

# Matthew Syed launches first school Table Tennis Academy

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Matthew Syed plays a demonstration match

Former Commonwealth champion Matthew Syed has launched the first Jack Petchey Foundation Table Tennis Academy at Greenshaw School in Sutton.

The launch at Greenshaw is the first in a pilot scheme aimed at schools and colleges in London. The JPF Academies programme provides 10 tables with the aim for the Academy to become a focal point for the development of table tennis within the local area.

It will also host competitions, training courses, coaching and link to a local community club to coach and support young people to play table tennis and develop talent in their school.

Greenshaw has seen a rapid increase in popularity in the sport since Gary Carter, Head of PE, introduced outdoor and more indoor tables, which are used daily by over 100 enthusiastic students.

The Friday night club is regularly attended by 30 to 40 young players and the plan is to set up a satellite club based at the school which will support and coach players to a standard to compete in the annual Jack Petchey London Schools' Table Tennis Championships.

To mark the launch, Olympian Syed unveiled a special plaque, hitting a ball at a target in order to open the curtains. He then played a demonstration match in front of the excited students.

Syed said: "It's great to see table tennis playing a big role in this school. I look forward to seeing these young players develop as table tennis players and as human beings."

Will Smith, Headteacher at the school said: "The school has benefited from a number of Jack Petchey initiatives all of which have supported the students.

"As the first Jack Petchey Table Tennis Academy to launch in London we are thrilled that Matthew Syed joined with us to celebrate the opportunities this new project will bring."

Jonathan Bruck, Head of Operations at the ETTA, attended the launch and added: "The creation of the Greenshaw Table Tennis Academy is testament to the great work Jack Petchey provides for the local community and schools. This will inspire a new generation to play table tennis and help grow the sport."



Guests and students at the launch

JPF initiated the investment in table tennis and encouraged the ETTA to develop the JPF London Schools Table Tennis Challenge. Funding of £573,000 has enabled a significant number of indoor and outdoor tables to be donated to secondary schools across London, which has considerably increased participation in the sport.

Jack Petchey CBE, founder of the Foundation, said: "I loved to play table tennis in my younger days. It's a great sport and can be played by all, that's why I felt it would be a great activity to promote to young people.

"I am proud of the partnership with ETTA to deliver this programme and it is a real joy to know that so many youngsters are now picking up a bat and ball before school, after school, and even in their lunchtimes!"

Schools wishing to apply to the scheme must be participating in the JPF Achievement Awards Scheme and can find out more information from <http://londonschoolstabledtennis.co.uk>

For more information about the London Schools competition, visit  
<http://www.jackpetcheyfoundation.org.uk/table-tennis-programme>

**Paul Stimpson (16th May 2014)**

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