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School's equestrian dream team



We're backing you: Sarah Butler of Blue Chip hands over a sponsored bag to head of Sixth Form Dr James Raymond

PUPILS at a top Sheffield school are saddling up for a new sporting venture.

Sheffield High School six-formers, Katie Midgley and Alex Chester are putting together a school equestrian team to compete in showjumping and dressage at National Schools level.

It's a first for the school and the duo, both aged 17, have managed to secure sponsorship from a number of local companies.

Katie and Alex have the pick of 26 pupils, ranging from 11 to 17 years of age, ready to compete

and have even found a former jockey on the school staff, music teacher, Miss Rolfe, who rode on the flat against many of the country's leading jockeys, including Frankie Dettori, Willie Carson and Pat Eddery.

"We are speaking to local equestrian trainer Lisa Morris who attended Sheffield High from 1984-1991 and went on to be the individual British Universities Champion in Combined Training," said Alex. "Lisa is qualified to BHSI level and is really keen to be involved in our training programme."

By Derek Fish Equestrian

"The school has been really supportive and now it's up to us," added Katie. "Unfortunately our first two events were cancelled due to the bad weather but we're hoping to get out and prove ourselves soon."

They're currently putting together teams for the National Schools Equestrian Association dressage qualifier on April 10 and showjumping on May 8, both of which are held at Queen Ethelburga's in York.

Katie and Alex have received prestigious 'Go4it' Bronze Awards in recognition of their efforts so far. The award encourages activities and experiences purposefully designed to embrace 'can-do' outcomes and positive risk taking.

Head teacher Valerie Dunsford said: "The girls have put a tremendous amount of work into setting up this new venture and securing sponsorship for the team. We're very proud of them and wish them every success in their first competition."

Their chief sponsor is Sheffield firm Blue Chip Feed Ltd, who will be supplying saddle cloths and caps to all the riders along with a selection of jackets, plus B-Seen Limited and POW.

Blue Chip founder, Clare Blaskay, a former High School pupil, is thrilled to be supporting the project.

"As a company we pride ourselves on spotting and sponsoring young talent and we're sure that a new equestrian star will emerge from the High School team."