

# Elite sports set to take a leap ahead



**MAKING THE PITCH:** Boys and girls at Ascot Park Primary School would welcome a specialist soccer program. Practising their skills, from left, Abdulhalim, 12, Mohammad, 13, Nabiku, 12, Mohammed, 10, and Calvin, 10.

Picture: DYLAN COKER



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A SUCCESSFUL sporting program at a local school which develops elite gymnasts has plans to expand the program to include other sports.

Ascot Primary School is the only primary school in Australia which offers students an opportunity to train in gymnastics up to 30 hours a week. The specialist gymnastic program is funded by Department for Education and Child Development.

The success of the 25-year-old program has prompted principal Greg Cox to develop ways of including other sports such as diving, football and soccer at the school.

He said he has already consulted the Football Federation of SA about partnering up in the near future to include elite soccer training at the school.

The program would be offered to aspiring soccer players across the state who want to train as elite players. Students would have to go through an application process and take part in a soccer trial.

"Soccer lends itself to primary school as the skills curriculum developed by Soccer Australia begins at eight years of age," he said.

"A soccer specialist program at APPS would benefit our mainstream students as the program could also be accessed by mainstream students not only from APPS but also other primary schools in the state.

"Students in mainstream at APPS (if they did not get into the soccer program) must have

## Soccer lends itself to primary school

PRINCIPAL GREG COX

soccer skills as part of their PE curriculum as this is mandated because we are classified as a specialist sporting and physical education school."

Mr Cox said the current gymnastics program has been well supported by the school community and is successful because of the partnership with Gym SA and the school.

"Gym SA coaches the kids in the skills and we provide the curriculum, the (emotional) support and the go-between for families, Gym SA and the students," he said.

The school's gymnastic program has 20 students from

Years 2 to 7 who can train up to 30 hours a week before school and after school at the Marion Leisure Centre.

Mainstream students are also offered two lessons a week on gymnastics as part of the physical education program with the school's specialist teacher.

Year 7 student Abdulhalim said he would definitely like it if there were a specialist soccer program at the school.

"Soccer is my favourite sport and (I) would like to learn skills and more about the game at school," he said.

A departmental spokeswoman said while the school receives funding through the Resource Allocation Adjustment Panel for 2.1 Teachers (\$212,476) to support its gymnastics program, the department also provides additional funding for specialist sports programs at other schools.