HELP FOR CLUBS TO SHAPE VOLLEYBALL-FRIENDLY SCHOOL SPORTS HALLS

Practical guidance for clubs engaging with schools, academy trusts, councillors and local partners

November 2026



The strongest opportunity to influence a new or refurbished school sports hall is usually local and early.

Clubs should build relationships with schools and trusts before designs are fixed, make a clear case for volleyball and help identify partners or funding for improvements beyond the national minimum specification.

This support is intended to help local volleyball organisations influence facilities at the point when changes are most achievable and affordable.

By coordinating evidence, relationships and practical expertise, clubs, regional and county associations can make a stronger case for halls that support safe volleyball, sustainable community access and long-term participation growth.

Why local engagement matters

Volleyball England has raised concerns about school sports hall specifications with the Department for Education (DfE).

The national minimum specification currently determines the level of government funding available, while decisions about enhancements are generally made by individual schools or Multi-Academy Trusts.

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National specifications are reviewed over long cycles and current priorities include fire safety, sprinklers and circulation space.

This means local clubs may be able to secure improvements more quickly by engaging directly with decision-makers on individual projects.

1) Identify projects early

Monitor local authority planning portals, council and academy trust announcements, school rebuilding programmes and local education news. Early engagement is vital: changes become harder and more expensive once a design is approved.

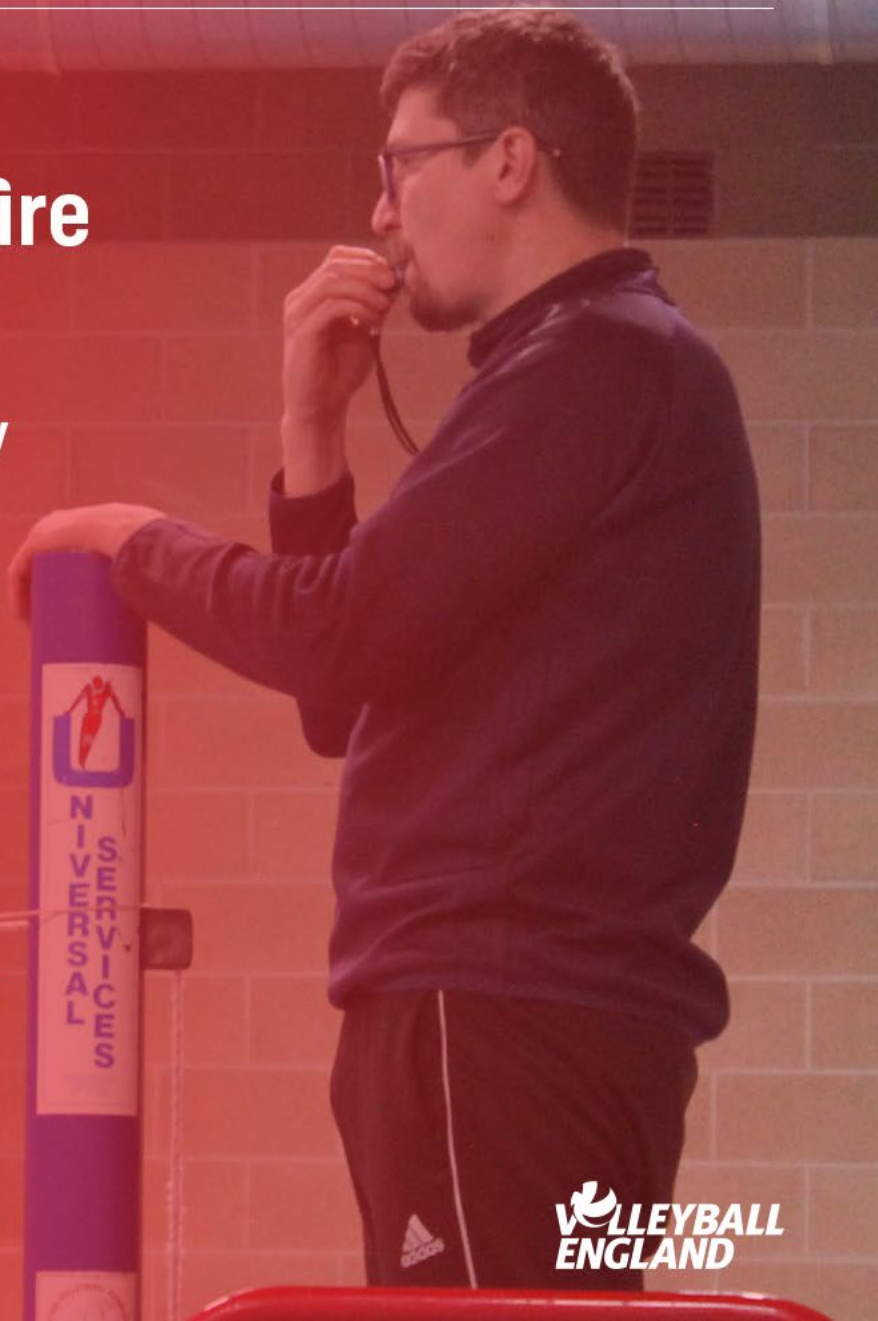
2) Build the relationship

Contact the headteacher, PE lead, estates or facilities lead and, where relevant, the Multi-Academy Trust.

Offer a constructive partnership, focused on curriculum, enrichment, community use and a sustainable junior pathway.

3) Make a concise, practical request

Explain the club's local reach and ask to discuss floor markings, usable court dimensions, run-off space, ceiling height, lighting and electrical provision before the specification is finalised.





4. Engage local councillors

Speak to ward councillors and the local authority about the wider community benefit and whether Section 106 or other local capital funding could contribute to enhancements beyond the DfE-funded minimum.

5. Offer activation, not only advocacy

Show how the club can support the school through coaching, teacher development, introductory sessions, festivals and a clear route into junior club activity.

6. Keep Volleyball England, regional and county associations informed

Share details of significant local developments and the outcome of conversations with Volleyball England and, where relevant, your regional or county association.

This will help coordinate support, avoid duplication and ensure learning strengthens future guidance and national advocacy.

How regional and county associations can help

Regional and county associations can strengthen this work by monitoring developments across a wider area, connecting clubs that share an opportunity and supporting consistent messages.

They are also well placed to identify patterns across multiple projects and escalate strategically significant opportunities to Volleyball England.

Their role is to enable and coordinate local action rather than replace the club's direct relationship with the school, academy trust or facility operator.

Clubs should therefore involve their regional or county association where an opportunity has wider significance, could benefit more than one club, or where coordinated local evidence and relationships would strengthen the case.

Volleyball England will work with regional and county bodies, where appropriate, to help connect relevant parties.



Club facility guidance



What to ask for

- Appropriate volleyball court markings, agreed with PE staff and included before the floor is finished.
- The largest viable clear playing area, with safe run-off around the court and no avoidable fixed obstructions.
- Sufficient clear ceiling height and careful placement of basketball structures, divider curtains and other equipment.
- Suitable post sockets, anchoring arrangements, storage and electrical provision.
- Lighting and glazing designed to reduce glare and visual distraction during play.
- Where natural daylight is required for multi-purpose use, consideration of automated blackout blinds or another effective light-control solution.
- A community-use agreement that gives the club realistic access at sustainable times and prices.

Useful link

Volleyball England Facility Guidance

Understanding the constraints

The current standard school sports hall specification remains at 34.2m x 18m. The DfE estimates that increasing this to 36m x 20m would add approximately 105m^2 and around £500,000 in construction cost.

Any enhancement above the nationally-funded minimum must normally be paid for locally or balanced against other priorities within the project.

School halls also need to support examinations and other uses, so designs commonly require substantial natural daylight. A fully enclosed 'black box' hall is therefore unlikely to be accepted in most school projects.

Practical light-control measures may be a more achievable request but would require separate funding.

Important

Section 106 and other local funds are limited, highly localised and subject to competing priorities. Sport England funding may be worth exploring for eligible improvements, but clubs should check the current criteria before making commitments. Please also note that at this time, no Volleyball England funding offer is currently attached to this guidance.

Useful links

Sport England | Sport Halls

Sport England | Artificial lighting



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Building a persuasive local case

- **Participation:** evidence of current membership, junior demand, waiting lists and nearby schools or communities served.
- **Education:** how volleyball supports PE, enrichment, leadership, inclusion and positive experiences of physical activity.
- **Partnership:** what the club can contribute through volunteers, coaching, teacher upskilling, equipment or programming.
- **Community value:** the additional activity and access the facility could enable outside school hours.
- **Deliverability:** a prioritised request, outline costs where available, and realistic funding or partnership routes.

Before you make contact

Confirm what is being built or refurbished and how far the project has progressed.

Identify the school, trust, council and project contacts who can influence the brief.

Agree your club's essential requests and distinguish them from desirable enhancements.

Prepare two or three strong facts about local demand and the club's community impact.

Be clear about the practical support your club can offer in return.

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Suggested message to a school or academy trust

Subject: Opportunity to make [school/project name] volleyball-friendly

Dear [name],

We understand that [school/project name] is planning a new or refurbished sports hall. [Club name] supports [number] players across [area/age groups] and would welcome an early conversation about how the facility could support both the school curriculum and wider community participation.

Small decisions made during design such as court markings, clear run-off, equipment positioning, net-post provision, lighting and storage can determine whether a hall can be used safely and effectively for volleyball.

We would be pleased to share practical input and explore how our club could support delivery through coaching, teacher development, introductory activity and a pathway into junior volleyball.

Could we arrange a short meeting with the appropriate PE, estates or project lead before the specification is finalised?

We would also be happy to work with local partners to explore possible external funding for any enhancement beyond the core project budget.

Kind regards,
[name]
[role and club]
[contact details]





Volleyball England's role

Volleyball England will continue to make the national case for facilities that better support volleyball and community sport. The organisation will use learning from local projects to improve advice to clubs and, where appropriate, help regional and county associations share evidence, connect relevant clubs and coordinate support to identify and progress strategically significant projects.

This national role is intended to complement, rather than replace, the local relationships led by clubs and supported by regional and county bodies.

At present, however, there is no planned change to the national PE strategy: whether volleyball is selected by a school will continue to depend significantly on the skills and preferences of local teachers, alongside the willingness of clubs to build relationships, support delivery and create accessible junior opportunities.

Share your experiences

If a new or refurbished school sports hall is planned in your area, please contact membership@volleyballengland.org **with the project location, current stage, key contacts and the support you may need.**

Where appropriate, please also involve your regional or county association so that local activity can be coordinated and wider opportunities identified.

Examples of successful local engagement will help us strengthen the evidence base, improve future guidance and share good practice across the volleyball community.

