

25 May 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

### **BCET (British Chess Education Trust) Awards 2021 - Nomination for Stroud High School, Stroud, Gloucestershire**

I would like Stroud High School (SHS) to be considered for the BCET 2021 Award.

In a secondary school chess field dominated by independent boys' schools from London and the South East, a state Girls Grammar School in Stroud, Gloucestershire is making its mark on the field.

The chess club at Stroud High School started in 2017 when a new Year 7 Girl who plays at national and international level started up the club. CSC kindly provided some chess sets for the school. Then in 2019 the club had a parent (a strong county player) volunteer as the chess coach. One of the other parents coordinates and organises a number of the events.

The chess club has encouraged girls of all standards to learn the game and to improve on their play, and has had a number of girls progress to the Gigafinal of the UKCC, and a couple of girls to the Terafinal stage. Where many give up chess at secondary school, particularly girls, the school is especially supportive and encouraging of the school chess club and helping Stroud High School to attend various tournaments. The school also supports individual achievements, for example being supportive in permitting a student time off to represent England in the Girls U13 at the 2018 World Schools Chess Championship.

Turning to 2020 specifically, the school performed exceptionally well at the ECF Girls Schools U19 Competition in January 2020 run by Andrew Martin, and finished in equal 3rd position, qualifying for the Finals in April 2020 for the first time; sadly, this had to be cancelled due to COVID. The school chess coach ran some additional chess training for both the SHS A and B teams prior to this competition, to provide some more intensive coaching.

During the 2019 / 2020 season, the school also participated in a number of regional Secondary School competitions as part of the ECF Secondary Schools Competition, participating in the events in Bristol, plus a number of other locally organised Secondary School competitions in Bristol.

Since lockdown in early 2020, Stroud High School chess club has moved online, and also had several new Year 7 Girls from September 2020. Both the girls and the parents have commented that they have greatly enjoyed the continuity of the school chess club, where many other hobbies and events have been cancelled over the last year, and there is great camaraderie amongst the club / team members.

The team rapport and friendship are a key element in this school success, with many of the girls from Gloucestershire / North Wiltshire having known each other since the age of 5 or 6, and coming up through the EPSCA and Junior County Teams; it is great to see this continuing through to playing chess in secondary school.

Whilst online chess is no substitute for OTB (Over the Board) chess, the girls who have taken part have immensely enjoyed the various competitions, taking part in the following in the 2020 / 2021 season:

§ A number of Stroud High School Swiss / Arena competitions have been organised on lichess since June 2020

§ Taking part in the online Bristol Area Mixed Schools Team Competitions, with the highlight coming 4th out of the 10 teams participating in the November 2020 event

§ Taking part in the online SPTW (She Plays to Win) Girls Schools Secondary Schools competitions, organised by IM Lorin D'Costa. Lorin has organised a series of 6 events over the 2020 / 2021 season, and Stroud High School at the time of writing is in 2nd place overall on the leader board, having finished 4th, 2nd, 2nd, 3rd and =3rd over the 5 events to date.

§ The school has also regularly taken part in the online Mixed Secondary School Battles on lichess, organised by Neill Cooper

§ Organising an online Lichess Arena Event for 3 local Secondary Schools in Gloucestershire

§ In general, over 2020 and the 2020 / 2021 season, the Stroud High School Chess Club has hosted / taken part in an online event a week

§ Girls have also been improving their skills via the puzzles and practice tools available online on lichess and other platforms

Whilst focusing on School Achievements for this BCET Award, at an individual level in 2020 / early 2021:

§ 1 girl is (OTB) West of England U14 Girls and Wiltshire Mixed U14 champion, February 2020 (just before lockdown)

§ Several girls qualified for and played in the Terafinals of the online UKCC, Summer 2020

§ 1 girl played in the ECF 2020 British Women's Online Championship in December 2020, qualifying in =3rd for the Women's Standardplay championship and playing in the finals and finishing in = 10th; and also qualifying for and playing in the Women's Rapidplay Finals

§ 2 girls have been playing in 4NCL online competitions

§ 1 girl was selected for the Adult County team for the online Western Counties Chess competition in early 2021

DOE - additionally, in recent months, we have had several girls join the School Chess Club keen to learn / improve chess as part of their DOE skills; and the Board 1 has been assisting Lorin D'Costa with his Beginners Training Programme via Zoom for SPTW (She Plays to Win) as part of her DOE volunteering.

Thank you for considering our nomination.

Yours faithfully



Mr M McShane  
Headteacher