



# RIFA

RISHWORTH INTERNATIONAL  
FOOTBALL ACADEMY

# Introduction

The Rishworth International Football Academy (RIFA) is an integral part of Rishworth School, offering students a truly unique programme combining; high quality education with professional football coaching programmes at the standard of English Premier League football clubs.

RIFA is a partnership between Rishworth School and the 'Street Work' Soccer Academy. 'Street Work' has a 30-year track record of delivering top quality football coaching programmes in England, and around the globe, enabling and supporting young people of all abilities to fulfil their full potential.

Rishworth School combines a three hundred year history with up-to-the-minute innovation to create an atmosphere in which not only are traditional values cherished, but in which invention and exploration is encouraged.

Rishworth has high expectations of students' behaviour and work ethic, but recognises that all students have individual strengths that we can celebrate and develop. Learning is about living at Rishworth, as our motto reminds us: 'Res Non Verba' - 'Deeds not Words.' We are firmly rooted in the security of the spectacular Yorkshire countryside, but as a thriving boarding school we have a truly global outlook.



RIFA offers a unique service that not only develops young people's sporting skills, but also focuses on them developing a sense of self-belief, self-discipline and self-worth that can be communicated through all aspects of their lives.

RIFA offers a clear and unique pathway for students with opportunities into the professional football arena through the quality of the programme, and strong partnerships with professional football clubs globally.





# Building on Rishworth Sporting Excellence

Rishworth School has a proud sporting heritage with the RIFA programme building on a wide range of sporting successes to produce top class sportsmen and women.

Currently 40 pupils represent club level, regional or national teams across a range of disciplines including Rugby, Hockey, Netball, Dressage, Athletics, Swimming, Tennis, Badminton and Football.

Some examples of the school's existing sporting initiatives are:

- The Ford Rugby Academy** founded with the support of George Ford (who studied at Rishworth-played fly half for England) and Mike Ford (manager of Bath, Toulon and England) seeks to develop talent within players throughout their time at the school. At its highest level an elite pathway with a personalised programme delivered by rugby professionals aims to ensure students have the opportunity to follow in George's footsteps, and play at the highest levels.

- The Rishworth Cricket Academy** gives students the opportunity to access a programme within the school and at the Cricket Asylum in Sowerby Bridge. The programme is delivered through high level coaching supported by diagnostic digital technology. Students within the programme have already achieved county and regional representation.

- The Rishworth Badminton Academy** offers a different route for students to achieve elite performance. Founded and run by Helen Calverley (who studied at Rishworth-played for England) the graduates from the academy benefit from links that are being forged with Durham University.

The school has a tradition of elite sport and the RIFA programme benefits significantly from the experience of the school's PE Department, which is able to offer additional strength and conditioning sessions. Additionally, the Catering Department offers nutritious and healthy food, whilst the teaching staff support students who have to travel across the world to compete.



# The RIFA Philosophy

The RIFA “**total football**” philosophy is one that emphasises supporting the ‘whole person’ whilst playing attacking football with freedom and creativity.



Consequently, the physical, psychological, emotional, and pastoral elements of working with individuals and groups are focussed upon, and are not marginalised to the detriment of purely playing football.

Football is so important to many young people, and this aspect is never lost. However, RIFA maintains a philosophy that supports the student’s wider development needs.

Our “total football” philosophy enables us to produce more skilful and ball comfortable players who are equipped both physically and mentally to play the game at their optimum level.

RIFA provides players with the opportunity to develop their football ability within a professional club academy environment focussing on the following areas-technique, pace, power, strength, the speed of decision making, mental qualities and player resilience to go with their technical ability.





# RIFA Best Practice

## Rishworth International Football Academy...

- Enables and supports young players of all abilities to fulfil their potential. The key element of the academy's coaching philosophy is to use the same principles applied in Elite Athletes Development Programmes.
- Employs the best UEFA Licence coaches who are experienced working with both amateur and academy football players who have aspirations to enhance their sporting and social development.
- Uses state-of-the-art screening and selection techniques to provide realistic and pragmatic information on the ability of the players requiring coaching.
- Mentors, monitors, and coaches the players through a systematic approach enabling them to enhance their football skills.





# RIFA Development Programme

The RIFA programme is specifically designed to offer students a 3 year course starting at age 13 years and concluding at 16 years of age. For those students who choose to continue until they are 18 years of age then an extended 2 year programme will be available.

The programme syllabus contains the following key elements, namely:

- **Ball mastery:** Control/manipulation of the ball on different surfaces
- **Passing/receiving/possession:** Sub theme-tempo/retain/risk
- **Defending:** Sub themes-pressing and blocking, beginning a press, protecting goal/defending in and around the box, pressing in middle and defensive third
- **Attacking:** Sub themes-build up play from back 4/goalkeeper, creating in final third/finishing, building play with advanced full backs
- **Transition:** Sub themes-counter attacking, regain to exploit space in wide areas, recovering to team shape to counter



# Student Football-Weekly Activities and Annual Programme

## Technical programme enabling individual and team improvements

**The key focus** throughout the academic year to enable student progression and development will be on:

- control, passing, crossing, shooting, dribbling, turning, defending, and attacking

## Individual programmes ensuring progress in all aspects of the game

**The key focus** will be on a personalised development plan to show improvement in:

- game understanding, control, passing, organisation, creating space and teamwork

## The structured weights programme

**The key focus** will be ensuring progression with all physical attributes relating to:

- position, size, with improvements in strength, power, balance and agility

## Competitive and progressive games programme

Providing high quality games against Premier League Academy Select and development teams to produce challenges relating to different aspects of the game-physical, technical, and tactical. Additionally, developing formations and styles with progression to techniques.

## Video analysis and discussion

Providing visual examples of good and bad practice to ensure a knowledge of positional awareness and key decisions when on the pitch-this provides evidence for individual development.

## National tours and tournaments

Providing opportunities for national playing experience to maintain and develop game knowledge, playing styles, game preparation, and cultural awareness.

## Attendance at Premier League and cup games

Designed to enhance football education and knowledge of position awareness, teamwork, control and passing, plus the ability to recognise personal targets needed to improve technical awareness.

## Student termly development reviews

Students will take part in development reviews throughout the academic year with the Head of Football Development and the Director of Football. Parents are expected to be present via online links. The reviews will be focused on the student's strengths/weaknesses in the following five areas of development-technical, tactical, physical, psychological, and social.

These meetings will provide an opportunity for students and parents to receive feedback and discuss with the Head of Football Development an agreed measurable/achievable learning and development plan for the student to work towards in the following term.

**There will also be regular academic reviews and reports from the subject teachers at Rishworth School**



## Career in professional football

**The Street Work Soccer Academy has, over 30 years, established very strong partnerships with professional football clubs globally.**

Students within the RIFA programme who demonstrate and reach levels required for a potential career in professional football will be provided with the necessary support, guidance, and opportunity for trials at professional football clubs. As a part of RIFA's commitment, we will continue to support/ advice and represent our students during their transition and beyond into professional football.



## RIFA's university pathways

**For those students who stay on the RIFA programme to 18 years of age there are university pathways that can be pursued.**

RIFA has connections with universities within the UK and USA. RIFA's strong connections with higher education programmes would enable students to not only strive for academic success, but also enable them to continue their footballing development without sacrificing the opportunity of a university education.

As part of the RIFA programme students will have the opportunity to visit universities that offer high intensity football whilst studying for a top class degree. Additionally, students will be able to train at the university facilities and to meet student athletes on the degree programme.





## RIFA facilities

The unique part of the RIFA experience is also the professional high-quality training facilities within the school grounds where the students will take part in their football development journey.

The school's facilities include:

- A full size 11 a side grass football pitch
- Grass training pitch
- Indoor sports hall
- Weight training gym
- Cardio gym
- Swimming pool

Furthermore, as part of the students learning and development some coaching sessions will also be delivered at the world-famous state of the art Manchester City Football Academy training facilities, thus enabling students to have the ultimate professional academy player experience.



## RIFA uniforms

Students will be responsible for provision of their training uniforms with the RIFA programme providing full RIFA branded Adidas uniforms for all competitive fixtures.

All participants will be required to wear the RIFA uniform at all coaching sessions and when travelling to games. It is an important aspect of the programme for students to value the benefits of appearance and professionalism in all aspects of their development.





## Rishworth Key Staff



**Paz Shan**

Director of  
Football

Paz brings over 30 years of experience as a player and football coach to Rishworth International Football Academy. Paz is owner and founder of one of the largest inner city football coaching academies in England providing coaching and life changing opportunities within football for thousands of young people from the North of England. UEFA Licence coach Paz has an extremely impressive record in developing players from the 'grassroots' and elite stages of football through to the professional level.

Over the last 12 years he has also been working within the Manchester City Football Academy. Initially Paz worked on the overseas programme for young academy players from the Al Jazira Football Club in Abu Dhabi who were placed on a 3-year football and education scholarship programme at Manchester City FC, with the education provided at Rishworth School. Paz was also previously the Manager of the Manchester City FC Women's 17's team.

Paz is currently working within the Recruitment Department at Manchester City FC in providing pathways and opportunities for talented young players into the Manchester City Football Club Academy Programme.



**Lee Lockley**

Head of Football  
Development

Lee is a UEFA licensed football coach bringing a wealth of knowledge and experience to RIFA. He has previously worked for over eight years at Everton Football Club with the boys and girl's academies as a BTEC Level 3 tutor in Sport and Football Coaching. He also managed the Everton FC Women's First Team to significant success in the English Women's Super League. Lee travelled internationally to deliver 'The Everton Way' academy coaching programme to coaches and aspiring footballers.

From Everton FC Lee took up a role at Liverpool FC where he taught the U21 and U18 players through the educational elements of their scholarship programme. In addition, he also had the role of mentoring the 11–16-year-old academy players through their individual training, playing and educational studies.

More recently Lee held a role at Manchester City FC where he coached across a range of academy age groups. He was also responsible for guiding the Manchester City Women's Development Team to league and cup successes. Alongside Lee's coaching roles he also represents the English Premier League on their 'Premier Skills' programme in China and Africa to develop new football coaches as well as young academy players.

## Rishworth Key Staff (continued)



**Shoaib Shan**  
Head of Operations

Shoaib has a wealth of experience in the football industry and runs the overseas Street Work Soccer Academy programmes in the Middle East, Asia, and North America. He is regularly based abroad in one of the academies so is well experienced with footballing students from overseas.

Shoaib has also been working in partnership with several university football academies in the student recruitment department which involves working closely with numerous students from around the world. This has resulted in Shoaib being aware of the needs and requirements of international footballing students. His experience makes him a crucial part of the RIFA programme in helping students integrate into the UK.



**David Johnston**  
Education and  
Management  
Consultant

David has extensive experience as an educationalist having held the roles of Headteacher, School Inspector, Director of Education, Government Education Consultant and most recently Education Consultant at Manchester City FC Academy for 10 years. He spent 3 years working with staff of Rishworth School in support of students from Abu Dhabi who were on a football scholarship at Manchester City.

Additionally, David has lectured worldwide on school leadership, written books on education management, and carried out specific assignments for the English Premier League.

David brings to RIFA considerable knowledge and understanding of how education and football partnerships work successfully to deliver quality programmes for participating students.





## Rishworth Key Staff (continued)



**Anthony Wilkins**

Head of Rishworth  
School

Anthony was educated at Ryde School on the Isle of Wight through to eighteen. Following this, his initial degree was a first in Philosophy and after postgraduate study at Oriel College, Oxford, he went to the City of London to work as an economic researcher for companies setting up new unit trusts.

Anthony then worked at St Dunstan's College in London, eventually becoming the Deputy Head of the Preparatory Department, before being appointed as Head of Heathfield (our prep school) in 2009 and Head of Rishworth School in 2020. During that time he maintained his academic studies, gaining further qualifications in Mathematics and the History of Mathematics, and Masters Degrees in both English Literature and the History of Religion. He is currently studying for a Ph.D in Literature with the University of Derby.



**Andy Thomas**

Curriculum Area  
Manager – Sport,  
Rishworth School

Andy studied Sports Science and Social Science (BSc) at Loughborough University, then spent two years working in industry before returning to Loughborough to train as a PE teacher.

Andy oversees a thriving PE Department that boasts outstanding academic results at GCSE, BTEC and 'A' Level, fantastic participation rates in school sport, and an exceptional ratio of students playing at representative level. Since working at Rishworth Andy has taught and coached a number of students who have gone on to play professional sport, including Gareth Widdop (England-Rugby League), George Ford (England-Rugby Union), Emyr Huws (Wales-Football), as well as Al Jazira FC (U.A.E) and Manchester City/Rishworth graduates Abdulla Alkhater and Sultan Alsuwaidi.

Additionally, Andy has also worked as a Residential Boarding Assistant and as Head of Boarding at Rishworth. His experience is, therefore, invaluable in helping students from overseas to quickly settle in to their new surroundings. Andy is a firm believer in the power of sport to forge lasting friendships and develop essential life skills.



## RIFA's Ambassador

**Abdulla Alkhater** is the Academy's Ambassador who was previously a footballing student at Rishworth School. Abdulla was in a programme that was initiated and funded by the owners of Manchester City FC. It gave young players from the Al Jazira Football Club in Abu Dhabi the opportunity to take part in a three-year football and education scholarship at Manchester City whilst being schooled at Rishworth. Abdulla then went on to play in the United Arab Emirates for Al Jazira FC and Emirates FC.

Abdulla Alkhater had both football and academic success whilst at Rishworth School

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*My time at Rishworth School was truly amazing. I learned so much about British football and culture. It enabled me to have a life changing experience that I would have been unable to get back in my home country. The football coaching programme was a vital part of my development to play as a professional footballer. Also, the teachers were a great support in me achieving my academic qualifications-they really treated me like I was part of their family. The school felt to me like one big family.*”

Abdulla Alkhater Rishworth School .



## Closing remarks from Paz Shan, Director of Football

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*At RIFA we prioritise the importance of all our students having an appropriate balance of education, football, and cultural experiences. Our dedicated staff will support them in gaining confidence and self-belief to give their maximum effort in achieving their dreams and aspirations whilst here in the UK.*”

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