

# OCA Junior Report 2017–18

Andrew Varney, September 2018

## Schools League

The winners were:

U18 Cherwell School  
U13 MCS  
U11 MCS and St Joseph's Primary School  
U9 MCS

Some 32 teams took part in these leagues.

We thank Joan Clanchy (St Mary & St John), Susan Tawse (St Clare's) and Robin Harskin (Christ Church) for all their work in supporting schools' chess over many years; all are moving on to other pastures.

John Place (Oxon Schools Chess League Secretary)

## School and Club Teams

MCS and St Joseph's reached the national semi-finals of the EPSCA U11 & U9 team Championships, and St Philip & St James the U9 semi-finals, while St Joseph's finished 6<sup>th</sup> in the ECF National Finals in Uppingham. The MCS U13 team finished 7<sup>th</sup> in the ECF National Junior Team Challenge after winning qualifiers at Aldro School in Surrey and at MCS. (John Place)

Building on the experience of last year, the ECF U11 Girls semi-finals saw 5 Oxfordshire teams of 3 entered from 3 schools (OHS, Headington Prep and St Joseph's).

In addition to a strong level of junior participation in the OCA League, separate junior chess clubs are held at Bicester and Wantage and (since earlier this year) at St Giles, Oxford. There is a strong possibility that another new junior club may start up in Headington in the near future launched on the back of the successful holiday clubs run by *Oxford New Generation* (see below).

The Oxfordshire Junior Squad club ("Ojays") continued to meet weekly during term time, with professional coaching most weeks. Although it is by invitation only, since it is intended only for county-level players, membership grew yet again during the year, with a typical attendance of between around 10 to 16, mostly aged between 6 and 11 years' old, on Thursdays at Cumnor and averaging up to 20 on alternate Tuesday evenings in Yarnton, as the "Ojays+" session for secondary school pupils has become very popular too. For further details see <http://www.oxon-junior-chess-squad.org.uk/>

## Holiday Clubs

A new venture this year was a holiday time junior chess and activity club with chess teaching and play in the mornings and other activities in the afternoons. There were sessions run successfully at Easter time, May half term and during August by the fledgling company *Oxford New Generation*, featuring small groups of around 8-12 from beginner to junior county level. Based on feedback and repeated attendance, these were clearly much enjoyed by the children and well-received by the parents.

## EPSCA Inter-Association Competitions

**U9** – The Oxfordshire Under-9 squad enjoyed an energized and successful season. Veterans of the 2017–18 campaign stepped up to take over from players who had moved on in the age groups and a host of exciting newcomers, not least in the middle order, helped make us a force to reckon with. There was impressive continuity and team spirit in the squad this year thanks to the enthusiasm and commitment of the players and the hugely positive support of parents. Highlights of the season included second place and 22 wins in the EPSCA South Zone final and an even stronger performance in the EPSCA national final with 23 wins securing fourth equal. While we surrendered the South Zone shield, we far surpassed our previous year’s performance in the final. The season as a whole witnessed some memorably stylish, dominant and defeat-cheating displays across main and reserve boards.

Elliot Kendall                      (Oxon U9 team manager)

**U11** – In the season 2018-2019 the Oxon U11 team played in several friendly and official events. The first notable event was the Four County U11 Teams friendly in Maidenhead (11 Feb 2018), in which Oxon team came first 6 points ahead of the second place, convincingly beating Sussex, Maidenhead and Bucks. The 2018 EPSCA U11 Zone South qualifier on 17th March at New College, Swindon was a major test for the team but Oxon team managed to score 35 points and qualify for the finals coming 4th in the overall standing. The Under 11 Final took place in Birmingham at Grace Academy Solihull on 21st April 2018, in which 15 counties were participating. This was a very tough event in which Oxon finished 9th scoring 25 points. The winners were Kent and Richmond dominating throughout the event and scoring 48 points each. For the sake of comparison, the average grade of Richmond players was 114 ECF (Rapid Play), of Kent players 110, and of Oxon team 80. It should be mentioned that in all these events the Oxon team did not have all its strong players but at least many U9 players got a chance to acquire invaluable experience by playing against strong opposition.

David Zakarian                      (Oxon U11 team manager)

**U11 Girls** – The girls’ team fought bravely at this year’s EPSCA U11 final and with a bit more practice could surely improve on their 10th place positioning. An honourable mention to Rosa Zeng who was the team’s star performer with 3 wins out of 3. Alison Lau and Elizabeth Houlihan also did really well to score 2 out of 3. The competition was fierce, but as always, we’ll be back!!

Marc Ives                              (Oxon U11G team manager)

PS Oxfordshire hosted the EPSCA final this year and also ran an inter-county girls friendly tournament at U11 and U18 level last autumn. Oxon won the U18 trophy convincingly, while the U11 competition was so close between the 4 teams that one extra half game point could have completely reversed the final team standings! A more elite team of Oxon U11 girls also retained the trophy at another inter-county friendly held in Warwickshire. As he steps down from the role, we would like thank Marc Ives for managing the girls’ U11 team for a good number of years.

Many of the trophies won by the various teams can be seen in the “virtual trophy cabinet” at <http://www.oxon-junior-chess-squad.org.uk/trophy-cabinet>.

## **SCCU U14/U130**

Our SCCU U14/U130 team has looked very strong this year. Having defeated Bucks 19½-4½, the team went straight through to a three way SCCU final (Hampshire and Berkshire disappointingly having withdrawn). An excellent 14½-9½ over Surrey will be followed by the team's final match for the title against Essex on September 30th. Surrey having beaten Essex, we must be ante-post favourites.

John Place      (Oxon U14/U130 team manager)

## **ECF U13/U18**

Oxfordshire secondary school juniors are as busy as ever and it was not easy to gather together teams in the academic year 2017/2018. Nonetheless, Oxfordshire managed to field a team of ten players for the Four Counties Invitational Tournament in Rugby, which took place on 26th November 2017. The team didn't collect too many points, but everyone enjoyed the competition and fought hard in all three rounds. Unfortunately, there were not enough responses for an invitation to play in the ECF Under 18 County Championships 2018.

Ola Murawska      (Oxon U18 team manager)

## **4NCL**

Oxfordshire juniors featured in the Oxford teams in the 4NCL and possibly in several other teams. Amongst them, Pavel Asenov and Zoe Varney played in first division Oxford 1, while Ross Tselos, Tom Shepherd, Dimitrios Zakarian and Hugo Rayner played for Oxford 3 and 4.

Three 'Ojays' (Oxfordshire Juniors) teams played in the Junior 4NCL weekends, which proved to be a great learning experience for many of the players. The Ojays A team also won the first place Division 2 trophy in September (weekend 1), having just dropped one match point out of ten, and were second in Division 1 at weekend 3 in April.

## **Delancey UK Chess Challenge**

A relatively large number of schools and clubs took part in the UK Chess Challenge this year, but the entries for the Oxfordshire Megafinal were down dramatically. This was due to a number of reasons, including the date being in the Easter holidays, the venue not being confirmed until a matter of a few weeks beforehand, and lack of communication from the new organiser.

As a result, while some players missed out altogether, a lot of Oxfordshire juniors entered other Megafinals and there were probably at least as many qualifiers for the Gigafinal stage as in previous years. A reasonable number qualified for the final Terafinal and Challenger tournaments, which this year are being held during September rather than in August.

## Other Oxon Tournaments/Events

**Witney Junior Rapid Play** is taking place on 23 September. Last year there were over 60 entries to the junior tournaments, just over half in the Major and a few less in the Minor section. It is expected to be at least as popular again this year.

### Oxfordshire Junior Chess tournament

The Oxfordshire Junior Chess Championships for 2017-18 were held at Cumnor PS on 6-7 January 2018. The sections consisted of Under 9 (6-round Rapid Play, ungraded), Under 11 (6-round Rapid Play, ECF graded) and Under 13, Under 15 & Under 18 combined as one 6-round 2-day Standard Play tournament. All sections were well represented with over 120 entries total from 27 different primary or prep schools and 15 secondary or senior schools.

The winners were:

U9	Champions	Jan Murawski	St Joseph's	5.5/6 (=TB 1&2)
	Runner-up	Jamie Sarisky	Phil & Jim	
	3rd place	Jacob Iliffe	MCS	5/6
		Charlie Lambert	Chandlings	4/6 (SOP)
U11	Champion	Amaan Kassey	MCS	5.5/6 (SOP)
	Runner-up	Dimitrios Zakarian	CCCS	5.5/6
	3rd place	Tashika Arora	OHS	5/6 (SOP)
U13	Champion	Hari Selvaraj	MCS	4.5/6
	Runner-up	Leonora Ives	SS Hel/Kats	4/6 (=U15)
U15	Champions	Bill Read	Wood Farm	4/6 (no TB)
		Josh Soanes	Bartholomew	4/6
U18	Champion	Liza Sheremetyeva	OHS	6/6

Under 18 School Cherwell\*

Under 11 School MCS\* (on tie-break)

\* clock prizes awarded to Abingdon School and St Joseph's as Cherwell and MCS were awarded the clock prizes the previous season.

## Individuals – International Representation

England representation among Oxfordshire juniors included:

Daniel Varney	European Schools, U17	(July 2018, Poland)
Ben Aubury	European Schools, U13	(July 2018, Poland)
Elizaveta Sheremetyeva	European Youth, U17G	(August 2018, Latvia)
Dimitrios Zakarian	European Youth, U12	(August 2018, Latvia)

Zoe Varney was unable to play in the European Youth in September 2017 at the last minute due to illness. Several other Oxfordshire juniors played abroad in various tournaments, including Hugo Rayner and Tom Shepherd in the Gibraltar Junior International in August 2018.

After winning the U7 section of the English Youth Grand Prix this year, Jan Murawski can expect to have a chance to represent England in an international event in 2019.