

Southmead running teams race to glory in Torrington!



Southmead dominate the field, taking the most team golds of any school in this prestigious regional event!

Just before half term, 49 children from Key Stage 2 competed in the Stephens Shield, the regional cross country running competition organised annually by Great Torrington School. Over 720 primary children from 23 schools across North Devon took part in the event, from federations of schools across Exmoor, to Bradworthy and Holsworthy near the Cornish border. A large number of local schools also entered, including three schools from the Braunton Learning Community (Caen, Kingsacre and Marwood).



Thumbs up! Stephens Shield veterans, Liam McQueen-Mason and Dylan McSherry (Yr6).

Last year's race day was cool, but dry underfoot. This year we arrived to a light drizzle, soaking ground conditions and a forecast that promised heavier rain as races began. If the weather was worse, the route at least remained unchanged, again combining distance and difficult terrain, descents and climbs, grass and mud, pinch points and off-camber corners. And like every year, some of the best young runners in North Devon! In short, everything the Southmead team were looking forward to!



With between 75 and 100 children on each start line, the first challenge in previous years has always been to get and maintain a position at the front of the pack, even before the starting whistle has been blown. However this year the organisers instituted a line-up start procedure, which meant that the fastest sprinters for each school were placed at the head of their school line, followed by the rest of their team. Although this did slightly diminish the numerical advantage of larger teams (like ours), it made a huge difference to the order and safety of the start, and was a very welcome change.



Year 3 squad. Back: Hermione Vickery, Sawyer Dent, Harry Baker, Reuben Capron, Mia Latu and Lyra Woollam-Dalling. Front: Tilly McQueen-Mason, Sidney Sapsford, Samuel Rodwell, Tane Langley-Walker, Marcie Jones and Leah Paylor.

Another change from last year was a reversal in race order, with boys taking the lead, this year. In previous years, the Southmead team have been absolutely ecstatic to see Amber Drake (2015) and Isabel Hebard (2016) finish the very first race of the competition at the front of the pack ... so they were delighted to see the Year 3 boys finish strongly as a team, with Harry Baker, Sidney Sapsford and Tane Langley-Walker finishing a brilliant 5th, 6th, and 8th! And with Reuben Capron coming in 23rd, the top 4 Southmead boys claimed the very first **Gold** of the day, more than 30 points ahead of their closest rivals (Monkleigh)! Once again this early success cheered the team immensely, with everyone else excited and eager to do their best.

Not to be outdone, the Year 3 girls also ran strongly, with Leah Paylor (8th) and Lyra Woollam-Dalling (15th) both finishing in the top 20 of their race. Together with Marcie Jones (21st) and Mia Latu (28th), the Year 3 girls' team scored equal points with Woolacombe, but were narrowly beaten into 4th place as the first Woolacombe runner just pipped Leah to the post. In fact, this race was exceptionally close, with just 2 points separating 2nd, 3rd, and 4th!



Year 3 girls running strong: Leah Paylor & Lyra Woollam-Dalling.

The winning boy and girl team in Year 4 go forward to the Devon Winter Games (as the Southmead girls did, last year), so there was huge competition for the Year 4 races this year, with over 100 boys and almost 90 girls on the two start lines.



Brilliant effort: Daniel Sanders finishes the Year 4 boys' race.

The boys tore away from the start, with Daniel Sanders putting in a brilliant sprint at the head of the Southmead line, and Reuben Rodwell running strongly to the end, to come in 11th. However, competition was exceptionally fierce in this race and the Year 4 boys were beaten by newcomers Sticklepath and old foes from Woolacombe and the Gateway Federation.



Speedyshoes: Issy Hebard.

Following on the heels of the boys, the Year 4 girls also found themselves battling against strong runners from Woolacombe and the Gateway Federation. Everyone on the Southmead team ran hard and there were some brilliant performances from Issy Hebard (3rd), Emma Pittman (18th) and Robin Reed (20th), but in the end the team were narrowly beaten into 4th place by only a three-point lead from Landkey.



The Year 4 girls get some encouragement: Isla Nicholls & Elsie Kester.

As in previous years, we were unfortunately unable to field a full team of boys in the next cohort, but Hamish Reed and Alex Pitt represented the Southmead Year 5 boys admirably: Hamish fighting through a huge pack to come in 7th, and Alex (survivor of last year's pack stampede), improving on his legendary and courageous run last year, with a strong 36th.



In the mix: Hamish Reed at the start of the Year 5 boys' race.



Leader of the pack: Poppy Williams sprints away from the Yr5 girls' start line.

After the success of last year's Year 4 girls, first at the Stephen's shield (where they took gold) and then at the County finals in Torbay (where they took Silver), everyone was anticipating a first-class result from the Year 5 girls. And they did not disappoint! Amber Drake repeated her excellent result from both previous years, easily beating the rest of the pack and coming in **first**, for an individual **Gold** hat-trick, and Southmead's first and only individual **Gold** of the day.

Close behind her, the other Winter Games veterans also ran a terrific race, with Annie Ogden 5th, Poppy Burrige 7th and Poppy Williams 12th. With a combined score of just 25, the first 4 Southmead girls from Year 5 not only took Southmead's second team **Gold**, but once again secured the smallest (i.e. best) score of any team in any year in the entire competition and (once again!) should be immensely proud of their tremendous team achievement!

But Amber, Annie, Poppy B and Poppy W weren't the only Year 5 Southmead girls' team this year. Just behind them on the starting line were another group of girls, just as determined to show their grit and determination. And **for the first time ever**, a Southmead 'B' team tied for a top 4 place after the 'A' team had already scored. Holly Selvey (24th), Rosemary Clopet (25th), Ruby Darby (30th) and Grace Hencher (49th) drew level with Caen on points, only missing 4th place because Caen's first runner (in 13th) came in ahead of Holly ... despite the fact that Holly, Rose and Ruby all beat all of the remaining runners from Caen. You were competing against their 'A' team, girls; and you very nearly beat them! ☺



Year 5 girls: Kyla McCarthy, Rose Clopet, Holly Selvey, Ruby Darby, Gabby Vickery, Annie Ogden, Amber Drake, Poppy Williams and Grace Hencher.



Cheer up boys; you did it! ☺
Year 6 boys Henry Jones, Liam McQueen-Mason, Dylan McSherry and Harry Hebard.



Another team of Stephen Shield veterans, the Year 6 boys were fiercely determined to win, wanting to prove that in their final year of the primary element of this competition, they still had the edge over the rest of the field. Last year they tied for first place on points, but just nosed ahead as Harry Hebard (2nd) finished ahead of Woolacombe's first runner. This year Harry came in 8th, with Henry Jones hard on his heels in 9th, closely followed by Liam McQueen-Mason and Dylan McSherry just behind in 14th and 27th. However if the line-up start slowed them down compared to last year, it also slowed down the competition, because this year they extended their lead over second-placed Woolacombe to a comfortable 7 points, to secure a third **Gold** for Southmead! Together with Finley Grimshaw (46th) and Reece Brades (58th), the Year 6 boys took part with sportsmanship and honour (and just a little pride!): we will miss you next year, boys!

Although the Stephens Shield veterans in this year's Year 6 cohort have always run strongly and performed well as individuals, they have never previously had enough girls to make a team. This year Grace Parkin, Macy Nicholls, and Isabelle Perryman were joined by Isabell Dobrowski and Lilly Boddington Smith, to make a final play for a team victory in this event, before the transition to the harder secondary competition, next year. Running hard against determined competition that refused to stop (even at the finishing line!), Grace Parkin improved once again on her position from last year, coming in a brilliant 3rd, followed by newcomer Isabell D in 23rd, Macy in 34th and Isabelle P in 53rd. Not quite enough for the team result they wanted, but a super effort against very tough competition. Tired but smiling, Lilly was our final runner to cross the line; very happy to have finished, and proud to have represented her school! ☺ We wish you all the very best of luck in the secondary races, next year, girls!



Photo finish: Grace Parkin powers along the final straight and into the funnel, to claim 3rd place for the Year 6 girls.



Proud parents: Karen Kester and Sarah Parkin,
Jason and Karen Lewis.

Another brilliant year!

Once again, out of 23 schools, five Southmead teams finished in the top 4. We secured one individual first, two individual thirds and a tremendous twelve runners in the top 10 of the 8 the different races. In winning three team firsts, Southmead also beat all other competing schools to claim the **most team Golds!** Comparing the overall team positions, Southmead also improved from last year's third place, now second only to Woolacombe ... who also beat us last year! So once again the children proved that the Southmead cross country running team are 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 the children safe among all of the other competitors and adults. So a huge thank you to:

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|----------------------|----------------|
| Bonita McCarthy | Laura Grimshaw |
| Emma Burridge | Michelle Dent |
| Emma Reed | Nick Grimshaw |
| Jackie Guthrie | Rachel Dunn |
| Jane Rodwell | Sally Baker |
| Jason Lewis | Sarah Parkin |
| Jenean McQueen-Mason | Steve Drake |
| Karen Kester | |

A special thank you to **Sarah Nicholls**, our brilliant PE Governor, who helped me coordinate our trip throughout the day; firstly helping to organise runners as they arrived at school early in the morning, and then collating results tickets as the children finished each race: thank you Sarah!

We also wouldn't have been anywhere near the top of the results table without the help of **Mrs Fallowfield** and **Mrs McSherry**, every week at Cross Country Running Club. Thank you both so much. We couldn't have done it without your commitment and dedication! Thank you from all of the club runners!



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! I am very proud of you! ☺

Keep running!
Mr Corney.



Competing schools (23)

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| Bradworthy | Kingsacre | Shirwell |
| Caen | Landkey | South Molton Community Primary |
| Exmoor Link Federation | Langtree | Southmead |
| Gateway Fed. (Bratton Fleming) | Marwood | Sticklepath |
| Gateway Fed. (Holywell) | Monkleigh | Torrington Bluecoat |
| Halwill | Newport | West Exmoor Federation |
| High Bickington | Our Lady's | Woolacombe |
| Holsworthy | Pilton Bluecoat | |