

AUTUMN TERM • SEPTEMBER 2025

KENT SCHOOLS ORIENTEERING NEWSLETTER



Medway School Games Event - May 2025

Alison Howe, Saxons

On 15 May 2025, the 3rd Senior School Games Orienteering Event was held at Capstone Country Park. With over 150 participants from years 7, 8 & 9 across 10 schools, there was a great buzz in the air in spite of the chilly conditions.

The day started with each school having a crash course in how to orienteer: how to read a map and interpret the symbols, how to orientate the map and how to track progress around a course. This year, short practice courses

were available for the teams to have a go at before starting their first shorter race which enabled the pupils to build their confidence, with most pupils getting round the courses successfully and in good time before a well earned lunch break. The afternoon challenged the pupils with longer courses and competition was fierce, but all pupils finished the courses with a great sense of accomplishment.

'This year, a 'naughty numbers' game was available for pupils to do over the lunch break, seeing who could complete the correct sequence of checkpoint the fastest - with chocolate to each of the fastest boy and girl for each year group, the stakes were high!

This years overall winners were:

Girls: Rainham Mark Grammer School

Boys: Holcombe Grammer

Team Work awards also went to Rainham Girls School and Rochester Independent Boys School

Overall, a fun and enjoyable day, and pupils are already looking forward to 2026:

'It was great, I would do this every day if I could'

'I am tired but I loved it'

'Really enjoyed it better than school!'





Introducing Orienteering into the School Curriculum

Article by Matt Mundie - The Hundred of Hoo Academy, Medway

It will have been about 5 years ago now that we first 'floated' the idea of introducing orienteering to our PE curriculum. We've always had a small OAA unit with some basic map and teamwork skills, but nothing formal and then covid struck. It was during this time that we were all looking for activities to do with our own children within the confines of the garden, that I set up a simple orienteering course using a crude set of markers and a hand drawn map. My children loved it! We started off with simple races, then started to make them a bit more cross-curricular - answering subject related questions and so on, even going as far as using ipads and phones to scan QR codes and trialling some of the apps that record the time.

When we finally returned to school it was time to trial some of the orienteering activities with our classes, starting with the youngest year groups as they were so open to having a go and they really embraced it. We then turned our focus to our older girls classes - again, they loved it. We were on to something.

When we spoke to the students about their experiences, it was clear that the reasons they enjoyed orienteering was because it was different. Nobody had done it before, so the 'playing field' was much more even and it was something that could be done at their own pace. Those that were competitive could compete to win, while the less competitive ones could simply enjoy the chance of working in small groups to overcome the challenges whilst also being active.

When we formally added orienteering to the PE curriculum the following year we started with homemade maps using Google Earth and control markers laminated and tied with string. This kept the costs down and gave us a lot of flexibility to change routes and tasks.

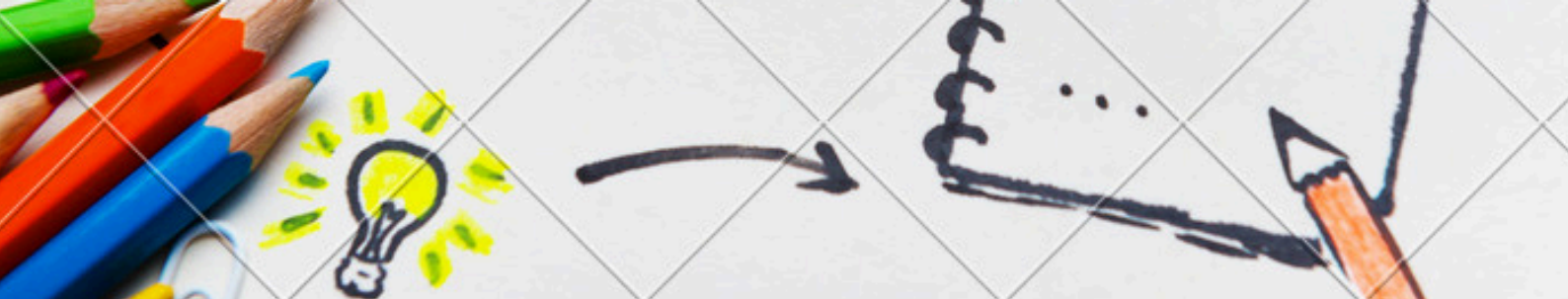
Later that year we were fortunate to be able to attend an orienteering CPD organised by our local SGO and Saxons Orienteering and it was through this that our first school-club link came about. Andrew from Dartford Orienteers helped us to map the school properly and pointed us in the direction of good quality equipment - checkpoint markers and other resources. By the end of that summer we had a full-site fixed course set up and an effective school-club partnership.

The following year, as part of the work the SGO and Saxons were doing to promote orienteering, we saw the inaugural Medway Schools Orienteering Competition at Capstone Park. It was a relatively small event with around 6-7 schools bringing students from a single year group to take part and it was a real success. In the two years following, the event has grown to most schools from across Medway participating across three different age groups.

As a result of the work our school has done with Dartford and Saxons over the past three years our students have gone on to win a number of these competitions, they act as leaders on events and we have also created an annual house competition. Our next step is to look at entering some of the more formal competitions.

Our students have really embraced orienteering and continue to enjoy it both as part of the curriculum and as an extra-curricular activity. For any school considering orienteering, I would happily recommend it - great fun!



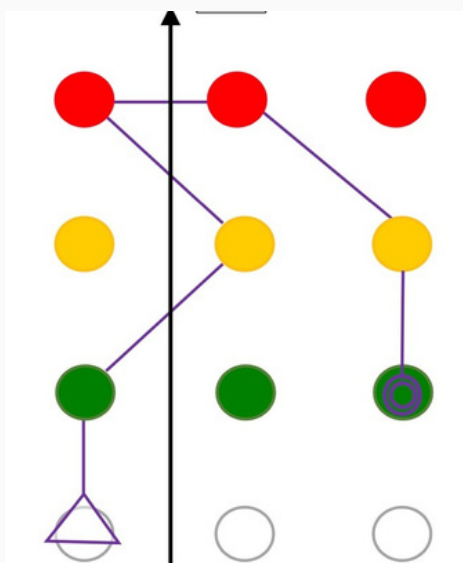


Teaching Orienteering course - Wednesday 15 October 2025

Would you benefit from some guidance from an experienced former elite orienteer and professional tutor on how to deliver map based activities in your school grounds? There is another Teach Orienteering Part 1 course on Wednesday 15 October 2025. It is a full day course (9am-4pm) at St John's Catholic Comprehensive School in Gravesend.

Confidence in the delivery of Outdoor Adventurous Activities was highlighted as an issue for some schools in Ofsted's 2023 report "Levelling the playing field". The Teach O Part 1 course aims to provide teachers and others working in schools and other enclosed sites with the knowledge, understanding and practical ability to teach the basic skills of the sport of orienteering mainly at Key Stages 2 and 3. The very practical nature of the course includes working as a small group to plan a short exercise, briefing another group as to what they should do, experience the activity as a pupil would by doing the activity prepared by another group and then sharing feedback afterwards.

For further information, click [here](#).



Example exercises you will learn on the course shown above.



Upcoming Orienteering Events in Kent this Autumn/Winter

For further information on upcoming events, visit www.saxons-oc.org and/or www.dfok.co.uk.

Sun 5 Oct	Knole Park	Sevenoaks
Sat 18 Oct	Capstone Country Park	Medway
Sat 1 Nov	Shoreham Woods	Shoreham
Sun 23 Nov	Hindleap	Forest Row
Sat 29 Nov	Kings Wood	Challock
Sat 13 Dec	Beacon Wood	Dartford
Sat 10 Jan	Eggringe	Ashford/Canterbury

All of our events have courses for beginners. Guidance will be available to newcomers and novices before the start. Go around individually or as a group, pair or family.

Permanent & Virtual Courses across Kent

You don't need to wait for an event to do some more orienteering. Try one of our permanent or virtual courses across Kent at a time that suits you - for more information visit www.saxons-oc.org/anytime

Victoria Park (Ashford) - Virtual

Tonbridge Castle & Haysden Country Park (Tonbridge) - Virtual

Capstone Country Park (Gillingham) - P / Virtual

Shorne Woods Country Park (nr Gravesend) - P / Virtual

Betteshanger Country Park (near Deal) - P / Virtual

High Meadow & Whinless Down (Dover) - P / Virtual

Mote Park (Maidstone) - P / Virtual

Brockhill Country Park (Near Hythe) - P / Virtual

Milton Creek Country Park (Sittingbourne) - P

Trosley Country Park (near Vigo) - P / Virtual

Leybourne Lakes Country Park (nr Maidstone) - P / Virtual

Bedgebury Pinetum - P

P - Permanent Course. Virtual - Virtual courses using MapRun app

**"how to" guides
for Virtual courses
and how to get
involved**



**FIND YOUR
WAY PROJECT**



Orienteering Activity: Using Purple Pen

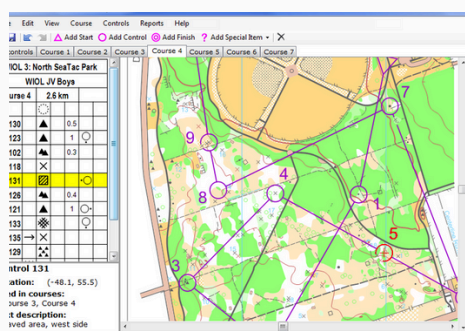
Skills: Incorporating navigation and physical activity into cross curricular learning

Resources:

- Windows based computer
- Map of your school

Purple Pen is an easy to use, free software tool developed in Finland and used extensively throughout the world for orienteering at all levels. It allows you to take a map of your school and overlay different courses. The map can be a pdf, a jpeg, a png file, or an ocd file, (OCAD - the output from a professional orienteering map making tool).

Purple Pen needs a Windows based computer to operate and will need to be downloaded. Go to purplepen.golde.org to download the software. Schools may limit the ability to download software so IT support may be needed. After downloading Purple Pen and clicking the short cut you will see a welcome menu with four options, the first of which is 'Create a New Event'.



When you click on Create a New Event, you will get a message that your background map cannot be found and you will be asked to locate it. The program takes you to your Documents folder. Find the saved copy of your school map and click on it. Check that the scale of the map showing in the dialogue box is correct and adjust it to the correct scale of your map if necessary. Click OK and Purple Pen will then import the map of your school into the file. Before doing anything else, save the Purple Pen file into the same folder that you saved your map. This will mean that you do not need to re-import the map into Purple Pen for any future use of Purple Pen.

Purple Pen files obtained from either DFOK or Saxons will contain a few example courses but it is easy to start from scratch yourself, with helpful videos available online.

Once you have mastered setting up new courses around your school, there is no limit to the number of courses you can create. Purple Pen becomes your courses library which can be used and added to by various teachers and shared amongst yourselves. Once prepared, the same courses can be used in subsequent years. These courses can be used just for a bit of orienteering fun, or they can be linked to subject learning.

Some schools develop a question and answer sheet for their activities. You can then store a copy of each of these and the course map printed from Purple Pen into a cellophane sleeve, one for each activity course, in a folder that becomes the hard copy library of your activities. Keeping "masters" in this way means that the activities can be used repeatedly and at short notice without needing to open the Purple Pen file.