



# WELCOME TO THE WITHAM DOLPHINS SWIMMING CLUB

**Dive In. Train Hard. Swim Proud.**

Welcome to Witham Dolphins Swimming Club, established in 1974 – a friendly, inclusive, and ambitious volunteer-run club where swimmers of all ages and abilities can thrive. When joining a competitive club, some of the rules, forms, dates, events, etc. can be a bit daunting, but we hope we have covered all of these subjects within this pack. However, if you have any questions please do not hesitate to speak to someone at the club who will be glad to give further details.

Please don't feel overwhelmed by the amount of information within this pack – not all of the details will be relevant to you when you first join the club. We hope that the information within this pack will be something that you can refer to as and when you need to.

[www.witham-dolphins.org.uk](http://www.witham-dolphins.org.uk)





## **ABOUT US**

Witham Dolphins is a community-focused swimming club dedicated to developing confident swimmers and strong team spirit. Our experienced coaching team provides structured training in a safe and encouraging environment.

### **We believe in:**

- Building confidence in and out of the water
- Encouraging personal progress at every level
- Promoting teamwork, discipline, and sportsmanship

We are a competitive club with four squads.

- Development Squad
- Club Squad
- A Squad
- Masters



Coaching is led by Karen, our head coach and A Squad lead Coach, and supported by Julie, our Development Squad lead coach, Rachel and Rowena, our joint Club Squad lead coaches, David our Masters lead coach, as well as an experienced team of dedicated coaches. All of our lead coaches are Swim England trained and qualified. Alongside our lead coaches, we have a great team of volunteer coaches ensuring our swimmers are safe, trained to a high standard and able to compete.

Movements between squads will be based upon achieving the relevant criteria but also attendance, maturity and behaviour.

## **WHAT WE OFFER**

### **Development Squad**

**Coach:** Julie Franks

Congratulations to your swimmer for meeting the criteria to join our swimming club.

The objective of this squad is to develop your child's skills and help them to gain confidence in competitions. We take children who can swim all four strokes legally and tweak their strokes, introduce skills and criteria to develop as competitive swimmers.

Swimmers are split into 6 lanes in the main pool on Monday's and 3 lanes in the leisure pool on Sundays. We keep the lane allocation fluid to enable us to work on specific requirements across strokes and skills as needed.

Attendance is required at both sessions to ensure you child gets the full rounded training.

### **Club Squad**

**Coach:** Rachel Banning and Rowena deBeligny

Focused coaching designed to refine technique, build stamina, and develop racing skills, helping swimmers progress towards achieving County qualifying times. Movement from Development Squad to Club Squad is discussed between the coaching team. Swimmers must be able to swim all four strokes to a competitive standard consistently.



## A Squad

**Coach:** Karen Lacey

Movement from Club Squad to A Squad is only considered once swimmers achieve county times. A Squad provides high-level training for swimmers competing at county, regional and national levels.

## Masters

Opportunities for adults to stay fit, improve technique, or compete.

## Comittee and Volunteers

The Witham Dolphins owes a great deal of thanks to those people who form our committee. All members of the committee are volunteers and give a huge amount of their time to the smooth running of the club.

A full list of the team can be seen at [www.witham-dolphins.org.uk/our-team](http://www.witham-dolphins.org.uk/our-team)

If you are interested in becoming a member of our committee, please do not hesitate to contact our chairperson, who will be able to talk to you about some of the tasks the committee undertakes.

Our club captains are selected each year by our swimmers and presented at our annual awards evening. They are chosen based on their attitude to club life and towards helping others in the swimming journey. They are very often at competitions and are always willing to lend a helping hand to other members of the club.

Current captains can be found at [www.witham-dolphins.org.uk/our-team](http://www.witham-dolphins.org.uk/our-team)

At training, parents and carers are welcome to stay for the duration of training. However, to minimise poolside noise and distraction, they are asked to spectate from either of the two spectator areas and not on poolside. Please be reminded that during training sessions the Coach must concentrate on the swimmers. If you have questions for the Coach about your individual swimmers, you can arrange a mutually convenient time to speak outside of training times. General information is published regularly in the newsletter, and the club will endeavour to hold regular parents' information sessions throughout the year, when deemed necessary by either the coaching team or the Executive Committee. During training, parents and carers are asked to leave the coaching, management and constructive criticisms of swimmers to the Coach, and / or Club officials as appropriate.

## TRAINING SESSIONS

The Club's training program runs from late August until the end of July.

Our sessions run throughout the week at Witham Leisure Centre, Spinks Lane.

CURRENT TIMETABLE		Development Squad	Club Squad	A Squad Pathway	A Squad	Masters
Monday	06:00-07:15				X	
	17:15-18:15	X				
	18:15-19:15		X	X		
Tuesday	06:00-07:15			X	X	
	18:10-19:40				X	
Wednesday	18:40-20:10			X	X	
	20:10-21:10					X
Thursday	18:10-20:10				X*	
Friday	06:00-07:15				X	
	18:40-19:40		X	X		
	19:45-20:45					X
Sunday <i>Small pool</i>	14:30-16:30			X	X	
	16:30-18:00		X			
	16:45-17:45	X				

\*Regional swimmers finish 30mins later on Thursday at 8.10pm



## KIT

Children joining Dolphins are asked to bring a pull buoy, fins, goggles, and a water bottle. As swimmers progress through the club, they may also need hand paddles and a snorkel, but please wait until advised before purchasing these items.

There is no need to buy expensive equipment – any brand is absolutely fine. Swimmers grow quickly and tend to get through kit faster than expected, so we recommend keeping things practical and affordable.

For girls, a standard swimming costume is perfectly suitable. Some swimmers choose to wear racing suits for competitions, but these are not essential and can be expensive. If you do decide to purchase one, it's often worth waiting for sales.

The boys must wear tight-fitting jammer shorts that finish just above the knee. Again, there is no need to spend large amounts on these, do shop around in the sales.

### ALL SQUADS

What your child will need for training is as follows:

- Swimming Costume/Jammers
- Goggles plus spare (essential)
- 2 x Swimming hats inc squad hat
- Drink bottle (500ml minimum)
- Mesh swim bag
- Kick board
- Pull buoy
- Short blade fins

### CLUB & A SQUAD

As above plus:

- Hand paddles
- Snorkel

Coaches can advise on type and brand

What your child will need for competing is as follows:

- 2 x Swimming Costume/Jammers
  - 2 x Swimming hats inc Competition hat
  - 2 x Swimming Goggles
  - Towel
  - Dry Clothing
  - Drink bottle (500ml minimum)
  - Food for energy between events. Nut free snacks to last the whole session (no fizzy drink or sweets)
- All in a small drawstring bag, as most galas are restricted on space per club

Also to consider

- Leave early to get to pool on time
- No Phones on poolside
- Money for a locker

*Coming Soon!*  
Second hand kit sale. If you have any kit you no longer need please bring to training. Thank you!

All other optional club kit is held with Red Sportswear at

[www.redsportswear.co.uk/witham-dolphins-swimming-club](http://www.redsportswear.co.uk/witham-dolphins-swimming-club)





## **COMPETITIONS & EVENTS**

Witham Dolphins is a competitive club and your children are encouraged to compete and join in with the galas available to them. Children will not move up through the club if they are not competing. There are different types of galas available and it can seem daunting but please do ask if unsure of your child's eligibility. Swimmers can start competing as long as they are 9 years of age on the day of the gala (some entry level events allow 8 year olds).

### **Development squad**

It is important that each swimmer trains and competes at different events so that they train their mind and body to experience the different events. Every swimmer is required to enter galas. We expect all swimmers to enter a gala as soon as possible. As we often have short time frames to enter, there isn't always time to speak with a coach ahead of entering. Unless a group email is received advising that the gala isn't ideal for development squad, we would be expecting swimmers to compete in the following events;

- 1) 50m races free and back, - breast and fly only when your coach believes you are legal
- 2) 100m races favourite stroke(s) when your coach believes you are ready
- 3) Longer distances will be mainly for club squad and above but don't hold back. If you want to have a go, go for it!

Swimmers also have the opportunity to take part in:

• **ESSEX MINI LEAGUE (BY INVITATION)** - <http://s630071153.websitehome.co.uk/eml/>

Essex Mini League is a fun, team-based gala competition and is usually aimed at our younger swimmers, although many of our older swimmers also take part and are fantastic at supporting and encouraging the younger members of the team. Invitations are sent out by Ruth, our Welfare Officer, and participation is by invite only.

At these events, Dolphins compete against other local swimming clubs to earn points. Points are awarded based on finishing positions, with first place receiving the highest number of points and every swimmer contributing towards the club's overall score. Every race matters, and all participants help the team.

Swimmers will not usually know which races they are competing in until they arrive at the event. Races are typically 50m events and relays, with swimmers competing in their age categories. However, as Dolphins is a smaller club, swimmers may sometimes be asked to compete in an older age group.

These galas are always hugely enjoyed by the swimmers. They are friendly, supportive, and have a brilliant team atmosphere. Mini League events are also shorter than many traditional galas, usually lasting around two hours. Although swimmers may leave once they have completed their races, they are encouraged to stay until the end to cheer on their teammates and support the club.

For parents, our top tips are to bring a pen so you can keep track of your swimmer's races, and pack plenty of snacks and drinks for poolside. There are always several Dolphins Team Managers and coaches on hand to make sure every swimmer is in the right place at the right time.



• **ESSEX SWIMMING LEAGUE (BY INVITATION)** - <http://wp.essexswimleague.org.uk/>

The Essex Swimming League (ESL) is an annual swimming competition organised between Essex-based clubs. This league works in a similar way to Mini League, but with a greater focus on performance and race times. The fastest swimmers in each age category are selected to represent the club, usually swimming the stroke and event they perform best in. Participation is from Ryan our ESL co-ordinator by invite only. Ryan selects the fastest swimmers to attend these galas. It is a team event incorporating swimmers from Development, Club and A Squads. If you receive an invitation, please try to attend. Either way, please respond to Ryan ASAP so that he can build the team and allocate races.

The aim of the league is to promote competitive swimming and team participation through the coordination of an annual swimming competition. This usually takes place between the months of September and June each year. Each season consists of four galas with each individual gala result contributing to an overall final league position.

Unlike Mini League, which focuses on team participation and points, this competition is much more time-focused, with swimmers aiming to achieve the fastest possible performances for the club. It provides a fantastic opportunity for swimmers to compete at a higher level while still enjoying the supportive Dolphins team atmosphere.

• **FRIENDLY CLUB GALAS**

These are galas organised by individual swimming clubs throughout the year. Dolphins will send out an email with details of the event, and parents can then log into Club Organiser to check whether their swimmer is eligible to enter. Entries are made individually, and parents pay for the races their child would like to swim.

Although Dolphins attends these galas as a club, swimmers compete as individuals rather than for team points. Swimmers are seeded into heats with others of the same gender who have similar entry times, rather than strictly by age. This means a swimmer may win their heat but not place overall in the event – or equally, they may not win their heat but still achieve a high overall placing.

These galas are excellent opportunities for swimmers to achieve new Personal Best (PB) times and work towards county qualifying times. Witham Dolphins also hosts its own gala each year, the Festival of Swimming, which is always a fun and popular event. Swimmers are expected to support and attend this gala where possible.

Some galas require swimmers to already have an official entry time for an event. Dolphins regularly runs timed swims during training sessions to help establish estimated race times, but if you are unsure about eligibility or suitable entry times, please speak to one of the coaches before entering.

Certain galas may also have minimum or maximum qualifying times. Thankfully, Club Organiser will usually only display the events your swimmer is eligible to enter, making the process much easier.

Once swimmers have completed all of their races, they are free to leave the event, provided they inform a coach or team manager before departing. It is also worth noting that many galas take place across an entire weekend and are split into four separate sessions: Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon. Events are spread across these sessions, so swimmers should not expect all races of the same distance or stroke to take place together.



## · LARGER COMPETITIONS

### Counties

The Essex Swimming County Championships bring together the county's fastest swimmers for long-course racing at the London Aquatics Centre, London. Held across several weekends each January and February, the event showcases rising talent, tough qualifying standards, and exciting finals.

### Regionals

The East Regional Swimming Championships are a long-course competition bringing together top swimmers from Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk. Held across three weekends each spring at venues such as Inspire Luton and UEA Sportspark Norwich, the meet features tough qualifying times and showcases rising regional talent.

### Nationals

The National Swimming Championships in the UK are Aquatics GB's premier annual meet, held each spring in a 50m pool and used as official selection trials for major international competitions. They feature elite British swimmers across all strokes and distances.

## AT COMPETITIONS & GALAS

Please cheer for your swimmers and all the other swimmers in the club. However, calling out to the swimmers while they are on the blocks, focused for their races, distracts both swimmers and officials. Please do not ask time keepers for your child's times immediately after a race. Times are collated and published as soon as possible after each event / meet. Please accept the officials' decision on your child's swim, and discuss any concerns you have about a decision privately with the Coach at the conclusion of the meet.





## · LICENSED MEETS

There are four main categories of swimming gala, as well as two different pool course types. Understanding these can help make the competition pathway a little clearer for both swimmers and parents.

### Levels of Swimming Galas

Swimming galas are grouped into levels based on the standard of competition and swimmer experience. The exact criteria can vary slightly between organisers, but generally the levels are as follows:

#### Level 1

Level 1 galas are the highest standard of competition and are aimed at elite swimmers. These events often attract national and international competitors and usually have very fast qualifying times. They provide opportunities for swimmers to achieve national rankings, qualifying standards, and recognition at the highest level.

#### Level 2

Level 2 galas are still highly competitive but have slightly less demanding qualifying times than Level 1 events. Swimmers attending these galas are typically experienced competitors looking to achieve personal bests, regional qualification times, or continue progressing through the sport.

#### Level 3

Level 3 galas are designed for swimmers who have moved beyond club-level competitions and are building competitive experience. These galas may still have qualifying times or age restrictions, but they are generally more accessible and are ideal for developing confidence and racing skills.

#### Level 4

Level 4 galas are entry-level competitions aimed at swimmers beginning their competitive journey. These events focus on creating a positive, supportive environment where swimmers can gain race experience and confidence. Qualifying times are usually relaxed or not required at all.

### Course Types in Swimming Galas

Swimming competitions also take place in two different pool formats: short course and long course.

#### Short Course (SC)

Short course galas are held in 25-metre pools, which are most commonly indoor pools. Because swimmers complete more turns during races, these events are often faster-paced and place greater emphasis on turns and underwater work.

#### Long Course (LC)

Long course galas are held in 50-metre pools. With fewer turns and longer distances between walls, these races place more emphasis on endurance, pacing, and stroke efficiency. Long course competitions are often associated with higher-level events and championship meets.

Most of the galas that Dolphins attends are short course competitions.

We encourage participation at all levels – from first-time racers to seasoned competitors.

A list of forthcoming events can be found at [www.witham-dolphins.org.uk/events](http://www.witham-dolphins.org.uk/events)



## **MEMBERSHIP FEES**

### **Swim England Annual Membership**

On joining Witham Dolphins you will be asked to make a payment for Swim England membership. You will be told which category is relevant for your swimmer. This can be upgraded at any time if necessary.

Swim England membership fee is charged upon joining, and at our renewal date in January of each year. The fee covers membership to Swim England and all the benefits with that - it is not an insurance policy. Fees and dates can vary slightly: you will be notified by the coaches and committee when fees are due. Please note: the membership fee is not based on an annual rate from the date of joining, it is required when you join and again at renewals in January, for example if you join in September you will pay the full membership fee of either Cat 1 or Cat 2 (whichever is appropriate) for September through to December, and again in January.

The categories are as follows: -

Swim England Category 1 – Club Train - Approx £15

For swimmers that are 7 & 8 years old. As a Club Train member you will be able to compete in low level competitions or an event that has an exemption under Swim England regulations.

Swim England Category 2 – Club Compete - Approx £40

For individuals 9+ who are part of a club and looking to compete in any discipline in open competitions. This membership offers you the benefit of structured competitive pathway at all levels in every discipline

Swim England Category 3 – Club Support - Approx £10

For anyone involved in a club who volunteers or is employed by the club, including committee members, officers, Teachers and Coaches as well as any parent members.

As mentioned above, there is a Swim England fee for each of our volunteers. This is paid for by the club. We include an annual club membership fee alongside the Swim England renewals to cover this and other aspects.

If you have any queries about the categories, please do not hesitate to speak to a member of the committee.

Please note: The club manages all renewals as a batch so there is no need for swimmers or parents to do it themselves.

### **Monthly club fees**

These are dependant on the squad you are in. These will be outlined if you are offered a place at the club.





## **WELFARE**

### **How to Raise a Concern and Safeguarding**

At Witham Dolphins Swimming Club we take safeguarding seriously.

The Club have a set of expectations and behavioural standards as laid down by Swim England and every member, including coaches, volunteers and also parents/guardians of members, are required to adhere to these.

These are known as the Codes of Conducts and copies of these can be found on the link below. If you cannot find what you are looking for on our website then you can email the club Welfare Officer at [welfare@witham-dolphins.org.uk](mailto:welfare@witham-dolphins.org.uk) who will be able to assist you.

[www.witham-dolphins.org.uk/welfare](http://www.witham-dolphins.org.uk/welfare)

## **CLUB CODE OF CONDUCT**

To ensure that swimmers and parents enjoy their time within the Club and to ensure equity, respect and fair play, the Club has a Swimmer and Parent Code of Conduct. Both have to be signed and returned to the Membership Desk or Club Secretary. Both documents clearly explain what is required during training and competitions. We operate an 'open door' policy so if you have any questions please see your squad Representative or the Coach who will always answer any questions you have.

More detailed information can be found at [www.witham-dolphins.org.uk/welfare](http://www.witham-dolphins.org.uk/welfare)

## **CLUB COMMUNITY**

At Witham Dolphins, you're more than just a swimmer – you're part of a family.

We believe swimming should be enjoyable both in and out of the pool, which is why we organise a variety of social events, team activities, and fundraising opportunities throughout the year. These help build friendships, strengthen team spirit, and create lasting memories for swimmers and families alike.

Some of our regular events include:

- Our Annual Winter Ball
- Team-building activities, such as rounders matches at the Summer Picnic
- End-of-term fun swim sessions
- Fundraising events, including quiz nights and other club activities





## VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers play a hugely important role in supporting the club and helping it continue to grow and thrive. We are always looking for additional volunteers, whether for specific committee and poolside roles or simply as club helpers at events and galas.

The types of roles parents undertake are:

Committee positions and deputies  
Officials  
Team Managers  
Coaches


Time Keepers  
and much-needed cake makers!

Having just joined the Development Squad, we hope you and your child will spend many years within the Club.

If you would like to become a volunteer please email  
[info@witham-dolphins.org.uk](mailto:info@witham-dolphins.org.uk)

*We would love to hear from you!*

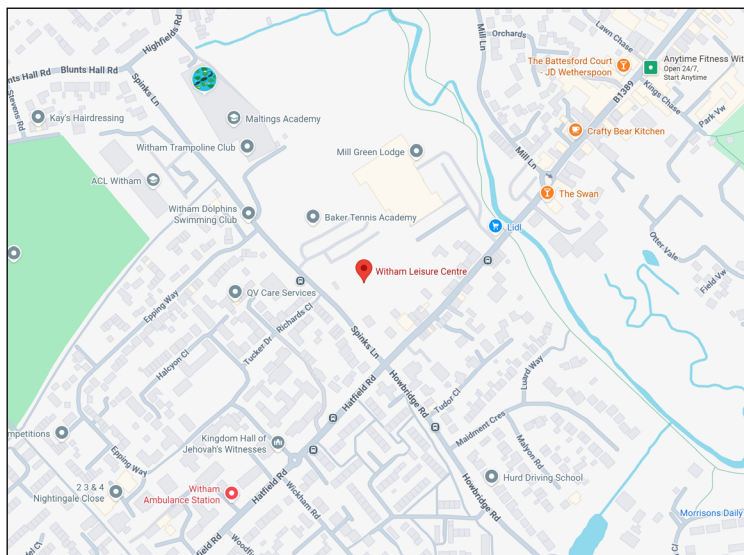
## LOCATION

 Training takes place at Witham Leisure Centre.

Get in Touch

 [info@withamdolphins.co.uk](mailto:info@withamdolphins.co.uk)

 [www.witham-dolphins.org.uk](http://www.witham-dolphins.org.uk)



Follow us on social media for updates, results, and club news.

 Facebook Public - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/703427298627982>

 Facebook Members Only - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/10552061695/>

 Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/withamdolphinssc/>



## WELCOME TO OUR POD!

Witham Dolphins Swimming Club is the perfect place to  
make a splash.

Come swim with us – and be part of something special.