

Pupils box clever in sports lessons

YOUNGSTERS have been packing the punches thanks to new sports sessions.

Schoolchildren from across South Wales have been benefiting from non-contact boxing coaching at the Elite Fitness gym in Fairwater, Cardiff.

The gym's owner Simon Harling, who is also a top strength and conditioning coach, believes boxing is good for young people because it helps them to develop the skills they will need if they want to become top athletes.

He said: "I work with Welsh golf and Welsh squash so I know how important it is that young people get the fitness skills they need at an early age.

"If they don't, then by the time they work with me at elite level they have to spend a lot of time trying to develop skills they should have started working on a lot earlier.

"As young people are developing, you need to expose them to as many different stimuli as possible to make sure they're well-rounded. Boxing is great because it ticks a lot of boxes.

"It teaches good hand-eye coordination, balance and spatial awareness. I do boxing sessions with some of my squash players because it helps



■ Brothers Jack and Sam Parry, from Tonyrefail Comprehensive School, give their teacher Ceri Bowley an uppercut

PICTURE: Peter Bolter ©

them to with a lot of those skills.

"It also teaches young people discipline, and things like skipping include cardiovascular aspects."

As well as laying the groundwork for the top athletes of tomorrow, the boxing sessions are also encouraging sports participation among young people who might usually shy away

from after-school sports activities.

Ceri Bowley organises sports clubs at Tonyrefail Comprehensive School as part of the 5x60 scheme, which strives to engage young people in extra curricular sporting activities.

He believes boxing will appeal to a lot of young people who might not otherwise be enthusiastic about sport, and thinks it could be particularly good for young people with behavioural difficulties because it emphasises the importance of respect.

He said: "We ran a boxing taster session and the feedback has been really good.

"We're looking to run one boxing club on a weekly basis from January and we may look into running extra sessions depending on demand if it proves popular."

Run by the Welsh Assembly Government and the Sports Council for Wales, the 5x60 initiative aims to encourage young people to engage in an hour of physical activity five times a week.

Mr Bowley said: "We aim to offer non-traditional sports as well as things like football and rugby – whatever the children want to get involved in."