

School squads ready for team championships

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Victoria Dock Primary School, Kingston upon Hull (Humber), the current U11 Boys champions, will be back to defend their title

London Academy and Northfield School & Sports College are aiming to use the Butterfly National School Team Championships as a springboard to European success.

The schools are among several defending champions competing at the event, organised by the English Schools Table Tennis Association, at Hinckley Leisure Centre this Saturday.

But the incentive is double for the reigning under-16 boys' champions London Academy, from Edgware, and their under-16 girls' counterparts from Northfield in Billingham (Cleveland).

They have been selected as ESTTA representatives at the International School Sport Federation World Schools' Table Tennis Championships in Clermont-Ferrand, France, from April 4 to 10, and will be looking to justify their selection.

A total of 27 schools have fought their way through County, Zone and Regional Finals to fill the 32 places at the 48th staging of the national event, which will feature boys' and girls' teams of four players at U11, U13, U16 and U19 levels.

Caldy Grange Grammar School, West Kirby (Merseyside) will be looking to retain their U19 Boys' title won last year, as will Victoria Dock Primary School, Kingston upon Hull (Humber) in the U11 Boys and Great Wood Primary School, Morecambe (Lancashire) at U11 Girls.

New title-holders will be crowned in both the U13 Boys' and Girls' events, together with those in the U19 Girls, after last year's strong favourites, Horsforth School, Leeds (West Yorkshire) were robbed of the opportunity to play as they were 'snowed in' and unable to travel.

Teams from Altrincham Grammar School for Boys (Greater Manchester), St Mary Magdalene Academy, Islington (London Central), Bramley Sunnyside Junior School, Rotherham (South Yorkshire) and Walton Girls' High School, Grantham (Lincolnshire) could make their mark as in previous years.

Other teams who reached this stage of the championships as winners of the four Regional Finals held in Blackburn, Bournemouth, Bristol and Grantham will also be playing hard to become Butterfly School Team Champions.

Joining the VIPs will be guest presenter Darius Knight, England's No 5 player, who is currently aiming to qualify for the Commonwealth Games squad.

A full list of participating schools can be found on the ESTTA website www.estta.org.uk under Events/Results.

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