

DAWLISH

SWIMMING CLUB

Welcome to Dawlish Swimming Club!

Parents/Guardians Handbook

This handbook is aimed primarily at helping people who are new to swimming clubs get through their first few years with at least some sense of what's going on around them; although people joining from other clubs may also find it useful to explain some of those little quirks that every organisation develops over the years.

This document will help you identify

- what you don't need to worry about - because it will be done for you
- what you do need to look out for - because you may have to do something about it

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1. Introduction & Fees

You've filled in the club registration form, found your way around the Club Website. The last thing you might need is something else to look at.

However pretty soon you'll find emails appearing in your inbox announcing various events and reminding you to do things about which you have no knowledge; the club notice board will be overflowing with indecipherable bits of paper in which everyone else is intensely interested; and everywhere you go it will seem as though everyone is talking knowledgeably about everything – except you!

Don't worry; we've all been there!

If you simply can't manage any more at the moment then do just try to get to the end of the next page which gives you a summary and tells you how we communicate with you. That said, we really do recommend that you try to read or at least skim the rest when you get the chance, otherwise you'll never know what you might be missing!

One thing we would ask is that you appreciate what a complex beast a swimming club is. Dawlish swimming club has around 200 swimmers aged from 5 upwards, we run at least one training session 7 days a week, 50 weeks a year, and organise or participate in many competitive events throughout the year; with very few paid members of staff. With all the best intentions in the world things go wrong from time to time, but with your help and support we can nearly always sort them out.

1.1 Fees

- Membership runs on a calendar year basis, ie. January to December
- Each member pays a membership fee covering membership of the ASA (amateur swimming association), Devon ASA and Western Region ASA-
- Swimming fees are payable via Standing order only, members-joining mid-year will need to pay a one-off top-up payment to cover the fixed fee charged by the ASA tiers
- Whilst the club will endeavour to check the correct payments are received each month, it remains the responsibility of each member to ensure they are paying the fees commensurate with the squad and number of sessions swam.
- Members will receive a letter each December detailing any changes in swimming fees for the following year
- Members need to complete a club membership form every year, ASA membership forms need only be completed when first joining the club

2. Summary

Don't worry about

- Training groups
- Galas, apart from
 - Checking the notice board to see if your swimmer has been selected for a team and indicating whether they can swim or not
 - Checking the notice board to see if you have been requested to help!
- Open meets
- Devon County Championships & Regional Championships

Look out for

- Time Trials - various times throughout year
- Friendly Galas
- The Devon County and development galas
- The Club Championships – everyone (November & December)
- Fundraising events

And how do you find out about any of this?

- look at the notice board and website on a regular basis
- read your emails/post and respond or act in a timely basis
- let us know if any of your contact details change-Very important
- talk to everyone you can

and last but by no means least

- GET INVOLVED – it really is much more interesting if you do!

3. Training groups

The good thing about training groups is that **you don't need to do anything!** On joining the club a swimmer is allocated to a training group. In ascending order, these are

- Learn to Swim squad
- Development Squad
- Junior Squad
- Competition
- Senior Squad

When your swimmer is assessed as having reached a certain level they will be moved to the next group.

Group moves within the Learn to Swim squad and the Development Squad are largely based on continuous assessment; there are no formal exams or tests to be passed. Group moves from Development Squad onwards are increasingly based on a swimmer's ability to swim certain distances in an acceptable time and commitment to training.

There are no pre-determined dates when moves take place. **We will tell you when swimmers have been moved, what the new training times are (and whether your fees will change).**

As you sit in the canteen wondering what is going on, you might find it easier to think along the following lines:

- For younger swimmers in groups up to and including the Junior Squad the focus is on technical training with a small amount of fitness and sprint work. All those funny exercises they go through are designed to get them to move different parts of their bodies in the most efficient way for different strokes, because
- when they move into the Senior Squad the amount of technical work is gradually reduced in favour of building up stamina speed. When you watch them go through their first 16 length warm-up session in the 25m pool you realise why so much time is spent getting the strokes right; poor technique at this stage will be exposed very quickly, brute strength will only get them so far!

Coaches might flinch at these sweeping generalisations, and in no way are they supposed to trivialise all the effort and skill that goes into devising and implementing interesting training schedules. But it should be sufficient to give you some sort of framework to what is going on. If you want to know more about the theory then be warned – you might be coach material! There's a section at the end of these notes for you and anyone else who might want to help.

In summary, the only thing you need to do for regular training is to make certain that the swimmer turns up at the right time.

3.1 Coaching Staff

In the Learn to Swim Squad and Development squads the aim is for swimmers to work with just one or two main coaches. However as the number of training sessions increases in the Junior and Senior Squad, swimmers will regularly work with more than one coach under the overall guidance of a Lead Coach as follows:-

Head Coaches (Junior/senior squads)	Garry Mitchell + Chris Chappell
Learn to Swim Squad Leader	Ian Bowen -Friday Veronica Blackmore- Wednesday
Development Squad Head Coach	Yvonne Swann
Senior Sprint coach +LTS	Joss Chappell
Development Squad +Assistant Senior coach	Darren Farley

There are a vast number of teachers who assist all of the above including younger members of the club who have completed various training courses to be able to do this. You should feel free to talk to any of the club's coaching staff if you have any questions or concerns. As it can be quite manic poolside during training you might want to email the club with your query as follows:-

- dawlishswimmingclub@tiscali.co.uk

4. Competitions

Competitions are a key part of the club's activities. This is where it can seem to get complicated. But once you get started the process is quite gradual and despite what can sometimes seem like a deliberate attempt to confuse by describing competitions with as many different obscure names as possible, the formats are really quite simple and repetitive.

The trick is to know how, when and where to get started!

Dawlish is committed to giving as many of our swimmers as possible the opportunity to compete regularly during the year, irrespective of ability. It's a good idea to get your head around what's going on as soon as possible so that it doesn't come as too much of a surprise later on, although the level of competitive activity for swimmers before they join the Development Squad is relatively limited.

To get an idea of our competitive schedule, take a look at the club events schedule on the notice board (which can also be downloaded from the website¹) and read about past and future events on the website. What follows should help you put it all into context.

The first thing to get straight is that there are two types of competitions or "meets"

- team competitions, normally called "galas" where we compete as Dawlish Swimming Club against other clubs
- Individual competitions, which are generally called either "Opens" or "Championships"

4.1 Galas

The great thing about galas for parents is that team selection is made by the coaches and posted on the notice board. If a swimmer is selected for a particular event, generally **all you need to do is to confirm availability and make certain that they get to the venue on time and with their swimming kit**; it's that easy!

Here's just a little more information that might help you understand the various competitions.

Galas take place throughout the year, normally on Saturday evenings. Competitions are normally, but not always, a mix of individual and relay events; normally no more than 25m for younger swimmers and normally segregated, boys and girls. The one time where boys and girls race together is what are called "cannon" races where representatives of each age group (and sometimes the whole team!) race in an extended relay; it's every bit as chaotic (and exciting) as it sounds!

Points are awarded for each race. Sometimes the winner receiving the smallest number of points, others the largest; it just depends on the rules of the competition.

Galas come in all shapes and sizes, they can

- Be one offs, like the Gorman Trophy or Invitational galas, or run as a league like the East Devon mini league
- Be aimed at different ages of swimmers.

¹ www.dawlishswimmingclub.co.uk

- Have 1 or 2 year age bands like Arena and the Devon Counties
- Be aimed at different abilities of swimmers by stipulating that swimmers cannot be faster than a certain time (a “no faster than” time, or NFT).

If your swimmer is selected for a gala it is a good idea to talk to the competition secretary/ Team Manager or someone who has been before to understand the format.

You shouldn't assume anything if a swimmer is not picked for a gala team. They may be too fast for that particular event, or not fast enough, or we may need to give someone else a chance either just to compete or to compete using a stroke that they are not normally selected to swim. If you want to understand why someone hasn't been selected for a particular gala, don't guess; ask the Coach/ competition secretary directly, please don't just think your child is being ignored.

4.1.1 Your first gala

Sooner or later everyone attends their first gala. Despite all our best efforts you may have missed the team list appearing on the notice board and will have received an email or phone call to see if you are able to attend. Don't worry about it, nobody minds – at least the first time!

The team always meets changed and poolside, not at the entrance. It's your responsibility to make certain that the swimmer finds the Dawlish team, which may not be easy as the competition will nearly always be at a strange pool and as a new parent/swimmer you probably won't recognise the Dawlish Team Manager or any of the other swimmers. Look out for club kit bags, t-shirts and hats.

All swimmers are expected to wear a club hat at competitions. This is mainly because they're representing the club, but also because it makes them easier to identify amidst the organised chaos that is a swimming competition.

Once the swimmer has safely found the team you can relax. There will always be lots of poolside support to make certain they know what they have to do, particularly for younger and less experienced swimmers.

- The Team Managers (TM) or one of the coaches tells everyone what races they will swim in .
- There is normally a chaperone poolside who is responsible for getting the swimmers to the right end of the lane a few races in advance. If a swimmer needs to leave the pool for whatever reason they should always check with their TM first.
- There may also normally be a “lane end” representative who is responsible for making sure the swimmers know what stroke they're swimming and how many

lengths (not as silly as it sounds, even for experienced swimmers). They also help with the timing of handovers during relays, especially for younger swimmers.

- Finally there will be at least one timekeeper; and although for your first gala it's probably too early to be worrying about it, every swimmer's times will appear on the club website and / or notice board, normally within a week of the competition

All of these people are parents by the way, just like you. No-one expects you to get involved in your first gala, but you might like to bear in mind once you get used to the routine that we can only provide this level of support to everyone's swimmers if parents are prepared to participate.

There is usually a fee for spectators to cover the cost of a programme and pool hire.

4.1.2 East Devon Mini League

The Mini League is one of the first competitive events in which many swimmers participate.

The competition takes the form of individual (male and female) events for each age group (Free, Back, Fly and Breaststroke) and a Freestyle and Individual Medley (IM) relay for each group. Generally swimmers won't be told until they arrive exactly what they will be swimming as the team will only be confirmed once sickness etc are reported and may be changed quite close to the start of the event. Swimmers can be asked to swim both individual and relay events or just relay events.

4.2 Club Championships

This is the next thing you should look out for where only members of the club participate. There are generally no time, age or ability restrictions²; the idea is that everyone should compete if at all possible.

The club championships are held in November & December covering all strokes and distances up to 1500m

The Club Championship is run exactly like an Open competition. There is a routine and discipline to the way all Opens work (if you watch the Olympics it really isn't all that

² Some younger swimmers may be limited to shorter distance events

different) and the sooner swimmers get comfortable with that process the better they will perform at other competitions. The Club Championship is one of the friendliest ways to introduce swimmers to the way the system works.

Heats are swum in time order, slowest first, but awards are made by age group i.e. a swimmer may race in a heat with swimmers older or younger than them because their entry times are similar. Once all the heat results are received, swimmers' success is measured against the time they achieved relative to other swimmers in their age group; this is called "heat declared winner" i.e. a swimmer might be the fastest in their age group but never actually be in the pool at the same time as their peers. If they do well, they might even get a medal!

However to stand any chance of winning that medal they need to compete, and for them to compete you have to fill in the application form and commit in advance for the events in which they want to compete. We will email you about it, post notices on the club notice board, and put the information and the application forms on the web site, but at the end of the day ...

**... you have to fill in the registration forms and return them;
no-one else will do it for you!**

Just as with the swimmers during the event, there is a discipline to entering competitions. **Deadlines for returning application forms are serious and don't include margins for people who forget or are on holiday.** Whether it's the Club Championship or an external event; these competitions are complicated to manage and there just isn't time constantly to chase people who don't apply on time. Miss the date and it's your swimmer that will miss out.

4.3 Devon County Championships

A few words about this event which takes place over seven full weekends in February & March and is the first formal rung on a ladder that runs through Regional's Nationals and ultimately ends up at the World Championships and the Olympics; which is rather humbling when you think about it!

Counties have minimum entry times but no NFT (not faster than) times. Typically swimmers will at least be in the Development/Junior squad (minimum age 9yrs as of the date of the Championships) before they reach the qualifying times which will be posted on the club website and notice board when available.

Whilst the longer races will operate on the “heat declared winner” basis, shorter races may have a final swim-off to determine the ultimate winner i.e. the six³ fastest swimmers in an age group may race head-to-head to determine the final placing in that age group. It also gives those swimmers another opportunity to improve their times.

If a swimmer looks like they might qualify for one or more events at Counties then the preceding months can be something of a challenge as you try to piece together opportunities where they might achieve the qualifying times. We enter swimmers for a number of the open events in the early part of the year for just that purpose; details are on the event schedule.

But for the purposes of this note that’s all in the future; Counties aren’t generally an issue for new swimmers.

4.4 Opens

This is where it can get a bit messy. The good news is that until swimmers get to the Development or Junior Squads you don’t really need to worry about it but here’s some background if you’re interested.

In theory, “Opens” are precisely what the name says, open to anyone. However in practice the club will manage entries to a certain number of opens each year and provide poolside coaching support, so although you could go anywhere in the country for a race, at the outset at least we’d recommend that you stick with the events we select! If the club lists an open on the event schedule then we’ll submit a group entry and provide poolside coaching support.

Opens (and Championships) are generally rather longer than Galas; typically an afternoon and evening; sometimes in four sessions over a weekend; sometimes, as with the County Championships, over more than one weekend. You don’t need to attend every session if your swimmer isn’t involved in an event during a session. However, when a swimmer is involved you need to be there at the start of the session irrespective of when during the session the event is scheduled. You can leave when they’ve finished all their events (making certain of course that they haven’t qualified for a final!).

This extended format introduces a whole new level of out-of-water skills for swimmers; how to keep warm when not swimming sometimes for over an hour, how to warm up in preparation for a race, how to keep focused, what to eat. The club issues guidelines as we approach the event when new swimmers first start competing in opens; **it’s a good idea to take this advice seriously**. Packing cubes of raw jelly and the rest may look silly before you’ve experienced it, but it’s written with the benefit of a lot of experience; **take advantage of that experience**. The alternative is to hang around a pool for over two hours and then watch your swimmer perform poorly in a 50m race that’s over in less than 40 seconds because they weren’t properly prepared, and then have to repeat the whole process over another weekend somewhere else to get the elusive qualifying time they wanted.

³ Or eight or ten depending on the size of the pool

The type of race distance varies between competitions. Some focus on sprint events of 100m or less; others on middle distance events of 200m or 400m; some do everything. The only way to find out is to look at the detail. Generally 9/10 year olds cannot enter 100m races apart from the IM.

Rather confusingly, some open meets are referred to as “A”, “B” or “C” level whilst others are referred to as “ASA⁴ level 1, 2, 3 or 4”.

The letters refer to an ASA defined level of swimmer ability. There are formal ASA issued times linked to each level⁵, but broadly

- “AAA” grade swimmers are about national level
- “AA” grade swimmers are about district or regional qualifying times
- “A” grade swimmers are getting county qualifying times
- “B” grade are good club swimmers
- “C” is everyone else

The numbers refer to a specific category of meet as defined by the ASA.

- Level 1 - aimed at National Grade swimmers
- Level 2 - aimed at Regional Grade swimmers
- Level 3 - aimed at County Grade swimmers
- Level 4 - other swimmers

Licensed meets (until now we were referring to them as Opens) must meet certain organisational criteria such as electronic timing, officials have to be ASA qualified etc.

When you submit an entry you have to provide an entry time, typically this will have been achieved in a competition or timed by the swimmer’s coach. The higher level licensed events may require times to have been achieved at a licensed event and within a specific period before the competition. Some events have various combinations of time restrictions on them. So

- The County Championships have a minimum time standard, but no “no faster than” times
- Some Development meets have “no faster than times”
- Some Opens have both an upper and lower time constraint.

⁴ The Amateur Swimming Association, the governing body of the sport in the UK. See <http://www.sportcentric.com/vsite/vtrial/page/home/0,11065,5157-179543-196761-40076-265736-custom-item,00.html> for details.

⁵ <http://www.sportcentric.com/vsite/vfile/page/fileurl/0,,5157-1-1-121400-0-file,00.pdf>

Once again, events will be swum in reverse order of entry time and awards made against performance in age category. The extent to which awards are determined by heat declared winner or a final swim off will vary between opens.

As there is a lot of demand for places at Opens (lots of swimmers out there are looking for qualifying times, especially towards the end of the year) it is really important to get your entry in as soon as possible and in advance of any closing date. Our Competition Secretary usually sends our entries off in batches as soon as they are received. This helps us get places at events which will usually fill up well in advance of the closing date given.

4.5 Nutrition

Competition/Training Nutrition Plan

Since swim meets can last ALL day (County Age Groups) swimmers need to be aware of what they are eating and drinking either before, during or after they race.

Timing of the Pre-Event Meal

The type of food swimmers eat may influence how they perform in the water. Fatty foods take a long time to digest. The following foods are good examples:

- Crisps
- Chips
- Doughnuts
- Danish Pastries

Protein foods that also contain fat take the longest time to digest. For example:

- Peanut Butter
- Chicken
- Pork
- Beef
- Fish

If the swimmer consumes these types of food just before they compete, the blood rushes to the stomach to try to digest the food. Unfortunately the muscles required for swimming Competitively also require the maximum blood supply. Something has to give, the body cannot do both at the same time, and it may result in a poor performance and probably stomach ache.

Carbohydrates

Your body needs glucose for energy. The main source of glucose is the carbohydrate – sugars and starches – in your diet. If you do not have sufficient carbohydrates in your diet you will not be able to train as hard or as long and fatigue (tiredness) will set in.

Any foods consisting of Carbohydrates can be digested quicker than foods

mentioned above. Here are some examples:

- Pasta
- Cereals
- Bagels
- Wholemeal Bread
- Fruit
- Vegetables
- Rice
- Breakfast Bars
- Baked Potato

These foods can be out of the stomach in approximately 2 hours therefore; the pre event meal should be composed of primarily carbohydrates. It also appears that carbohydrates digested up to 3 hours before exercise may improve performance. As you can see there is quite a selection. So, which carbohydrate is best? Well it depends on how quickly the body converts the carbohydrate to glucose. Here is a table of some carbohydrates and whether they are high, medium or low speed in being changed to glucose:

High Medium Low

White Rice Brown Rice Pasta
Watermelon Banana Apple
Baked Potato Boiled Potato Baked Beans
Sports drink Squash Milk
Honey Muesli Bar Sponge Cake
Bagel Bread Fruit Cake
Jelly Beans Crisps Chocolate

Try to eat High-speed foods just before, during and immediately after exercise. Remember; eat at least 2 hours before exercise, then about 30 minutes before exercise have a 50g snack, steer away from bulky snacks as these could cause stomach pains. Experiment with different snacks from the 'high' list.

If you train for longer than an hour, you will need to consume carbohydrates to avoid fatigue. Use an 'Isotonic' sports drink, as this will give you the carbohydrate as well as the fluid (see fluids).

The best time to refuel and restock those depleted glucose stores ready for the next work out is immediately after exercise.

Eating at All Day Competitions

The same principle used to time pre-event meals also applies to all day competitions. If a swimmer races at 10:00 and again 2 hours later, a meal high in fat and protein will more than likely be in the swimmers stomach when they get ready to race. This will lead to a possible reduced level of performance and a stomach ache.

Guidelines

Time to Next Event:

1 hour or less. The swimmer should stick to carbohydrate foods and juices. e.g.

orange juice, bananas, plain toast or a diluted carbohydrate sports drink. Swimmers should limit the amount of food taken.

2 to 4 hours. Swimmers should add more carbohydrate foods and juices. e.g. bagels, hot cereals and muffins along with some type of pure fruit juice.

4 hours or more. Swimmers can add more protein with carbohydrate foods. E.g. a light spread of peanut butter on a muffin or bagel or a chicken sandwich on two slices of bread with pure fruit juice.

It is also vitally important that swimmers should drink fluids, (NOT fizzy drinks), as they can quickly become dehydrated on the hot poolside. Waiting until the swimmer is thirsty is TOO LATE.

Replacing Fluids

During exercise our muscles use energy. However, the muscles only use 25% of the energy the other 75% is released as heat – which is why exercise makes us hot! We need to get rid of the excess heat otherwise we would overheat – so, the main way to keep our bodies cool is sweating. Heat from working muscles is transferred to the blood. Blood flow to the skin is increased, and the heat is lost via evaporation – sweating. Sweat comes from the water in your blood so you have to replace the lost water otherwise, you will become dehydrated and suffer.

How Much?

The more you sweat the more fluid you lose and therefore, the more you need to drink. Approximately 1 litre of fluid is lost for each hour of exercise. The easiest method of finding out how much fluid you lose is to weigh yourself before and after exercise. Each kg of body weight lost is equal to 1 litre of fluid loss. Another way is to check the colour of your urine – if it's pale and plentiful you're well hydrated, but if it's dark and in short supply you'd better start drinking. Another consideration is that for every 1% drop in body weight there is a 5% drop in performance the difference between coming first or last!

When to Drink

As always, prevention is better than cure – start exercise well hydrated. Try to drink between 300 – 500ml (good-sized glass of water) in the 15 minutes before you start exercising.

Drink during exercise, but do it in between exercise sets when your coach is talking. It's extremely unlikely that you will drink too much water, but if you are doing excessive amounts of exercise in extreme temperatures you may need an 'Isotonic' sports drink – 5 – 8% carbohydrate in solution, with sodium (salts) similar to the concentration of blood, this is quickly absorbed by the body.

When exercising it is worth remembering the following:

- Less than an hour - ordinary water will do.
- More than an hour and in extreme temperatures, use an 'Isotonic' sports drink.

REMEMBER – don't wait until you are thirsty, that's too late, you're already dehydrated

5. Personal best and competition entry times

5.1 Personal best times

It's very difficult to talk about swimming without sooner or later talking about personal best times, or "PB's".

In the early stages of the club PB's are by no means the only determinant of progress; serious account is also taken of technical skills and general attitude toward training. But as a swimmer moves through the club the focus is increasingly on just how fast they can swim a particular stroke over a particular distance. PB's also feature strongly in team selection, the ability to enter certain competitions, and where in a competition a swimmer will compete.

Results from all meets are displayed on the club notice board and website so you can keep a record of your swimmers times but ask one of the coaches if you need further information.

Technically PB's can only be registered in an individual event or where the swimmer swims the lead or first leg of a medley. Non-lead legs of medley races don't constitute PB's because reaction times when you can see a swimmer coming toward you can be over a second faster than when you're waiting for the starter. However times from non-lead legs can be useful for you to see your progress so they're all recorded in the system.

Once your swimmer starts competing it's a good idea to **keep a record of their times yourself so that they're readily available when you need to complete event application forms.**

5.2 Age Up Dates

One area where there is bound to be confusion is the differing age groups and why your swimmer is in one age group for one competition and another age group for another one. This is down to the 'Age Up' date for the competition in question.

Consider the following:-

- Our Club Championships have an 'age up' date of 31st December. This means that the age group you will be in, e, g, U9, U10, U11 etc is determined by how old your swimmer will be on 31st December.
- The 'age up' date for Counties is the date of the last session of the meet,.
- Other competitions/Opens will have their own 'age up' date.

One thing to remember is that if British Swimming set a single date for all competitions your swimmer would continually come up against the same competitors and might get disheartened. This way everyone has a chance to shine at different times.

Don't worry too much – your swimmer will always be swimming with swimmers of a similar age as themselves whether its described as U10 in one competition and U11 in another. The

different 'age up' date for different competitions won't mean your swimmer is at a disadvantage in the meet.

6. Awards, medals and things

Everyone likes to feel that they're succeeding and you'll find that there are a number of ways for Swimmers to mark their progression; some are more obvious than others.

6.1 Medals

Most individual competitions will reward first, second and third places with the normal coloured medals; sometimes the winner will receive a trophy of some kind. Don't expect fancy award ceremonies with anthems played and flags hoisted! The results of races will be posted on the wall somewhere around the pool, normally in a number of different places so that both swimmers and parent/guardians can see them. The locations of these lists are normally easily identifiable by the crowds gathered around them. If the swimmer qualifies for an award they need to collect it from a medal table.

6.2 ASA award scheme

Through the scheme swimmers can collect badges when they have successfully achieved the required times at specific strokes and distances.

3 types of award which relate to the length of the swim:

- Sprint: distances up to 100m for all strokes including Individual Medley (IM)
- Middle Distance: 200m for all strokes including IM and 400m front crawl
- Distance: 400m IM and 800m and 1500m front crawl

Times are graded at 4 levels: Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum, with a separate award for each stroke. Once the swimmer achieves a time at that level for any stroke, they can claim the round badge which relates to the distance (i.e. Sprint, Middle & Distance) and the relevant stroke flash and then collect further flashes as times are achieved for each stroke at that distance. The ASA times for the most popular distances are posted on their web-site.

Once gained awards may be purchased from the club desk.

6.3 BAGCATS

You'll probably come across BAGCATS⁶ for the first time if your swimmer goes to Counties. BAGCATS are a point-based system operated by the ASA. Their objective is to encourage development across multiple strokes and distances for swimmers under 14 and to discourage specialisation at too early a stage in a swimmer's career.

The good news is that you don't have to swim any additional events to gain BAGCAT points. At Counties, in addition to awards for success in a specific stroke over a specific distance, success will also be measured on BAGCAT points across the competition as a whole.

If you are aiming to get maximum BAGCAT points you need to swim the following events with points awarded for times gained against national averages:-

- 50m of either Free, Breast, Fly, Back
- 200m Free
- 200m Form stroke (no mystery here – it just means 200m of any stroke but Free)
- IM – either 100m, 200, 400m depending on age

You shouldn't need to spend too much time worrying about this until your swimmer reaches the Development/Junior Squad, but if you're interested more detail may be found on the ASA website⁷

6.4 Desk

The desk operates on most Wednesday and Friday evenings at the Leisure centre generally between 6.00pm and 7.30pm.

The desk takes orders for a very wide range of precisely the sort of stuff you'll see people wandering around with and which will very quickly become essential. Track suits, kit bags, hats, fins (short flippers!), t-shirts; and not forgetting the ASA awards – which is why we put the section about the desk here!

Not only is it more convenient than the internet, any profit it makes is ploughed back into the club. Please support it.

⁶ British Age Group Categories

⁷ An introduction to BAGCATS may be found at <http://www.britishswimming.org/vsite/vcontent/page/custom/0,8510,5157-182570-199788-42591-269055-custom-item,00.html> and detailed categories at <http://www.britishswimming.org/vsite/vcontent/page/custom/0,8510,5157-182570-199788-42591-269055-custom-item,00.html>

7. Finally; there's you!

7.1 Communication

There is a lot going on at the club and our commitment to you is to try our best to keep you informed about it all. To do so we use three principle means of communication

- The club notice board at Dawlish Leisure Centre
- The club website (www.dawlishswimmingclub.co.uk)
- Email

This all involves a lot of effort on our part. In return we'd ask four things.

- Please look at the notice board and website on a regular basis
- Please read your emails/post and respond or act in a timely basis
- Please let us know if any of your contact details change
- Do advise us if you think you are not paying the correct fees due to a change in session etc, it is your responsibility to check.

7.2 Getting involved

We can write documents like this, send you emails, and put stuff on the notice board and web site, but at the end of the day the three best ways to find out about what's going on are to

- Talk to the coaches, and committee members or contact the desk , you can also email the club via the contact us link.
- Talk to people in the canteen; some of them will be better informed, others will be in the same state of uncertainty as you. Either way you'll find talking about it helps.
- Get involved, if not in the day to day operation of the club, then in the running of events.

The club has very few paid members of staff so everyone else you see coaching, or managing competition entries, taking registers, running the desk, generally wandering about the pool in a more or less business-like fashion, or sending you annoying emails is a volunteer who is helping out because they want to help their children swim and the club be the best it can competitively. And that's just the general day to day operation of the club.

Every time we stage an event like the Club Championships it takes nearly 20 people to run it. Some of these jobs require qualifications; many don't.

- If you find yourself intrigued by the jobs that require qualifications at some level (time-keeping, judging or coaching) then please talk to Bev Coomes, the club secretary; the club always needs more people with these skills.
- If you've got a good memory for faces then perhaps "whipping or chaperone" might be for you; it might sound alarming but swimmers have to be got to their races on time somehow!
- Or perhaps you don't mind taking ticket money, handing out refreshments to poolside helpers, taking messages between the judges, handling medal and trophy distribution or any of the other tasks without which we'd never be able to mount an event

Getting involved is a way of putting names to faces, becoming known yourself, and beginning to find your way around the other complexities of the club that this note can't begin to address.

If that's not enough then think of it this way. For any competition you'll have to spend a minimum 4 or 5 hours at the pool to watch just a few minutes of racing in which your swimmer is involved. It's hot, sticky and, frankly, can be very boring. Poolside helping is cooler (trust us – heat rises!) and much more interesting.

So when the notices go up asking for people to help, please don't assume that it will be too complicated, or that everyone who did it last time will do it again. Get involved, because it's only by all of us getting involved that our swimmers can do what they all enjoy so much ...

Swim

Sorry this has gone on so long. If you have any ideas of how this document might be improved (either by cutting out information you find irrelevant or by adding content that isn't covered) please email the club with your ideas

January 2011