

Southmead running teams smash records in Torrington!



Just before half term, 38 children from Key Stage 2 competed in the Stephens Shield, the regional cross country running competition organised annually by Great Torrington School. Over 700 primary children from 24 schools across North Devon took part in the event, from Halwill and Holsworthy near the Cornish border, to Bratton Flemming and Bishops Nympton on the edges of Exmoor. A large number of local schools also entered, including Woolacombe, Ilfracombe, Combe Martin, Marwood, Caen and Kingsacre.



And they're off! Isabel Hebard leads the Yr3 girls in the first race of the day.



Yr5 boys starting pack.

Last year the children endured driving rain and cold winds. This year the day was cool but conditions were relatively dry underfoot. Once again, the route combined distance and difficult terrain, including descents and climbs, grass and mud, pinch points and off-camber corners. And of course, some of the best young runners in North Devon! Undaunted, the Southmead team were eager to start!

With between 75 and 100 children on each start line, the first challenge in each race was to get to a position at the front of the pack and stay on the line, even before the starting gun had been fired! The huge number of entrants meant that there was a separate race for girls and then boys in each year group, starting with Year 3. The competition therefore started with the Year 3 girls setting off first along the course.



Yr3 girls starting line-up.



Dream ticket: Isabel Hebard (Yr3).



Last year the Southmead team were delighted when Amber Drake rounded the final corner at the very front of the pack ... so they were absolutely ecstatic to see Isabel Hebard repeat Amber's momentous achievement this year! Running strongly in her Southmead jersey, Isabel headed straight for the finish: the very **first** child to cross the Stephens Shield 2016 finishing line! The rest of the Year 3 girls team also finished strongly, with Elsie Kester, Isla Nicholls and Grace Paterson all finishing in the first 25. With a combined score of just 63, Southmead narrowly beat both Marwood and Woolacombe (at 66 pts each), to take 2nd place overall. Just like last year, this early success buoyed the team immensely, with everyone else determined to put in a personal best in their own race.

Not to be outdone, the Year 3 boys also ran a super race, with Reuben Rodwell, Tommy Ashton and Corey Hughes all finishing in the top 20. Together with Vaughan Mottram Mitchell, the Year 3 boys team took 3rd place overall.



Racing away: Yr3 boys (Reuben Rodwell, Tommy Ashton, Corey Hughes, Vaughan Mottram Mitchell, Caine Jackson)



Team Spirit: Yr4 boys (Hamish Reed, Alex Pitt) and girls (Rose Clopet, Poppy Burrridge, Poppy Williams, Amber Drake, Grace Hencher, Kyla McCarthy, Amy Skarzynski, Ruby Darby).



No.1! Amber Drake (Yr4).

Already excited about the Year 3 results, the Southmead team was blown away by the Year 4 girls. Amber Drake repeated her excellent result from last year, easily beating the rest of the pack and coming in **first**, for Southmead's second individual gold of the day. Close behind her, the remaining girls also ran a terrific race with Annie Ogden, Poppy Burrridge and Poppy Williams all finishing within the top 10. With a combined score of just 23, the Southmead Year 4 girls came **first** and also secured the smallest (i.e. best) score of any team in any year in the entire competition and should be immensely proud of their tremendous team achievement! The Year 4 races are especially competitive, with the runners all contending for a place in the Devon Winter Games. So the Southmead Year 4 girls will now be invited to take part in these Games, which will be held in Torbay in March 2017.

This is the first time Southmead have ever qualified for this prestigious competition! Very well done girls! 😊

For the Year 4 boys, Southmead were represented by Hamish Reed and Alex Pitt. As four runners are required for a team score, these boys couldn't score for the school, but were still determined to try their very best, and neither disappointed. Hamish ran very strongly, finishing an excellent 8th. Unfortunately Alex fell in the first few metres and was trampled by the pack as it left the start line. Battered but undaunted, Alex demonstrated amazing courage and resilience, and declared that he would carry on. The rest of the pack had already completed their lap of the starting field and were rapidly disappearing through a gateway, but Alex got right back into the race and ran the course to the finish line, overtaking an incredible 44 other competitors to come in an astonishing 45th. **We are so proud of you, Alex!**



Above: Coming through! Hamish Reed (Yr4).



Left: Courageous & resilient. Alex Pitt (Yr4).



Leaders of the pack: Macy Nicholls, Isabelle Perryman, Grace Parkin (Yr5)

The Year 5's and 6's had a longer distance to run than the 3's and 4's, but took this in their stride. Like the Year 4 boys, there were not enough Year 5 girls for a full team, with several girls unable to attend on the day. Despite this, these three Stephens Shield stalwarts were determined to run as hard as they could. All three of them ran brilliantly, with Grace Parkin, Isabelle Perryman and Macy Nicholls coming in 4th, 13th, and 18th, respectively. With just one more qualifying runner, the Year 5 girls would certainly have scored highly as a team.

Another team of Stephen Shield veterans, the seven Year 5 boys were fiercely determined to win, encouraging and spurring one another on. This was a highly competitive race, but our runners gave it everything they had. Harry Hebard and Liam McQueen-Mason finished within the top 10, with Henry Jones and Dylan McSherry just behind in 14th and 21st. Tied with Woolacombe for **first** place on 44 points each, the judges declared that as our first runner (Harry, in 2nd place) finished ahead of Woolacombe's top runner (in 4th), the race was **won** by Southmead!



Ahead of the game: Harry Hebard and Liam McQueen-Mason (Yr5)



Dream team. Above: Lilian Clopet & Marisa Poole. Below: Lexi Gerrard & Livi Walker (Yr6).

Last year the Southmead Year 5 girls team raced into first place, so hopes were high for this year's Year 6 team. And they did not disappoint.

Old hands Lilian Clopet, Marisa Poole and Lexi Gerrard were joined by Livi Walker. Once again the girls put in a stellar performance, with Lilian taking **first** place (for Southmead's third individual gold) and all of the girls finishing in the top 15.



As a result, the Year 6 girls team once again came **first**, with just 30 points; less than half the points of the second placed team (Caen, on 85). We will miss you next year, girls!

In the final race, Southmead was represented by three Year 6 boys: Rio Capron, Samuel Stephen and Thomas Hencher. All three put in an indomitable performance in what was a very competitive field with some very tall, very strong runners, and both Rio and Samuel finished in the top 10. Well done boys!



On your tail: Rio Capron chasing the lead (Yr6)



They think it's all over . . .

Rio Capron and Samuel Stephen collect their tickets (Yr6)

What a brilliant year!

Every single one of our five qualifying teams finished in the top 3 out of 24 schools. We secured three individual firsts and a tremendous three team firsts: **a record for our runners!**

In securing three team firsts, Southmead also tied with the Gateway Federation (Bratton Fleming and Holywell) for the most team golds!

Comparing the overall team positions, Southmead were very narrowly beaten into third place by Woolacombe and the Gateway Federation, with teams that were almost twice our size.

However, the smaller Southmead team had the best average team score, narrowly beating even Woolacombe ... so runner for runner, the Southmead squad are now among the very best in the region! ☺

But we couldn't have attended the competition at all without the brilliant support of a tremendous bunch of very helpful parents, and we would like to thank all those who came along and helped our team participate on this very large site, keeping them safe among all of the other competitors and adults. So a huge thank you to:

Bonita McCarthy
Emma Reed
Lucy Jones
Matt Burridge
Mrs Clopet
Mrs Grimshaw
Mrs Poole

Nick Hencher
Rosalind Hebbard
Sarah Parkin
Sarah Patterson
Simon Ogden
Steve Kester



. . . it is now! (It's Yr5)

And finally, well done to **ALL** of the Southmead runners, including all of those there is not space to mention here. You ran in fiercely competitive races, performed spectacularly and behaved brilliantly!

We are SO proud of you! ☺

Mr Corney.

Competing schools (24)

Bradworthy
Caen
Combe Martin
Exmoor Link Fed. (Bishops Nympton)
Exmoor Federation
Gateway Fed. (Bratton Fleming, Holywell)
Goodleigh
Halwill

Holsworthy
Ilfracombe Juniors
Kingsacre
Landkey
Langtree
Marwood
Monkleigh
Shirwell

South Molton Community Primary
Southmead
St Margarets C of E Bideford
Sticklepath
Tarka Federation
Torrington Bluecoats
Westcroft
Woolacombe

