



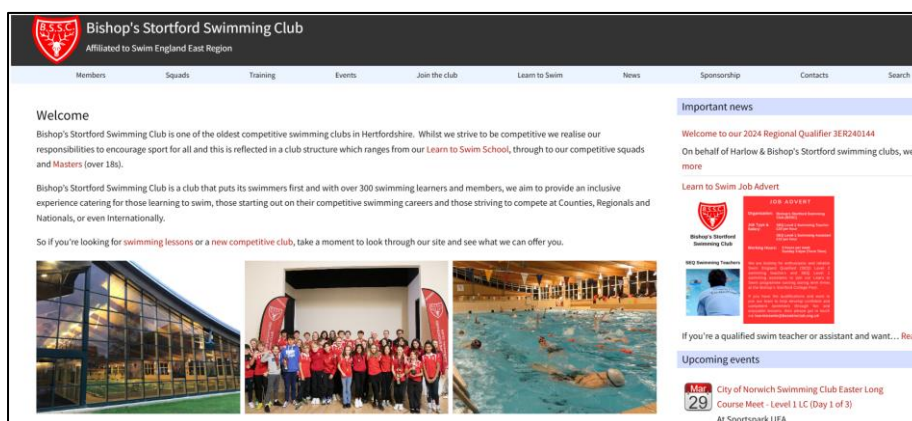
A Parents' Guide to Swimming!

Welcome to Bishop's Stortford Swimming Club. If you are new to the world of swimming, it can be bewildering to say the least! Hopefully this will help answer a few of your questions now or in the months ahead!

There are many people you can ask who have done it all before. First point of contact is your squad coordinator and the most up to date list of coordinators can be found on our [website](#). They should have been copied into your initial welcome emails. If they cannot answer your question, they will know somebody who can. Some of your fellow parents may also have older swimmers, so they are a fantastic source of help and information!

BSSC website

The BSSC website (www.bsswimclub.org) contains a wealth of information and will be able to answer many of the questions you may have.



Make sure to take a look at:

- 'Squads' tab – details about our coaches, club captains, squad structure, squad criteria and squad coordinators.
- 'Training' tab – information on regular training session times as well as news on cancelled sessions and school holiday sessions.
- 'Events' tab – calendar of meets that the Club will attend, and which squads will attend them, as well as Club Championships and meets arranged by us.

Social media and communications

Key communications from the club and our newsletter will be shared via the main contact email you have provided. However, as the season goes on we share lots of other information via our social media pages. You can follow BSSC on:

- BBSC Members Only Facebook group
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1823296997916897>
- Bishop's Stortford Swimming Club Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/BSSwimClub1>
- X/Twitter <https://twitter.com/bsswimclub1>
- Instagram @bsscswimmingclub

We love sharing the successes of our swimmers, so will be posting celebrations across all of our BSSC social media channels, as well as sharing with other relevant media, for example local newspapers. To allow us to use your child's photo in these celebrations, **please make sure you have given photo consent**. BSSC adheres to strict Swim England social media guidelines so rest assured that photos will be appropriately taken and shared.

Swim England membership

On becoming a member of BSSC (both swimmers and associated members) you also became a member of Swim England. Your details are held on a database, which in the swimmer's case is used to keep a record of their swimming times. For associated members, membership is necessary to volunteer within the Club, or to become an Official.

It is vitally important that you do not hide your details on the database as your swimmer's details need to be found when they are entered in swim meets and galas. Please register with [Swim England Online Membership](#) where you can check that all your details are correct and that you have not hidden your details.

Swim Manager

By now, you should have received your log in details for Swim Manager (<https://bishopsstortford.swimmanager.co.uk/>). It is very important that you set up your account either using the website, or the app. The web option has more functionality available, but the app is quick and easy to use. You can use Swim Manager to:

Enter meets

When entries to a meet open, you'll receive an email from the Competitions team including a link to Swim Manager. Follow the link, and each meet will contain details of venue, dates, schedule etc (web version only, not the app). Additional details can always be found in our website Event Calendar. Click on 'Enter meet' to see which races your swimmer is eligible to enter, check the box beside the races they want to do, and submit. This can't be edited once submitted, and an invoice will be raised for the race/s entered, so do check carefully before submitting. Any issues with meet entry, please email our competitions team on competitions@bsswimclub.org.uk

For the younger swimmers, our coaches will make suggestions on which races they should choose, but if you have any questions please do chat to your coach. Meets are typically one or two days in length and each day is split into sessions. Multiple events (e.g. Girls 50m Freestyle, Boys 100m IM) happen within each session and a rough rule is to select no more than 2-3 events per session and two sessions per day. Swimmers get tired when competing and will not achieve their best times if they enter too many events. The club hosting the meet will publish a schedule of events so you can see which events happen in which session when making your selection – the link will be in Swim Manager or on the [Events](#) calendar on our website.

A full list of meets we are entering and the link to Swim Manager can be found on the [Fixtures](#) page.

Volunteer for roles

You can also sign up to help at Club meets using Swim Manager (web version). Log in, and go to 'Events'. A list of upcoming Club events will appear; click on the Jobs button to view all the roles available, and click 'Sign Up' if you see something you fancy. Our club heavily relies on volunteers to run our events, so please consider helping – you'll often get the best view in the house (i.e. poolside) if you do!

Track your child's times and personal bests

Go to 'Members' and select your child. Click on the 'Times' or 'Personal Best' tabs to view their PBs, or track their performance by each race over the current or previous seasons.

Our coaches

In March 2024 our new coaching team arrived and details on them can be found on our [website](#).

















Your swimmer: club and training kit

The **Club kit** is supplied by [Stortford Sports Supplies](#) and should be ordered via their website. They supply BSSC hats (which can be personalised with your child's name), polo tops, tracksuit tops, hoodies, rucksacks, onesies as well as swimming costumes/trunks, goggles and training kit.

When you start we recommend you buy a club hat for them to use at training and meets (an unnamed hat is fine to start with and will arrive quicker) and a named club polo shirt that they will wear poolside at meets and galas, along with black bottoms (shorts, joggers or leggings). Named club hats are nice to have but tend to be bulk ordered a few times each season, so you could be waiting a while for them to arrive. A named club rucksack will be useful at meets as it is easy to get bags confused in the poolside chaos. Make sure to buy some comfortable goggles for everyday training, and keep the racing goggles for meets (don't forget to try them out ... more below). Basic swimming costumes and trunks are fine for training and early days of competing.

Training kit

Training kit varies by squad, so it is best to check with the Coach what is needed if your welcome email has not specified it already. As a minimum, your swimmer will need a kick board, pull buoy and fins, all named and stored in a mesh bag that they will bring to training each time, along with their water bottle.

SQUAD	KICKBOARD	PULLBUOY	FINS	ANKLE BAND	HAND PADDLES	SWIM PARACHUTE
Rookies						
Juniors B & C						
Juniors A						
Age Group Competitive Age Group Performance Senior Competitive Senior Performance						
Masters						

The picture on the left shows the requirements for the 2024-25 season, but please visit the [club kit](#) page for more details of specific training kit.

Racing Suits and Goggles

Most swimmers, as they get older and more experienced, will want to wear a racing suit when they compete, rather than the basic swimming suit they use in training. I'm afraid the first time you buy one you will gasp at the cost, so it is best to try and keep away from making that purchase as long as possible if they are in the younger squads. They are fine to compete in a basic swimming costume of any colour, and makes like Speedo, Arena and Funkita (a firm favourite with the older female swimmers) do lovely costumes. Make sure they are definitely wanting to continue with swimming before progressing to buying competition kneesuits/skins (girls) or jammers (boys).

Racing suits do come in various specifications and cover a very wide price range. Joyce and Claire at [Stortford Sports Supplies](#) are excellent and will advise you if you are new to racing costumes. Email them via their website and they will allow you to try on a variety of costumes before making a purchase. They can often be found as the swim shop at local meets, so check their homepage for details of meets they are attending.

A plea – do not be tempted to buy large for growth! If you do, they will not work as they should and be a waste of money. A racing costume should be very tight and take a long time to get into – ask the older swimmers just how long, especially the girls!

Racing goggles are smaller, sit into the eye socket more and of course, cost more than standard goggles! They are not recommended for regular training and younger swimmers don't need them for meets, but there will come a time when they start requesting them. Remember to get your swimmer to test new racing goggles with some dives and turns before competing, as we too often see younger swimmers with goggles round their nose, mouth or necks at meets who then get disqualified when they try to move them.

Your swimmer: training attendance and behaviour

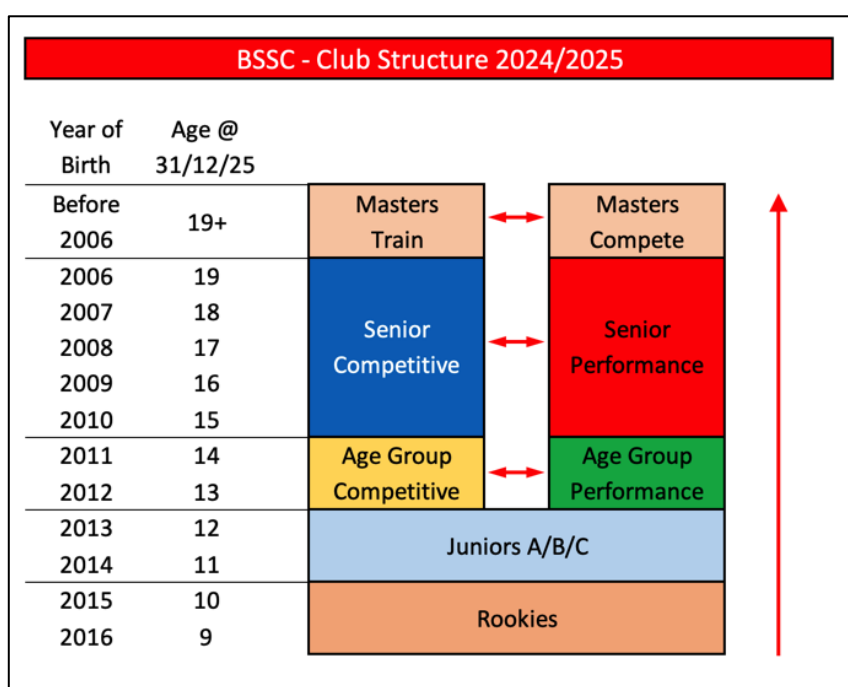
As you join the club you and your swimmer will be asked to sign codes of conduct. We have high expectations on how our swimmers behave at training and during competitions, how they interact with our coaching staff and volunteers and the respect they should have for each other. We also expect our parents to behave appropriately and support their swimmers in their own conduct. We also know you have expectations from us and our promise to you is outlined in the documents. If you have any concerns please contact our welfare officer on welfare@bsswimclub.org.uk

We offer multiple training sessions for every squad and our coaches would love you to attend them all as that is the best way to progress – swimming seems to be like no other sport in the hours you need to put in to improve! However, we do understand that children lead busy lives and may have other competing interests. For older faster swimmers who are joining our more competitive squads such as Elites or National, make sure you have read the attendance expectation for that squad (e.g. attending all but two of the offered sessions every week) outlined in the squad criteria (see next section).

Your swimmer: squad structure

BSSC's squad structure takes into account three main factors when determining squad placements: age, swimming times and attendance. Swimmers are primarily grouped by the calendar year in which they were born, and by their times against a target list for that age within each squad. The more competitive squads (e.g. Age Group and Senior Performance) will have expectations around weekly attendance that a swimmer must commit to.

The main squad movements take place once a year, prior to each new season in September. Times achieved are reviewed after the last meet on the summer schedule, and any changes are communicated prior to training resuming in August/September. Throughout each season, swimmers can request to move squads if they can't meet the attendance expectation set for their squad, or swimmers will be offered a new squad as they achieve. The squad structure for the 2024/25 season is shown below:



You can find the latest Squad structure and full criteria, including attendance expectations [here](#).

Your swimmer: meets and galas

Swimmers can compete in open meets and galas from the age of nine.

There are many different competitions available to our swimmers, but they typically fall into a few categories:

- Open Meets, Team Galas, Counties, Regionals & Nationals
- Club Championships
- BSSC Level 2/3 Open Meets: run by our club that are open for other clubs to join
- BSSC Level 4 Meets: run by our club that are only for our club members

Open Meets

Open Meets are run by other clubs that we send groups of swimmers to attend.

Our coaches decide which Open meets each squad will attend throughout a season (Sept-July); head coach Jamie will send out a schedule in advance so you can mark dates in your diaries and they are also found on the [Events calendar](#) page of our website. Not every squad attends each meet as some are aimed at older, faster swimmers.

You will receive emails from our competitions team inviting you to submit entries via Swim Manager. Meets can fill up quickly, so it's important to submit in plenty of time. Sometimes plans have to change, so keep an eye on emails from the Club regarding any updates or changes to meets.

To be able to swim an event in many of the licensed Open Meets that we attend, your child must have a registered time. This can be achieved in Club Championships or the Level 4 meets organised by the Club.

Team Galas: Peanuts League and Arena Swimming League

The Hertfordshire Peanuts League is a series of three galas run in May, June and July each year, and is a mix of individual events and relays in which we compete against other teams in Herts. We are currently in the First Division so it is a tough but fun competition for our younger swimmers (aged 9-12 years). They are usually advised on the night as to which events they will be competing in.

In galas, the swimmers swim for their team, not as individuals.

If your child is chosen to swim, see it as an honour for them to be able to compete for their Club. Please don't see it as a waste of time if your child is only chosen to swim one race in the relay team. We have all been there and every race is good experience. Galas are fantastic occasions where the comradery of the swimmers (and of the cheering parents in the gallery) comes to the fore. You will leave with ringing ears!

We are also members of the Arena Swimming League, which is the premier swimming league competition in England and Wales, now in its 50th year, where nearly 400 teams and over 16,000 swimmers compete in team relays and individual events across six leagues. We compete in the London League and select a squad of swimmers (age 10 to 18+ years for individual events, age 9 for relays only) to attend three galas every October, November and December.

Counties

The first major competition your swimmer will try to qualify for will be [Swim Herts](#) County Championships, or 'Counties' as they are more commonly referred to, which are held over three weekends in January/February each year. For our younger swimmers their first County time is a Big Deal. There are event consideration and qualification times for each age group/gender which must be achieved within the qualification period.

Read the [BSSC Brief Guide to Counties](#) for more information.

Regionals

As they progress, your swimmer will aspire to reach 'Regionals'. The [Swim England East Region](#) Long Course (50m) Championships are usually held over the two May bank holiday weekends. Typically the older age groups compete on the first weekend and the younger at half term. Again, there are event qualification times for each age group/gender which need to be achieved in the allocated window at the right level of meet.

Early November, the Swim England East Region will also hold their Short Course (25m) Winter Championships. This is aimed at older swimmers with single event qualification times for each gender only, which must be achieved within the qualification period at the right level of meet.

Nationals

'Nationals' are what our older swimmers aspire to! The most auspicious is the [British Swimming](#) National Championships held in April, where our swimmers can compete with Team GB athletes such as Adam Peaty, Duncan Scott, Anna Hopkin and Molly Renshaw. Single event qualification times are set for each gender only, there are no separate age groups and times must have been achieved in the specified window and at the right level meet.

The British Summer Championships and Swim England National Summer Meet are held each July/August. These are by invitation only, based on the long course times (50m pool) achieved during the qualification window which is set from approx. 10th March to 31st May. The top 28 swimmers in each age grouping for each discipline/distance in Great Britain are invited to the British Summer Championships and the next set of eligible swimmers (in 2024 around 30 swimmers) are invited to English, Scottish or Welsh National Meets depending on their Nationality choice.

The Swim England National Winter Short Course (25m) Championships are held in December, and qualification times are typically split into two clusters for each gender (16 & Under, 17+ years).

Club Championships and Club Meets

BSSC holds an annual Club Championships, where members can compete in multiple events against their training partners to be the champions for that season. Presentations are then made at a separate celebration evening.

During each season we may also run Level 4 meets at the College pool that are open only to our club members. These give additional opportunities for our swimmers to gain times in events they may not have swum before or not swum for many months.

When we have enough officials and volunteers regularly helping at our club, we also run external Level 3 Open Meets which other clubs can attend. These have been run at Borehamwood and Harlow (25m) and Luton (50m) pools and are great fund raising opportunities for the club.

Swimmingresults.org

When your child starts to compete, their times will be logged on the British Swimming database (follow this link [Swimmers Best Times](#)). Here you can follow your swimmer's progress through the years and look at their ranking within the Club, County, Region and Country.

To find your swimmer's times:

- Visit [Swimmingresults.org](#)
- Rankings/Individual best times – enter your swimmer's name to view their Personal Best times
- Rankings/Event Rankings allows you to see the ranked position of swims swum in the last 12 months, and can be filtered by course, stroke, age, gender, region, county and club

You can find more information in the [BSSC Guide to Competitions](#).

Volunteering to help

As with many of the clubs your child may be involved in, ours is managed by a team of volunteers. We rely on the generosity of members to give up their valuable spare time. We are always looking for new people to join the team - see <http://bsswimclub.org.uk/volunteering/>

However little time you can spare, please consider helping. It is a fantastic way to feel more involved in your Child's sport and make new friends along the way. If swimming is your child's passion you will find yourself in many swimming pool galleries over the years to come!

There are various ways you can help:

Become a Committee member

The biggest group of regular volunteers is the committee, ideally made up of about 15 members, who meet for two hours once per month. There are various positions such as Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, Team Manager, Workforce Co-ordinator, Membership and Welfare, to name but a few. The committee are elected every year at the Annual General Meeting in June and we are always looking for new members to bring fresh eyes and ideas to how we operate and manage the club.

Become a Team Manager

Each time we attend a competition, we have to have a certain number of qualified individuals, Team Managers, poolside with our swimmers in addition to our coaches. Swim England have defined the ratio of Team Managers to swimmers and we always need more parents to become Team Managers. It's a nice role where you get to be with the swimmers for a session and you will often have the best view of the races. You will need a Swim England DBS check (the Welfare Officer of the club will initiate this for you) and you will need to attend a Swim England Safeguarding Course (typically a 3 hour online course) and a Team Managers course (2.5 hours online). To be poolside with swimmers you only need to have the TM1 qualification, but if you'd like to get involved in running trips away, then the TM2 qualification covers nights away and trips abroad. As a club we are affiliated with the Swim England East Region and attend the TM workshops they hold – more info can be found [here](#).

Help at an event

We run our own licensed Open meets, club nights and Club Championships and need a lot of help on the day to make these happen (selling tickets on the door, marshalling swimmers, selling raffle tickets, distributing cold drinks to officials and coaches, giving out medals). You will have a ringside position to watch the action – and volunteers get in for free!

Ad hoc help

You don't have to commit to joining the Committee; an hour or two of your time as and when is also greatly appreciated. You could write an article about competition results for the local paper, donate or source raffle prizes, help with a funding application, enter times into our systems during a meet, or interview swimmers for the newsletter.

Train as a Technical Official (person in white!)

We can't run our own meets, or send our swimmers to meets run by other clubs without the help of our qualified officials. Many of our current officials have older swimmers and will be leaving the club soon, so it is important for us to get new parents qualified. The first step to becoming a swimming Official is by completing Swim England's Judge 1 Online Learning Theory [course](#). The course costs £20 and consists of eight short modules, followed by mentored poolside practice that can be arranged locally by our club. Once you are qualified, you can volunteer to officiate at any meet

including Counties, Regionals and even Nationals! It's a great way of spending time poolside whilst your swimmer is competing and you even get fed on the day!

If you would be interested in working towards this qualification please explore the course [link](#) and email our officials coordinator for more information: officials@bsswimclub.org.uk

Sign up via Swim Manager

You can sign up to help at Meets via Swim Manager (web version). Go to Events, then Jobs, then you can see all the roles available and what they involve. If you're unsure, ask the Competitions team or your squad coordinator for more information.

Useful documents and contacts

Visit the [Members section](#) of the Club website to find:

- BSSC Guide to Competitions
- Demystifying DQ codes
- BSSC Guide to Counties / Regionals / Nationals
- BSSC Guides to Arena League & Peanuts

BSSC **key contacts** are:

- Jamie McLaughlin, Head Coach: headcoach@bsswimclub.org.uk
- Joe Collins, Assistant Coach: Assistant.coach@bsswimclub.org.uk
- Welfare Officer: welfare@bsswimclub.org.uk
- Competitions Team: competitions@bsswimclub.org.uk
- Membership Secretary: membership@bsswimclub.org.uk
- Club Secretary: secretary@bsswimclub.org.uk
- Communications Team: comms@bsswimclub.org.uk
- Treasurer: treasurer@bsswimclub.org.uk

Finally...

Swimming will hopefully become a way of life for your child. Through swimming they will learn self-discipline, patience, empathy for others, how to win and very importantly how to lose. They will make friends for life – both within the Club and with swimmers in other Clubs whom they will compete against through the years.

We hope you and your child will have many happy and successful years with BSSC!