



Cross Country: County Championships Southmead secure spectacular silver!



Yr4 girls' prove that they are one of the best teams in Devon by beating 14 other teams of regional finalists.

On Wednesday eight Yr4 girls travelled down to Torquay to take part in the Devon Winter Games, for the Cross Country Running County Championships. 16 schools took part in this event, with almost 100 girls on the start line. And like the Southmead competitors, each of these children had already proved their calibre by qualifying as either regional gold or silver medallists.

Although the course wasn't long and there were no hills, there was no opportunity to walk it first ... which was probably for the best, because several days of rain had turned it into something of a swamp before the race even began! It was wet, it was slippery and it was cold. It also involved a woodland section and a lake which we couldn't see from the start, and there were no 'hares' (older pace runners who stay ahead of the lead runners to show the way around an unknown course).

But despite the very early start, despite the nerves, despite the rain, despite some of them still being tired from competing in a swimming gala on the previous day(!), the Southmead squad performed brilliantly.



Limbering up; some quick stretches before we begin!



Encouragement along the final straight. Banner courtesy of Mrs McCarthy.



Gathering on the start line: the best runners from across the county.



And they're off ... into the rain and the mud!

First across the line for Southmead was Amber Drake who put in a tremendous run and came in a fabulous 4th, narrowly beating Poppy Williams who put in a sustained sprint-start, to come in a splendid 7th. Fighting their way through the pack, Poppy Burrige came in a terrific 12th, with Annie Ogden close behind in a superb 17th. Resolutely battling their way through the increasingly treacherous conditions, Rosemary Clopet finished a fantastic 52nd, just ahead of Kyla McCarthy who completed the Southmead-six, to finish on a sparkling (if somewhat muddy) 62nd!

Although disappointed not to be running themselves, our super reserves (Amy Skarzynski and Ruby Darby) were thrilled for their team mates, with whom they have trained and practised for so long. They encouraged and congratulated their victorious friends, and held the banner aloft for the weary runners; every bit as much a part of the team as those who ran.



Stretching out: Poppy Williams sprinting away from the start line.



Eyes on the prize: Amber Drake looking down the home straight.



Watch out for those elbows! Poppy Burrige coming through!



Closing in: Rose Clopet racing for the finish line.

For each 6-girl squad, scores for the top 4 competitors were combined to give an overall team score. With four runners in the top 20, and two of those in the top 10, we knew we were in with a chance. . . But as the results were announced in reverse order, we were stunned, then amazed and then delighted to discover that we weren't fourth ... or even third ... but into the medals with a spectacularly solid second! To secure second place in a race against the best runners across the whole of the county, and take a podium position on Southmead's first entry to the County Championships was simply amazing, and the girls were rightly proud of their achievement!

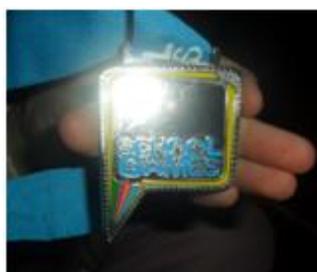
We were also not far behind the overall winners: Southmead scored a combined 40 points, while Woolacombe (veterans of the county championships) just nosed ahead with 31. In fact, North Devon dominated the podium this year, with Woolacombe also taking second place in the boys' race, just behind Bratton Flemming in first.



What a team! Amy Skarzynski and Ruby Darby hold the Southmead banner.



Delighted and amazed: the team collect their medals.



Silver for Southmead. What a result!



Our first visit to the Devon Winter Games. Will it be you in 2018?

I would like to pay tribute to the tremendous effort put in by all 8 girls over the last year. They have all worked so hard to improve their running individually, and have worked so well as a team, supporting each other. They are a lovely group and each one of them richly deserves this fantastic team result. **Well done girls: you did it!** 😊

I would also like to sincerely thank all of the parents who accompanied us down to Torbay and who supported the school by looking after all of the children at the Games. Very many thanks to: Bonita McCarthy, Emma Burridge, Rachael Dunn, and Simon Ogden. We couldn't take part in these events without you, so thank you all once again!

Mr. Corney.

Watch out for news about active clubs for the Summer term ... coming soon!

"I can't believe our runners came 2nd out of 16 top schools!" - Sophie Maxey (4AP).

"I really liked the race and I was really nervous. I liked it even more when I came 4th at the end!" - Amber Drake (4AP).

"At the start we lined up in a straight line behind our friends (each school lined up in team order, in single file). After the starting gun went we started to race as fast as we could and I came in twelfth!" - Poppy Burridge (4AP).

"Thank you for taking us for runs, Mr Corney!" - Annie Ogden (4NS).

"At the start when we lined up, I was second to last in the line. After the gun went, we all started running, trying to get through. We ran along a path next to a wood, which was where we got really muddy!" - Rose Clopet (4AP).

"I felt like I was going to cry when the Southmead girls came whizzing round the corner in the race!" - Ruby Darby (4AP).

"I found it really exciting, especially when our team came second! It was really muddy and rainy. Our team did really well and I am super proud of them for coming second out of SIXTEEN schools!" - Amy Skarzynski (4AP).