

E.P.S.C.A. Zonal Tournament

at R.G.S. Newcastle on 7th February 2009

16 teams from 6 different schools took part in this qualifying event for the Prestatyn Semi-Finals of the National Primary Schools Championships.

At U-11 it seemed after two rounds that NPS might challenge the RGS dominance of this event. NPS, ably led by Ayende Diop-West, beat the RGS'B' team by 3½-1½ in R2 but then collapsed 0-5 as RGS'A' took revenge. The RGS'A' team only lost one game all day (and that against the RGS'C' team; Ben Parker won all his five games. Captain Urban Coningham conceded only one draw as did Chris Wilson on board 2 and Ed Williams on board 3. RGS'B', despite defeats at the hands of their 'A's and NPS scored so heavily against the weaker sides that they held a comfortable second place. I kenna Obonna won all his 5 games. I was very impressed with the NPS'A' team and I'm glad to see that they qualified for Prestatyn. Their teacher, Richard Boddy, a former member of RGS Junior Chess Club, has every reason to be proud of them. The final qualifying place went to RGS'C' though there was really very little to choose between the bottom 6 sides. Probably it was the 4/5 performance by James Standfield - a reserve board 5 - that swung things in their favour.

There was little doubt about the outcome of the Under-9 Section. The RGS'A's led throughout with team captain Parth Mannikar leading from the front with 5/5. Omkar Dixit also won every game. No 100% scores from the 'B's, but Will Murgatroyd (captain), Matthew Howes and Jamie Lishman all scored 4/5. Rosalind Fraser (3/5) produced the best performance by a girl on the day. The only excitement in this section lay in the battle for the third qualifying place between St Teresa's and RGS'C'. St Teresa's led by Daniel Bell and with Aidan Byrne scoring 5/5 on board 2 needed to win their final round by 5-0 and they did just that. Their enthusiastic headmaster, John Harrison and team coach, Tim Adams, will be very proud of them. Tough luck on RGS'C' who scored 15½/25 points in total and yet missed out by just ½ a point. For them William Wilkinson and Finlay Brechin both scored 4/5.

The Tournament controllers, Lara Barnes and Alec McFarlane, both International Arbiters, who ran everything smoothly and with good humour said afterwards that everyone had behaved excellently and made their job an easy one. I am particularly grateful to RGS staff members, Ken Wilkinson and Louise Harrison who patrolled the upper corridor morning and afternoon respectively, to Mrs Gupta and Mrs Whitehurst who ran a successful and profitable tuck-shop, to Mr Brechin who kept score of the U-9s for me, and to Rob, the caretaker who set out the hall for us single handedly on the Friday evening. Also to the many parents, teachers and friends from all the schools taking part. In the end I found myself with little to do except to congratulate the winners and commiserate with the losers. It had been a good day.

Here are the final results

Under-11 Section

1.	RGS Newcastle 'A'	22½
2.	RGS Newcastle 'B'	17
3.	Newcastle Preparatory School 'A'	14
4.	RGS Newcastle 'C'	11½

5.	St Monica's, Carlisle	10
6.	Newcastle Preparatory School 'B'	9½
7=	Kings, Tynemouth	8½
7=	RGS Newcastle 'D'	8½
9.	St Teresa's, Heaton	8

Under-9 Section

1.	RGS Newcastle 'A'	21½
2.	RGS Newcastle 'B'	17½
3.	St Teresa's, Heaton 'A'	16

4.	RGS Newcastle 'C'	15½
5.	Newcastle Preparatory School	12½
6.	Kings, Tynemouth	7
7.	St Teresa's, Heaton 'B'	5

(Teams above the dotted line qualify for Prestatyn)

Paul Bielby