

## **Contents**

<b><u>Section</u></b>	<b><u>Title</u></b>	<b><u>Page</u></b>
1	Introduction	2
2	Club History	3
3	The Aims of the Club	3
4	Coaching and Training	4
5	Training Venues	6
6	Volunteers and Officials	7
7	Communication and Notice Boards	8
8	Nutrition and Hydration	8
9	Codes of Conduct	9
10	Child Protection	11
11	Equipment and Club Kit	11
12	Competitions and Galas	11
13	Ten Tips for Survival in Swimming	14

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 Wycombe District Swimming Club Committee

Appendix 2 Training Times

Appendix 3 Squad Entry Criteria

Appendix 4 Photography

Appendix 5 Club Fees

Glossary

Useful Telephone Numbers

Useful Websites

# **1. Introduction from the Chairman**

Dear Swimmer, Parent(s), Supporters and Friends

Welcome to Wycombe District Swimming Club. This handbook provides information about the operation of your Club and some guidelines for your future involvement in swimming.

We have regular training sessions at Wycombe Sports Centre, Princess Risborough Springs Swim and Fitness Centre and Thame Leisure Centre, and details of the current timetable may be found in Appendix 2. The Club also hold Training Camps and exchange visits with foreign clubs, with the opportunity to be hosted by, and in return host, a member of the visiting team.

The Club exists to promote swimming and participates in several Leagues, Galas and Open Meets up to National level. If you are selected to represent the Club at a gala you will be expected to make every effort to attend. For many of you, your first taste of competitive swimming will be one of our own Club Championships when every swimmer will be expected to enter.

Being involved in galas you will build up a record of Personal Best times (PB) for a given stroke and distance. Once you have established a PB, the next time you swim in a competition you will be able to see how you have progressed. All of the results are posted on the notice board, usually within three days. Once you have a PB, record it and keep it safe. The improvement in PB help you measure the progress you are making while at the same time aiding the coaches in selecting teams and deciding on promotions. Promotions do not solely depend on how fast you can swim but rely on a number of other factors too. The policy for promotion is detailed in Appendix 3.

The other benefits of swimming include building up your knowledge on safety, improved health, stamina, strength, meeting new people and making new friends. As with all sports the more you put into the sport, the more you will get out of it.

Included in this handbook is all the information you will need to guide you through your initial membership of the Club. Please take time to read it and keep it in a safe place for ready reference. Please ensure you stay up-to-date from information provided on the notice boards at our training facilities, and on the Club website [www.wycombe-swimming.org](http://www.wycombe-swimming.org)

The involvement and participation of parents in the operation of the Club cannot be underestimated and is essential to its continued success; be it taking round drinks at Club Galas to becoming a Swimming Official, a member of the Committee or even becoming involved with the coaching. If you feel able to help in any way, please contact a member of the Committee as listed in Appendix 1. Remember that the Club relies on your support, not just for your child, but for all swimmers.

Finally, please note that more information may be found on the Wycombe District Swimming Club website at [www.wycombe-swimming.org](http://www.wycombe-swimming.org) and includes the Club Constitution and Rules, and Bylaws which have more details about how the Club is organised and run.

Good luck to both Swimmers and Parents, and please enjoy the sport and get to know those who help run your Club.

Mick Philpott

Chairman, Club Committee

## **2. Club History**

High Wycombe District Swimming Club was formed originally in the 1930's, and used to swim in the old Rye outdoor pool, which was unheated – the level of the water being maintained by a stream, which ran in one end and out the other. These spartan facilities however did not deter members, and competitions between other local clubs frequently took place.

With the advent of the war, the Club ceased to function, but was re-formed in 1957 when the outdoor pool at Rye opened. Swimming training was restricted to the summer months and one hour per week at the Slough Community Pool. Because of these limited training facilities the club was fairly recreational in its activities, although friendly inter-club matches were arranged whenever possible.

In 1974 the name of the Club was changed to Wycombe District Swimming Club, and in the summer of 1975 the move was made to the new 50 metre indoor pool at the Wycombe Sports centre. From that time our aim has been to cater for all levels of swimming from junior to master, recreational swimming to county, district and national competitive swimming.

To further this intention, the club appointed its first professional coach on a part time basis in 1979. In January 1986 it appointed its first full time professional coach and has continued to appoint professional coaches to further the aims of the Club. As the Club expanded the decision was taken to employ an Assistant Head Coach to work along side the Head Coach to further the success of the club. Many of the coaches, teachers and helpers are unpaid volunteers, many of whom put in enormous amounts of time and effort to further the interests of the club and the 400 or so active young swimmers based at the Wycombe Sports Centre, Princess Risborough Springs Swim and Fitness Centre and Thame Leisure Centre.

## **3. The Aims of the Club**

The mission statement of the Wycombe District Swimming Club is:

*The aim of the Wycombe District Swimming Club is to provide an environment for the coaching and development of swimming and to provide the opportunity and encouragement to enable all of its membership to reach their full potential within the sport of swimming.*

In every sporting organisation, the higher the peak you aim for, the broader base you need. For this reason, the Club caters for a range of swimmers from those who are just ready to begin their first steps in swimming right up to full international swimmers. A swimmer's individual progress and improvement, at whatever standard, are what give satisfaction to the club and its coaches as well as to the swimmers themselves.

Wycombe District Swimming Club provides coaching for all ages and levels of swimmer, and all are welcome. Our aim is to provide an enjoyable environment in which to:

- Help swimmers fulfil their individual potential, and
- Prepare them to compete at a level appropriate to their ability.

The aim is for swimmers to be happy, and for most of them the club is a highly social place. Equally the Club expects them to train properly and to respect their coaches. Swimming does demand, and helps develop, a degree of self-discipline that is useful in all aspects of life. In addition, all experts agree that it is the very best form of exercise available!

Finally, we must all remember that Wycombe District Swimming Club exists for all of its swimmers.

## 4. Coaching and Training

All coaching at Wycombe District Swimming Club is under the direction of the Head Coach and the Assistant Head Coach. The Club's coaches are experienced and qualified, and are entirely responsible for training and team selection in consultation with the team managers. As swimmers improve and progress, their training will change. When they are judged ready they will be moved into a different lane or squad. The decisions involved in this are entirely a matter for the judgement of the coaches, and will vary from swimmer to swimmer. Our coaches always have in mind what is best for each individual swimmer at their particular stage of development.

Successful competitive swimming depends on three physical attributes:

- Technique
- Endurance
- Strength

These issues are inter-related in the sense that it is easier to perform strokes correctly if you are strong; and you can only sustain your stroke correctly if you have good endurance. However, for the purposes of simple explanation they are dealt with separately here.

### Technique

Good swimming technique itself depends upon three things:

- Flexibility
- Natural talent and 'feel' for the water
- Practice

**Flexibility** is crucial because none of the strokes can be performed efficiently unless the swimmer is flexible. All-over flexibility matters, but especially that of the shoulders and ankles. Some people are more flexible than others, but it is easy – and important – to improve by regular and simple exercise. Always stretch properly before training.

**Natural talent** obviously varies but it is by no means true that those who have most of it are the most successful. Other factors are also important. The talented swimmer has good '**feel**' for the water but this is something that can be developed over time. It requires swimmers to think, literally, about how the stroke feels and especially about the weight of the water on their hands as they move through the water.

Timing is also important, especially how the arms co-ordinate with the legs; this is particularly true of Butterfly and Breaststroke.

**Practice** will improve technique. When training it is important that you concentrate on performing the stroke correctly; listen to your coach and do what is asked of you. Your coach will talk of keeping the stroke long, streamlined and keeping the stroke-rate up – these things matter!

In particular it is important that you do the drills properly. Drills are simply a way of working one specific aspect of the stroke. By doing this properly, the full stroke will improve.

Two further aspects that can be improved by practice are starts and turns. You should always be thinking about doing them in training. Races are quite often won by swimmers who are slower through the water but better at starting and turning.

## **Endurance**

There are two aspects to endurance:

- Cardio-vascular endurance
- Local endurance

**Cardio-vascular** endurance is the ability of the heart and lungs to work efficiently over time.

**Local endurance** is the ability of particular muscles to do the same. A good runner might have excellent cardio-vascular endurance but his back and shoulder muscles will not have the endurance of a swimmer's. This is why running is not a particularly effective exercise for a swimmer.

A training program for swimmers will include aerobic and anaerobic training. Put very simply, anaerobic training is short, fast work that cannot be sustained for long because you run out of oxygen. Aerobic work can be sustained for longer because there is a balance between the oxygen you take in and the oxygen you are using for energy production. Aerobic training 'sets' will be longer and slower with shorter rests than anaerobic sets. One of the objectives of training is to increase the efficiency with which you use oxygen.

Swimmers need a very efficient aerobic system – they need to develop their capacity to take in and use oxygen. This is because whereas a 100m runner can finish his race using only his anaerobic system, a 100m swimmer will have to use his aerobic system as well.

Normally, winter training will be mostly aerobic and the summer will contain more anaerobic work. In addition, during the competitive season and especially before a major competition, training will be 'tapered' – distances will be reduced to avoid tiredness and the sets sharpened to improve speed.

Without any doubt, the best way for a swimmer to develop endurance is swimming. Other forms of exercise such as running or even aerobics will contribute to the efficiency of the cardio-vascular system but not to the local endurance which a swimmer needs.

## **Strength**

Strength helps you perform the strokes correctly and increases the power of each stroke. Butterfly is especially demanding of strength.

The strength a swimmer needs is very specific – in the back, shoulders, triceps and stomach. In addition, swimmers need a different kind of strength from the explosive kind needed by most athletes. You can see this by looking at the muscular development of top swimmers (long, loose muscles) as compared with runners (shorter, tighter muscles).

Weight training can be used to increase strength but only when you are already physically developed and only under expert supervision. Swimmers need sustained strength rather than sheer power so the kind of weight training done involves relatively high repetitions with relatively light weights.

The best way for young swimmers to develop the right kind of strength is through swimming itself and performing the strokes correctly.

Several other aspects of training can be mentioned for the competitive swimmer:

**Variety:** in order to develop 'feel' and endurance and to 'groove' the strokes, successful swimmers need to spend a lot of time in the water. The strokes need to be settled into a groove in order that the

swimmer can hold the stroke together all the way to the finish under the physiological and nervous pressure of a race. To prevent training from becoming boring, the good coach will vary the sets you swim in many different ways. One aspect of this is the use of swimming aids.

**Swimming aids:** as well as introducing variety, swimming aids perform other functions. Pull-buoys enable you to forget your legs and concentrate on your arm pull. Paddles help you feel the correct hand entry and direction of pull as well as building up strength. Fins will increase the strength of your kick and ankle flexibility as well as helping with the high body position you need when swimming at speed. By providing extra momentum, they will also make it easier to perform some of the more difficult upper body drills.

**Pace clock:** To produce improvement, training must be done against the clock. The rest taken must be controlled or the set done in a specific time. It is therefore important that each swimmer learns to use the training clock properly. In addition, it is only by using the clock that swimmers develop their judgement of pace and timing.

Using the pace clock is an example of the truism that you train for swimming with your brain as well as your body. You do not improve by cruising up and down in the 'comfort zone'. You do improve by thinking about how you are performing your strokes and turns; by counting the number of strokes you take per length. Above all, because the coaching in this Club is good, you improve by listening to your coach and doing what is asked of you.

**Log books:** Wycombe District Swimming Club expects its swimmers to keep log books. For the younger, newer swimmers this will simply consist of keeping a note of the times which they achieve in any time trials or competitions which they may enter. This should gradually develop to include a record of your training – how many metres did you swim and which stroke were you working on at each session? For swimmers in the top squads, the log book needs to include recording of your regular test sets, notes of how you are feeling about your training, any hints your coach may have given you to improve your performance and any other information which may affect your swimming in any way. You also need to keep a regular note of your height and weight.

Finally, regularity of training is at least as important as quantity. Four training sessions a week is much more valuable than eight training session every other week. For this reason, the Club expects that the swimmers of 12 years and over in the higher squads to train no less than four training sessions or 6 hours per week.

## **5. Training Venues**

Due to the size of Wycombe District Swimming Club and it's catchment area, we train at a number of venues. Swimmers are drawn from a wide geographical area and so three training pools are spread over the South Bucks area.

**High Wycombe Sports Centre** is situated just off the M40 at High Wycombe. This is a six-lane 50m pool which provides the centre of the clubs activities. For training sessions it is often divided into two 25 metre pools by means of a dividing wall.

**Risborough Springs Swim and Fitness Centre** is the home of a six-lane 25 metre pool located in the centre of the Princess Risborough. Built in 1994, it has room for almost 50 swimmers at any time.

**Thame Leisure Centre** has the most recently built of the pools we use and is situated on the Lord Williams School site, on the Oxford Road. A 25 metre pool with 5 lanes, it is used (as is Risborough Springs) primarily to develop younger swimmers before joining the sessions at Wycombe Sports Centre.

## **6. Volunteers and Officials**

Wycombe District Swimming Club is entirely dependent upon the work of our many volunteers (the only paid professionals being the two coaches). There are many ways in which the parents of our swimmers can become involved in the organisation and running of the Club, to the benefit of not only their own swimmer, but to many others as well. Some examples of ways in which you may be able to help are:

- Coaching and support of coaches on poolside
- Committee and administrative tasks
- Competition Officials
- Open Meet organisation

**Coaching:** throughout Wycombe District Swimming Club the coaching is overseen by the full time Coaches. They work with a dedicated team who willingly give up a great deal of their own time to work with our swimmers; remember that in addition to the time which our coaches spend on the poolside with the swimmers, they also prepare programmes of work, attend competitions and coaches' meetings, all in their own time. The majority of our coaches also hold down demanding full-time jobs and have their own swimmers within the club to support. Indeed, many of them began by being a parent of a novice swimmer, and developed their involvement in coaching as their child progressed through the Club. Please give these important people as much support and help as you can, and remember that the occasional word of thanks or appreciation may help to make it all worthwhile!

The Club wholeheartedly supports the education and development of its coaches who regularly attend training courses and seminars. If you would like to become involved on poolside, you will be made very welcome and we are able to give you details of the appropriate training and support you will need in undertaking it. Please speak to Mick Wakely for further information.

**Committee and administrative tasks:** the Management Committee is fundamental to the efficient and successful running of the Wycombe District Swimming Club, working closely with the Coaches and the Boroughs. The Committee is elected in November each year at the Annual General Meeting. It is expected that every family will be represented at this meeting, as important decisions are made which will affect all the swimmers. There is a large variety of jobs to be done for the Club, some of which require some degree of existing skill and others which rely on a hefty dose of enthusiasm. Please consider offering a little of your time to help with one of these jobs.

**Competition Officials:** as with any competition, officials are needed for every competition undertaken by the Club. On many occasions all that is required is a willingness to get involved and to give up just a couple of hours of your time. For other competitions, particularly licensed meets, many qualified officials are needed, and courses are organised regularly which allow interested parents to qualify as timekeepers, judges, starters and referees. If you find yourself taking your child along to competitions, why not consider gaining a qualification which will allow you to offer valuable help. Again, speak to Richard Hipkiss, a Committee Member, in the first instance.

**Open Meet:** the Wycombe District Open Meet is the major fund-raising event of the Club year, and needs huge numbers of volunteer helpers in order to run successfully, including officials, help with refreshments, entrance money collectors and many more. Every parent whose child swims at this meet should offer their help, in order to keep down the club fees.

Please consider in what way you are able to help Wycombe District Swimming Club and **please do not wait to be asked!** It is worth saying again: *Our Club is entirely dependent on the work of our tireless volunteers* – don't always expect it to be another swimmer's parents!

## **7. Communication and Notice Boards**

Communication within Wycombe District Swimming Club is vital, especially considering the fact that we train at three different venues. The Committee sees this as a prime responsibility in keeping the swimmers and parents up to date with policy and events. The main media of communication at our club are the *notice boards* at each of our training centres and the Club website at [www.wycombe-swimming.org](http://www.wycombe-swimming.org)

*It is essential for swimmers and parents to check the notice boards regularly – at least once a week.*

The Committee ensures that there is a communications outlet to all venues, and a Club newsletter is produced from time to time.

Questions concerning coaching or training should be put to your coach who will either know the answer or can find out. There are regular coaches' meetings at which coaching, training and competition issues are discussed. The dates of these meetings are included on the fixtures list. Any other question, query or point relating to the running of the Club can be addressed to any member of the Committee. They will either have the answer, or know who to ask it if they do not, or they will put the point to a meeting of the Committee if appropriate.

## **8. Nutrition and Hydration**

In order to obtain the best out of their sport, swimmers must be 'fed and watered' well.

### **Food**

Below are listed some foods that should provide all that a swimmer requires, as well as some to be avoided. Remember that it is often better to eat more often and in smaller quantities rather than the traditional three meals a day. Most important of all, though, is to eat the correct foods.

Sportsmen and women need carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins and minerals (especially iron) in order to train and perform well.

**Carbohydrates** are obtained from pasta, breads, cereals, potatoes, rice, beans and pulses. If you have a sweet tooth, try to find sweetness in dried fruit, fruit juices, fresh fruit and honey, **not** from sweets, fizzy drinks, ice creams and chocolates, ie junk food!

**Proteins** are available in meat, fish, eggs, pulses, beans, nuts and dairy foods including milk and cheese.

**Vitamins** are all important, especially the B-group vitamins. They are found in fresh fruit and vegetables, dairy foods and fortified breakfast cereals.

**Minerals**, especially iron, are also found in fresh fruit and vegetables and many breakfast cereals.

Swimmers should be aiming to eat roughly five smaller meals rather than three large meals per day. Typical examples would be:

**Breakfast:** the most important meal of the day! Don't miss it, especially if you have trained early in the morning. Try cereals including muesli and porridge, but not sugar-coated varieties, bread (preferably wholemeal), fruit (dried or fresh), fruit pieces, honey and milk.

**Mid-morning snack:** particularly for those who have trained in the early morning. Try sandwiches, fruit, milk, yoghurts etc. Avoid biscuits, crisps, sweets and fizzy drinks as they add little to your nutrition and rot your teeth!

**Lunch:** try to eat a selection of carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins and minerals as above, whether as a school meal, packed lunch or at home.

**After-school snack:** have this between school and evening training sessions, to fill the gap before the evening meal.

**Evening meal:** A hot, sustaining meal containing meat, fish, eggs or pulses, fresh vegetables and fruit.

## Drinks

Swimmers need liquid, and lots of it! Water should be the main source, plus fruit juices etc. 'Sports' powders containing the necessary nutrients make a useful addition to drinks bottles during training.

*Every swimmer must bring a drink to every training session – and drink it!  
Remember no glass bottles on poolside and no fizzy drinks.*

## 9. Codes of Conduct

### Swimmers

#### **Training**

- ☺ Make sure you have all your training aids (drinks bottle, kick board, pull buoy, fins, hand paddles) with you before the session starts. Have your goggles ready and keep a spare pair in your bag.
- ☺ Arrive for your training session on time. Use the lavatory before the session starts. If you are going to leave early, talk to your coach before you enter the water.
- ☺ Stretch and loosen up before you enter the water. Swim the warm-up slowly, think about your strokes as you do them.
- ☺ Listen to what your coach tells you. If you don't understand, please ask.
- ☺ Always swim to the end of the lane. Let faster swimmers through. When you have finished a set, get out of the way of swimmers who have not.
- ☺ Remember, you swim with your brain as well as your body. Think about what you are doing in training: about your strokes, about the pace at which you should be swimming. Don't just plough up and down in the 'comfort zone'. Above all, think about the things you are trying to improve.

#### **Competitions**

- ☺ At Open Meets, check when you should post your entry cards and be sure you do so on time.
- ☺ Be a part of the team. Stay with the Club squad poolside. If you leave poolside for any reason you must tell one of the coaches where you are going.
- ☺ Report to your coach, not your parents, **immediately** after your race for feedback.

- ☺ Support your team-mates. Everyone likes to be supported.
- ☺ If you have made a final, well done. There will probably be a presentation. Make sure you know when it is and be on time for it.

## **Dress**

The following rules apply when representing the Club at any competition:

- ☺ Club caps must be worn by both boys and girls whenever they are racing.
- ☺ Official Club tops must be worn on poolside.
- ☺ Club tops must be worn for all presentations.

## **General**

- ☺ If you have a medical problem or injury or, for example, use an inhaler, you must tell your coach.
- ☺ Fighting or bullying of any kind in the Club is extremely rare and completely unacceptable. If it happens to you or you see it happening to anyone else, please report it immediately to your coach.
- ☺ The Club exists for the swimmers. It provides a place where you can do your best and enjoy it.

## **Parents**

The following is based on the Sport England's (formerly Sport Council's) Code for Parents which the Club fully endorses:

- ☺ Remember, children are involved in sport for their enjoyment and achievement, not yours.
- ☺ Be realistic about your child's ability. Do not over-expect. Much harm can be done when children consistently fall short of their parents' overly high expectations.
- ☺ Teach your child that honest effort is as important as victory so that the result of each race is accepted without undue disappointment. A Personal Best can be as big an achievement as a gold medal.
- ☺ Turn defeat into victory by helping your child to learn from the experience and to work towards improvement and good sportsmanship. Never ridicule or yell at your child for making a mistake or losing a race. In particular, be positive and do not show your disappointment.
- ☺ Remember that children learn best by example. Applaud good performance by other swimmers in this Club, and other clubs.
- ☺ Do not publicly question officials' judgement and never their honesty. Encourage your children to show the same courtesy.
- ☺ Recognise the value and importance of volunteer coaches. Do not undermine them. They give their time and resources to provide recreational activity for **your** child.
- ☺ Be helpful to your child but do not coach him or her. A little knowledge can be a dangerous. The coaches are there to do the coaching and selecting and most have been doing so for many years. If you think there is a major problem, speak to the coaches first.

## **10. Child Protection**

All persons who work in any way with our swimmers at Wycombe District Swimming Club have undergone the appropriate police checks. We take the welfare of our swimmers extremely seriously and any issues or concerns should be raised in the first instance with the Child Welfare Officer as listed in Appendix 1. Please also see the notice concerning photography in Appendix 4.

## **11. Equipment and Club Kit**

### **Swimming Aids**

All swimmers will need to wear well-fitting goggles (try on before you buy!) and those with anything other than very short hair need to wear a hat. Other equipment which will be needed is:

- Kick board (a small one, please) – all squads
- Pull buoy (again, smaller is better) – all squads
- Fins – all squads above Transition
- Hand paddles – County squad upwards
- Heart rate monitors – National and District squads

### **Club Kit**

The following items of Club kit are available – see notice boards for full details:

- Club caps (with or without swimmer's name)
- Club polo shirts (with swimmer's name)
- Club tracksuits (with or without swimmer's name)

## **12. Competition and Galas**

Competition is part of the Club's life. Many swimmers in the Club will choose to compete in events and meets of various kinds. Competing is one aspect of developing a swimmer's potential, and the progress that comes only from competition is enormously rewarding.

Young swimmers new to competition are given the support and encouragement that is aimed at making their participation an enjoyable and exciting experience.

Procedures for entry to competitions can at first, seem confusing. This section of the hand book aims to explain the subject. In addition of course, any Committee member, coach or 'seasoned' Club member will be happy to help.

Because the Club views competition as an aspect of training, it is part and parcel of the Club membership, and so *when picked to represent the Club, swimmers are expected to make themselves available*. Parents are asked for their co-operation in helping to make their son or daughter available to compete.

There are three basic types of swimming competition:

- Championship Meets (sometimes classified as Open Meets)
- Open Galas
- Inter-club Galas

The official Club fixture list is available to see on the notice boards at all training venues and on the Club website. This shows all the events which are being supported by the Club in the current season. The following information will explain what the type of meet is about and how to go about entering.

### **Championship Meets**

Apart from International events, there are various levels of Championship Meets in which the Club competes, including:

- Club Championships
- Bucks County Championships
- ASA South East Region Championships
- ASA National, Youth and Bagcats Championships

**Club Championships** are usually held toward the end of the year, depending upon other Club commitments. All swimmers are encouraged to participate in the Club Championships and for many it will be the first opportunity to compete and start a record of personal bests.

**Buckinghamshire County Championships** are usually held in February/March each year with the age of the swimmer being counted as their age on the last day of the Championships.

**ASA South East Region Championships** take place at either Aldershot or Crawley in the Open, Junior, Youth and Age-Group categories. Details can be found at the ASA South East Region website at [www.southeastswimming.org](http://www.southeastswimming.org)

**ASA National Championships** also take place at various stages throughout the year. During July, the National Long Course Championships take place in Manchester. This competition is for the country's top senior swimmers. At the end of July and beginning of August, the Age-Group and Youth Championships take place at Ponds Forge International Sports Centre in Sheffield. Every year Wycombe District Swimming Club sends a number of Age-Group and Youth swimmers to these Championships. Qualifying times for these competitions are very demanding, and for any swimmer to reach them is an achievement in itself. These qualifying times are displayed on the notice boards, and both long-course and short-course times are given. Converted times are not allowed to be used for the 'Nationals' and only long-course times are seeded, so for swimmers aiming for National qualifying times it is particularly important to enter long-course meets throughout the year. All times achieved at the 'Nationals' are entered onto the Club, County and National rankings.

### Open Meets

Open Meets take place at many venues around the country and throughout the year. Meets may be truly open and accept swimmers of any standard, or they may be 'graded' by the use of upper and/or lower cut-off times. Nationally there are changes in the way Open Meets are organised, indeed you may have noticed the term 'Licensed' replacing 'Designated'. In the future all meets will be licensed at different levels but for the time being the most common types of Meet on our Wycombe District Swimming Club fixture list are:

- B/C Grade Meets
- Licensed (formerly Designated) Meet

**B/C Grade Meets** are the usual starting point for newly competitive swimmers. Entries are only accepted from swimmers who have not yet swum faster than the cut-off times set for each competition. If, at the competition, you then do swim faster than the cut-off time you will not normally be eligible to win any trophies or medals for that swim, but you will receive a 'speeding ticket'! In the future these meets will probably become 'Licensed Level 3' – watch the notice boards for details.

**Licensed Meets** have replaced the old 'Designated' and A-Grade meets. Licensing is currently seen at two levels: Level 2 meets have both lower consideration times (similar to qualifying times) and upper cut-off times. Times achieved at these meets can be used for entry to both South East Region and National Championships. Level 1 meets usually only have consideration times, which are often at

a level similar to South East Region qualifying times. Please read Open Meet details carefully for specific entry criteria for that particular meet.

All Open Meets have age restrictions for the swimmers entering, and in general swimmers need to be at least nine years old, often ten, before they are able to enter this type of competition.

Most Open Meet organisers receive more entries for their competitions than they are able to accept, and a number of different methods are used to restrict the number of swimmers; for example:

- First come, first served
- Cut-off times

**First come, first served** restrictions are self explanatory. These meets can fill up extremely quickly – within days of entry forms being available, in some cases! The advantage of this method is that a swimmer whose entry is accepted will have been accepted for all the events which they entered. It is also useful for those who have not swum an event for a long time and so whose entry time is slow but does not reflect the time which they are likely to swim at this competition.

**Cut-off times** would most usually involve the rejection of the slowest entries for each event. This means that an individual swimmer may have some of their entries accepted and others rejected.

In all cases, when entries to open meets are rejected the entry fee is refunded to the swimmer involved.

For all Open Meet entries, swimmers should talk to their coach before filling in their form, to decide how many and which events to enter.

### **13. Ten Points for Survival in Swimming**

1. Do not compare your performances with those of other swimmers in the squad. Set your own goals, preferably in consultation with your coach.
2. Do not swim when you are ill BUT do not be ill too often! Do not confuse being stiff, sore and generally tired with illness and don't use illness as an excuse for not doing something you don't like.
3. It will be natural to discuss your child's performance, do not overdo it – no post-mortems please; it's fun, not a punishment. Let the coaches do the discussing.
4. Swimmers need family backing as does the Club – why not ask what you can do to help? It's more fun once you are involved and your help is needed throughout your child's membership.
5. Swimmers have to swim unsociable hours. Please accept this and do not block your child's progress because of it – some sunrises can be spectacular! Any National Age-Group swimmer has to get up early.
6. Swimmers must have a good sensible diet and plenty of sleep. They need your help in order to be disciplined in these! Many fourteen year olds seem to taste freedom and fall by the wayside – please help!
7. The Club's policy is to produce competent young swimmers (under fourteen) BUT not to push them to great things at this stage. A talented under-twelve will not be pushed, but allowed to

progress. The main aim is an excellent 400m Freestyle and 200m Individual Medley by the age of thirteen years. Once the swimmer reaches fourteen years old, more pressure may be applied BUT remember that girls are now 20+ at National level and the men are 22+, and often do not peak until they are in their mid-twenties.

8. Also remember that both swimmers and their parents require patience and persistence, and that young swimmers improve at varying rates. Like climbing steps, a sudden upwards movement may be followed by a levelling off. A swimmer may 'plateau' for some time and then suddenly take off again.
9. The child's progress, growth etc need to be recorded. This is useful information and will prove to be very valuable. Please help with this and back your child.
10. Please have confidence in the knowledge and experience of your child's coach and allow him or her some freedom. Do not be too critical! Be patient...enjoy the sport because that's what it is...and it is a SPORT FOR LIFE!