedules/groups according to the number of teams registered, available courts, categories and event capacity.
- Each team will play a minimum of three matches.
- At the conclusion of the Festival, the highest ranked eligible teams in each category will qualify for the Provincial Festival.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT A COUNTY / REGIONAL FESTIVAL



2.4 QUALIFICATION FROM FESTIVALS

Qualification to the next stage is determined by the final rankings at each County/Regional Festival.



COUNTIES WITH ONE FESTIVAL

The top two teams in each category qualify for the relevant Provincial Festival



COUNTIES WITH TWO FESTIVALS

The top team in each category from each Festival qualifies for the relevant Provincial Festival.

2.5 PROVINCIAL FESTIVALS

Provincial Festivals will bring together qualifying teams from the County/Regional Festival stage.

Separate Provincial Festivals may be organised for:



The format of each Provincial Festival will be determined according to the number of qualifying teams in each category.

Teams will play an organised schedule from which the provincial representatives progressing to the All-Ireland Festival will be determined.

2.6 ALL-IRELAND FESTIVAL

The All-Ireland Festival represents the final stage of the Primary Schools Festival pathway.

Qualifying teams from the Provincial Festivals will come together for the national event organised by Olympic Handball Ireland.

The All-Ireland Festival will celebrate school handball participation across Ireland while determining the national winners in each category.

THE FESTIVAL PATHWAY



SCHOOLS REGISTER



REGIONAL FESTIVAL



PROVINCIAL FESTIVAL



ALL-IRELAND FESTIVAL

3.AGE GROUPS, COURT SIZE, BALL, GAME TIME AND ALTERNATIVES OF THE SPORT



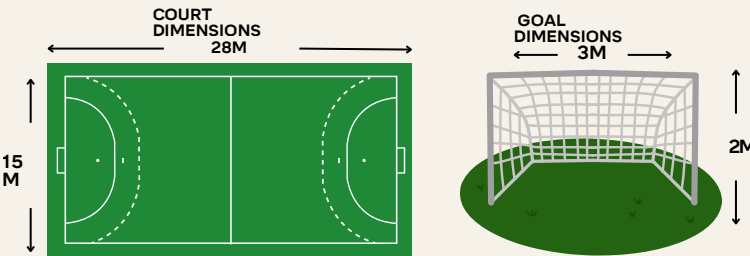
To ensure every child can participate, learn and enjoy the game, the rules of Olympic Handball are adapted for younger players. The categories, equipment, court dimensions and game structure below are designed to promote development, safety and participation.

3.1 AGE GROUPS

Category	School Year (Republic of Ireland)	School Year (Northern Ireland)	Playing Format
Minis	3rd & 4th Class	Year 5, 6 & 7	Handball 5
Juveniles	5th & 6th Class	Year 7 & 8	Handball 5

Age groups are based on the school year in which the child is enrolled during the 2026/27 academic year.

3.3 COURT SIZE & GOAL



Minimum court size:
28metres (length) x 15 metres (width).

Goal size:
3 metres (width) x 2 metres (height).



- Lines and zones are marked in accordance with the adapted rules.
- If full court markings are not available, the organiser will provide appropriate markings for the Festival.

3.2 BALL

Category	Ball Size
Minis	Size 0 (46–48 cm circumference) 
Juveniles	Size 1 (50–52 cm circumference) 

3.4 GAME TIME

Category	Minimum Game Time
Minis	Minimum 10 minutes matches
Infants	Minimum 10 minutes matches



- There will be a short half-time break.
- Actual game times may be adjusted slightly by the organiser to ensure the smooth running of the Festival.
- Times might be adjusted depending on organisational reasons.

ALTERNATIVES OF THE SPORT

To ensure inclusivity and allow all children to participate, the following alternatives may be used:



ADAPTED RULES

Rules may be adapted by the Festival organiser to suit the needs and ability levels of the players.



PLAYING NUMBERS

Smaller teams or modified numbers may be used to ensure everyone plays in a fun and active way.



REDUCED SPACE

Courts may be adapted in size to suit the available venue while ensuring safety and enjoyment.



PLAYER WELFARE

Player welfare and enjoyment are the priority at all times. Adjustments will be made as required.

4. TEAMS



The Olympic Handball Schools Festival is designed to ensure that every child has the opportunity to participate in a safe, inclusive and enjoyable environment. The rules below set out the team requirements for the 2026/27 season.

4.1 TEAM COMPOSITION

Each team must have:



**Minimum of
6 players**



**Maximum of
12 players.**

Teams must have a minimum of six (6) players and a maximum of twelve (12) players registered for each Festival.

4.2 TEACHER / ADULT SUPERVISION



Each school/team must be accompanied by at least one responsible teacher or authorised school representative.

The teacher/representative is responsible for the supervision, welfare and conduct of the players from their school.

4.3 PLAYING KIT



OUTFIELD PLAYERS

Outfield players must wear matching colours.



GOALKEEPERS

Goalkeepers must wear a colour that is distinguishable from the outfield players.



GLOVES

Gloves are not permitted.

4.4 FAIR PLAY & FIELDING TEAMS



Schools are encouraged to field as many teams as possible to ensure maximum participation.



Maximum of 2 teams but exceptions can be made depending on logistics organisation.



The Festival is about participation, enjoyment and development for every child.

IMPORTANT NOTES

- ✓ Players may only participate for the school they are registered with.
- ✓ Any player registered with a school must be enrolled in that school for the 2026/27 academic year.
- ✓ It is the responsibility of the school to ensure all players are registered correctly according to their age and class.
- ✓ Olympic Handball Ireland reserves the right to refuse participation to any team that does not meet the regulations.

5. MATCH RULES



FUN. FAIR. SAFE.

All matches in the Olympic Handball Schools Festival will be played in a spirit of fair play, respect and enjoyment. These rules are adapted to ensure the safety, inclusion and development of all.

5.1 GENERAL RULES

- All matches shall be played in accordance with these rules and the spirit of fair play.
- Decisions of the referees are final.
- Players must respect referees, opposition players and officials at all times.
- Unsporting behaviour will not be tolerated.
- The use of strong, aggressive or dangerous play is strictly prohibited.
- All players must shake hands with the opposition at the end of the match.

5.2 START AND RESTART OF PLAY

Situation	Restart
Start of match / after half-time	Throw-off from the centre
After a goal is scored	Throw-in from the goal area
Ball goes out of play over the sideline	Throw-in from the sideline
Ball goes out of play over the goal line (not a goal)	Throw-off from the goal area
After a foul	Free throw from the position of the foul

5.3 SCORING

- A goal is scored when the entire ball passes over the goal line between the goalposts and under the crossbar.
- Only from the attacking half.

5.4 FOULS AND FREE THROWS



- Fouls include pushing, holding, tripping, hitting or any other unfair action.
- Free throws will be awarded and taken from the position where the foul occurred.

5.5 GOALKEEPER RULES



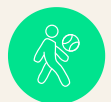
- Goalkeepers may move freely within their goal area.
- They can leave the goal area to play the ball as an outfield player but they can't cross the middle line into the attack.
- The ball cannot be purposely thrown back to the goalkeeper by a team-mate.

5.6 SUBSTITUTIONS



- Substitutions can be made at any time during the match and are unlimited.
- Please ensure that the player coming out has left the court before the other player comes in.
- There's no need for referees authorisation.

5.7 EQUIPMENT



- Teams must wear matching coloured shirts with numbers (where possible).
- No jewellery, watches or items that may pose a danger are permitted.

5.8 MISCONDUCT

Referees have the authority to manage misconduct as follows:



Verbal Warning

For minor offences or first-time issues



1 Minute Suspension

For repeated offences or unsporting behavior.



Red Card

For serious offences and dangerous play.



- Pedagogical rule is applied for 1 minute suspension, when another player can enter the game so the team is not left with a player less.

6. CLASSIFICATION, SCORING AND TIE DOWN



The goal of the Olympic Handball Schools Festival is to promote participation, development and enjoyment. Our classification, scoring and tie down procedures ensure a fair and transparent process to determine teams that progress to the next stage of the Festival.

6.1 CLASSIFICATION



- Team standings in each group are determined by the total points earned.
- The top teams from each category qualify for the next stage of the Festival as outlined in the Festival format.
- The number of teams that progress may vary depending on the number of festivals in each county as stated in rule 2.4.

6.2 SCORING SYSTEM

Teams are awarded points as follows:

Result	Points
Win	3 points
Draw	2 points
Loss	1 point
Forfeit / Non-appearance	0 points

6.3 TIE BREAK PROCEDURE

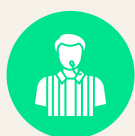
If two or more teams are tied on points, the following criteria will be applied in order:



- By the result of the match between the two tied teams
- The team that has the highest goals scored in total games carried out between all teams.
- The lowest number of goals conceded in total games carried out between all teams.
- Biggest difference between goals scored and conceded in total games carried out between all teams.
- In the event that a tie still exists, it is up to the organisation to determine the tiebreaker to be made.
- 7m or extra game to be decided by the organisation on the day

7. REFEREEING & EVENT OFFICIALS

7.1 FESTIVAL OFFICIALS



- Olympic Handball Ireland will coordinate the officiating requirements for each Festival.
- OHI may use qualified referees, trained officials, coaches, volunteers and other appropriately trained personnel to support the delivery of Festival events.

7.2 TEACHERS



- Teachers are not expected to organise the Festival, create match schedules or coordinate results.
- Teachers remain responsible for supervising their pupils throughout the event and ensuring that their teams are ready to play according to the published schedule.

8. FESTIVAL CONDUCT & FAIR PLAY



All participants, teachers, coaches, officials and spectators are expected to contribute positively to the Festival environment.

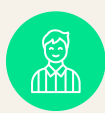
Respect must be shown towards:



Players



Opponents



Referees



Officials



Teachers



Volunteers



Venue Staff

- ✓ The Schools Festival is designed to create a positive experience for children. Unsporting, abusive or inappropriate behaviour towards participants or officials will not be tolerated.
- ✓ Olympic Handball Ireland reserves the right to take appropriate action where behaviour is considered contrary to the values of the Festival.

9. EVENT OPERATIONS



Teams must arrive and confirm attendance with the organisation once they arrive at the venue.



Match schedules will be prepared in advance wherever possible; however, OHI reserves the right to adjust schedules on the day due to withdrawals, delays, venue circumstances or other operational requirements.



Schools must ensure teams are ready to enter the court immediately when called.



Late arrival may result in matches being shortened, rescheduled or, where necessary, forfeited.

10. OMITTED CASES



Any situation not specifically covered by these Regulations will be determined by Olympic Handball Ireland.



Where an immediate decision is required during a Festival, the designated OHI Event Coordinator will make the final decision, taking into consideration fairness, player welfare, fair play and the effective operation of the event.



Decisions made by the designated Event Coordinator regarding the immediate operation of a Festival will be final.

