



RSW
SWIMMING

SQUAD HANDBOOK

2026-27

OUR VISION

To be the gold standard in school-based high-performance swimming. An elite, close-knit environment where every athlete is empowered to reach their full athletic potential, forging the discipline, resilience, and character required to succeed.

Updated: July 2026





ABOUT THE ROYAL

Located in the heart of the West Midlands, The Royal offers an outstanding environment for swimmers to develop and thrive. Based at The Royal School Wolverhampton, our programme provides a clear pathway for talented young swimmers from the local area, across the UK, and internationally.

Our environment has supported the development of athletes who have progressed to the very highest levels of the sport, including:

- Olympic and Paralympic champions
- Medal winners at European Junior Championships
- Podium athletes at European Youth Olympic Festivals
- Selections for World, European, and Commonwealth Games
- Progression into Aquatics GB National Centres
- Academic offers from top UK and international universities
- Full scholarships to leading universities in the United States

Swimmers at The Royal benefit from a focused and supportive environment, where training and education work hand in-hand. Boarding opportunities allow athletes from further afield to become part of our school community, though attending The Royal School Wolverhampton is not essential to be part of the programme.

As a state-funded independent school, The Royal School Wolverhampton charges no tuition fees and welcomes applications from both day and boarding pupils.

What We Offer

Our swimming programme is underpinned by the outstanding support of The Royal School Wolverhampton – a partnership that has helped young athletes flourish in both sport and education. We are proud of what our programme provides, constantly evolving to meet the needs of developing swimmers at every stage of their journey.

Swimmers at The Royal benefit from:

- *Professional coaching and athlete support*, with guidance across all areas of development – allowing swimmers to focus fully on their progress without the need for external services. This includes swim coaching, strength and conditioning, technical and race analysis, competition support, and holistic athlete care.
- *A comprehensive and progressive training schedule*, carefully designed to meet the needs of aspiring athletes and aligned with internationally recognised development standards.
- *Training camps*, both in the UK and overseas, providing valuable experience and helping swimmers build confidence in different environments.
- *Access to modern technology and equipment*, with ongoing investment to ensure swimmers have the tools needed to support their development.
- *University and career guidance*, helping swimmers plan for life after school – whether continuing their swimming, pursuing further education in the UK or abroad, or moving into the world of work.
- *Team travel to certain competitions*.

Individual sport science services can be accessed through trusted professional partners. While these services are at the athlete's expense, discounted rates may be available via RSW Swimming.

Our Legacy of Excellence

Made at The Royal...

RSW Swimming has a proud tradition of supporting young athletes to reach their potential – both in the pool and beyond. Many who began their journeys with us have progressed to become some of Britain's most successful swimmers, achieving historic milestones on both the national and world stage. Their achievements reflect the power of long-term development, hard work, and the supportive environment that The Royal provides.

Matt Richards MBE

- Double Olympic Champion | Men's 4 x 200m Freestyle Relay (2021 & 2024)
- Part of the first team in history to successfully defend an Olympic relay title with the same four swimmers.
- Olympic Silver Medallist | Men's 200m Freestyle (2024)
- Winner of 16 (and counting) additional major international medals.

Alice Dearing

- First Black female swimmer to represent Great Britain at the Olympic Games (Tokyo 2021 – 10km Open Water)
- Co-founder of the Black Swimming Association, launched to promote inclusion and access for BME communities in aquatic sports.

Tully Kearney OBE

- Triple Paralympic Champion | S5 100m & 200m Freestyle (2024), S5 100m Freestyle
- Paralympic Silver Medallist | S5 200m Freestyle (2021)
- 10x World Champion and multiple-time international medallist across Gold, Silver and Bronze.

Tobias Robinson

- Olympian | 10km Open Water (2024)
- World Championship qualifier | 10km Open Water (2022 & 2024)
- Commonwealth Games qualifier | 400m & 1500m Freestyle (2022)



COACHING

At The Royal, our swimmers are supported by dedicated full-time coaches. Working closely together, our coaching team ensures every swimmer receives consistent, high-quality guidance throughout their journey.

We believe that success starts with strong relationships, clear communication, and a shared understanding of what each swimmer needs to succeed. In the following sections, you'll learn more about how we coach, what we value, and how we help each swimmer grow – both in the pool and beyond.

Coaching Philosophy

At the heart of our programme is a simple goal: help every swimmer develop as both an athlete and a person. We aim to create an environment where swimmers feel supported, challenged, and inspired to improve.

We genuinely care about the young people we work with. We want them to enjoy the journey, feel proud of their progress, and grow into confident, resilient young people who value being part of something bigger than themselves.

At the same time, we encourage a mindset of excellence. We expect our swimmers to work hard, set high standards, and take ownership of their development. We help them understand the process, stay committed through ups and downs, and build the character needed for long-term success.

Trust is at the core of everything we do – between coaches and swimmers, teammates, and families. We believe success is about more than medals. It's about attitude, effort, and the life skills swimmers take with them when they leave our programme.

Our Pillars

- *Excellence Through Process:* Success is built through consistent effort, good habits, and attention to detail – not just race-day results.
- *Holistic Development:* We coach the whole person – physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing all matter.
- *Respect and Responsibility:* We promote respectful behaviour and personal responsibility, in training and competition.
- *Collaboration:* Our coaches work as a team, and we value open communication with swimmers, parents, and support staff.
- *Lifelong Learning:* We constantly review and improve what we do, encouraging curiosity and growth in both swimmers and coaches.

What Success Looks Like

To us, success means swimmers who:

- Aim for personal bests in and out of the water.
- Enjoy the process and take responsibility for their development.
- Uphold team values and support their teammates.
- Leave the programme as confident, skilled young people ready for life beyond sport.

Training Philosophy

Our training approach is simple: build smart, adaptable swimmers who race with skill and confidence.

We base our training on scientific principles, using proven theory like that of Jan Olbrecht to help balance aerobic and anaerobic development. We carefully structure training to build the physical foundations swimmers need for long-term success.

But training is never one-size-fits-all. We treat each swimmer as an individual.

A key part of our approach – especially in younger squads – is a strong emphasis on *medley-based training*. We believe that developing all four strokes is essential for young swimmers. This not only builds better all-round athletes but also helps avoid early over-specialisation, which research has shown can lead to burnout or plateauing in later years. By focusing on medley and all-round skill development, we ensure our swimmers are physically robust, technically versatile, and keep all future pathways open.

This strategy is a tried, tested, and proven method for producing swimmers who stay in the sport longer and are better prepared for high-level performance in the future.

One area where we excel beyond traditional methods is in *race pace training*. We don't just teach swimmers to go fast – we teach them how to race. From pacing and breathing patterns to stroke rates and skills under pressure, our swimmers learn to execute races with precision and confidence.

As swimmers progress, race pace training becomes more of a focus – building from early experiences of speed and pacing in younger squads, through to advanced race skills in our Elite Squad. Every session is a chance to build world class race habits.

We understand the importance of flexibility in planning. Training cycles are planned, but we adapt as needed based on how swimmers respond. We use a mix of data, observation, and swimmer feedback to guide decisions ensuring we always optimise the training environment.

In practice, our training includes:

- A balance of aerobic and anaerobic training to prepare swimmers for all race distances.
- A medley-based approach in younger squads to build versatile, well-rounded athletes.
- Adjustments for individual needs within squad sessions.
- Race pace training focused on technical and tactical execution, not just speed.
- Ongoing skill and technique work across all phases of training.
- Constant use of feedback and observation to track progress.
- Open communication, encouraging swimmers to understand and engage with their own development.

Ultimately, we prepare every swimmer at The Royal to race with skill, confidence, and consistency – now and in the future.



STRUCTURE

Programme Structure

The Royal is a *performance swimming programme*. We work alongside local clubs – not in competition with them – to provide a structured performance pathway that many clubs simply aren't able to offer. Our aim is to complement the work of local programmes, providing the next stage for swimmers who are ready to pursue their potential more seriously. Importantly, we encourage swimmers to retain their identity as part of their home club while training with The Royal.

Choosing to join The Royal means making a positive choice to prioritise swimming as your main sport. This doesn't mean swimmers are expected to give up everything else, but it does mean committing to structured, regular training as part of a performance pathway. If swimmers aren't ready to make that commitment, that's absolutely fine – our programme may suit them better further down the line when they feel more prepared.

Unlike larger clubs, we don't have the capacity to offer flexible, participation-only training options. Our squads are structured for swimmers who want additional opportunities to develop within the sport. However, that doesn't mean our programme is rigid. Life is busy, and we work closely with swimmers and families to help them balance their training with school, family life, and other commitments.



We take a supportive, individualised approach to managing challenges as they arise and finding solutions.

Ultimately, The Royal is for swimmers who want to invest in their swimming and be supported in doing so. We provide the environment, structure, and coaching to help them pursue that goal – when they're ready to make that choice.

Squad Structure

Our programme is deliberately kept small to ensure high levels of support and attention for every swimmer. Our squads offer a clear pathway, from developing young athletes to preparing for national and international competition.

As swimmers move through the RSW Swimming squads – Academy, Development, Performance, and Elite – the coaching focus adapts to support their growth, maturity, and stage of the performance pathway. Each squad plays a vital role in a swimmer's long-term development, building the skills, habits, and mindset needed for success in competitive swimming.

Squad Placement & Age Profiles

Squad placements at The Royal are determined by an holistic assessment of an athlete's technical proficiency, aerobic engine, training capacity, coachability, and emotional maturity—not simply their date of birth.

While we provide a 'typical' profile for each squad as a general baseline, these are strictly guidelines, not rigid boundaries. It is entirely normal and expected for athletes to fall outside of these typical age brackets.

A younger athlete may be integrated into a senior squad if their technical data and physical development require a higher training stimulus. Conversely, an older athlete may be placed in a squad to allow them to correct biomechanical flaws or rebuild their aerobic base without the pressure of a senior training load.

Every placement is an objective, athletic decision designed to maximise the individual swimmer's long-term potential. Being outside the "typical" age profile for a squad is not a detriment, nor does it indicate special treatment; it simply means the athlete is exactly where they need to be to execute their specific developmental next steps.

Academy

Typically Profile: School Years 7-8 + (Ages 11-13 +) | 5/6 swim sessions per week + land sessions

- Foundation-level training across all four strokes (Individual Medley approach).
- Emphasis on technical skill, efficient movement and core mechanics.
- Building enjoyment, routine and positive habits around training and competition.
- Introduction to basic training sets, pace control and self-management.

Development

Typically Profile: School Years 8-9 + (Ages 12-14 +) | 6 swim sessions per week + land sessions

- Continued IM-based training with growing exposure to race strategy and pace work.
- Refinement of starts, turns and underwater work.
- Development of aerobic fitness and training discipline.
- Encouragement of independence and ownership of the training process.
- Initial conversations around strengths, preferred events and future direction.

Performance

Typically Profile: School Years 9-11 + (13-16 years old +) | 7 swim sessions per week + land sessions

- Introducing event-specific training as a squad while maintaining an overall IM focus.
- Increased training volume and intensity aligned with competitive goals.
- Greater attention to lifestyle, recovery, and performance mindset.
- Individualised feedback and goal setting become more prominent.

Elite

Typically Profile: School Years 11-13 (15-18 years old) / 8 swim sessions per week + gym sessions

- Fully individualised training focused on target events.
- Advanced technical, tactical and physiological preparation.
- Regular use of race modelling, tempo and race pace work.
- High-level physical and mental conditioning for peak performance.
- Preparation for national/international racing and potential pathways beyond The Royal.



Academy SQUAD CRITERIA

Squad Criteria

- Swimmers must achieve the **BRONZE** Time Standard for the current season. (details about standards are available upon request)
- Swimmers may also be considered if they hold a minimum of six County Championship qualifying times.
- Regular attendance and commitment to training are required. Swimmers may start on 5 sessions per week if deemed necessary and appropriate but should aim to reach 6 sessions per week as soon as possible and within the time frame set by the Lead Coach. Swimmers should communicate with their coach when attendance isn't possible.
- Swimmers should begin to develop a performance mindset by showing positive training habits, good focus, and a willingness to challenge themselves in both training and competition.
- Swimmers are expected to participate fully in the RSW Swimming competition calendar to gain valuable experience in a range of different events.
- Split programmes (training with multiple clubs or squads) may be supported where appropriate; however, we encourage swimmers to train predominantly with The Royal wherever possible to ensure consistency and maximise their development. When allocating squad places, preference may be given to swimmers who commit fully to our training environment.
- Final squad selections are made at the discretion of the coaching team, based on potential, attitude, attendance, and commitment, and are subject to Executive Committee approval.

Fees

Monthly Training Fee / £115pm

Training fees are annual, split into 12 monthly payments. The squad trains around 48 weeks per year, with provision tailored to each swimmer. Fees are reviewed annually, with updates presented at the AGM.

Subsidy Information

All swimmers in this squad receive significant financial support from The Royal School Wolverhampton in the form of heavily subsidised training fees – a reflection of the school's commitment to supporting performance swimming.



DEVELOPMENT SQUAD CRITERIA

Squad Criteria

- Swimmers must achieve the **BRONZE** Time Standard for the current season. (details about standards are available upon request)
- A high level of commitment to the training programme is expected. Swimmers should aim to attend all scheduled sessions unless otherwise agreed with the Lead Coach and should communicate with their coach when attendance isn't possible.
- Swimmers should demonstrate a growing performance mindset through positive training habits, focus and competitive effort.
- Full commitment to the RSW Swimming competition calendar is mandatory.
- Split programmes (training with multiple clubs or squads) may be supported where appropriate; however, we encourage swimmers to train predominantly with The Royal wherever possible to ensure consistency and maximise their development. When allocating squad places, preference may be given to swimmers who commit fully to our training environment.
- Final squad selections are made at the discretion of the coaching team, based on potential, attitude, attendance, and commitment, and are subject to Executive Committee approval.

Fees

Monthly Training Fee / £120pm

Training fees are annual, split into 12 monthly payments. The squad trains around 48 weeks per year, with provision tailored to each swimmer. Fees are reviewed annually, with updates presented at the AGM.

Subsidy Information

All swimmers in this squad receive significant financial support from The Royal School Wolverhampton in the form of heavily subsidised training fees – a reflection of the school's commitment to supporting performance swimming.



PERFORMANCE SQUAD CRITERIA

Squad Criteria

- Swimmers must achieve the *SILVER* Time Standard for the current season.(details about standards are available upon request)
- Full commitment to the training programme is required. Swimmers should aim to attend all scheduled sessions unless otherwise agreed with the Lead Coach, communicate when attendance isn't possible, and make use of replacement sessions where appropriate.
- Swimmers consistently demonstrate a performance mindset in both training and competition.
- Full commitment to the RSW Swimming competition calendar is mandatory.
- Split programmes (training with multiple clubs or squads) may be permitted in certain cases; however, priority will generally be given to swimmers who commit fully to The Royal programme when allocating squad places. Wherever possible, we encourage swimmers to train exclusively within our environment to ensure consistency and maximise their development.
- Final squad selections are made at the discretion of the coaching team, based on potential, attitude, attendance, and commitment, and are subject to Executive Committee approval.

Fees

Monthly Training Fee / £130pm

Training fees are annual, split into 12 monthly payments. The squad trains around 48 weeks per year, with provision tailored to each swimmer. Fees are reviewed annually, with updates presented at the AGM.

Subsidy Information

All swimmers in this squad receive significant financial support from The Royal School Wolverhampton in the form of heavily subsidised training fees – a reflection of the school's commitment to supporting performance swimming.



ELITE SQUAD CRITERIA

Squad Criteria

- Swimmers must achieve the **GOLD** Time Standard for the current season. (details about standards are available upon request)
- Full commitment to the training programme is required. Swimmers are expected to attend all scheduled sessions unless agreed otherwise with the Lead Coach, must communicate when unable to attend, and should attend replacement session where appropriate.
- Swimmers should consistently demonstrate an elite performance mindset in both training and competition.
- Full commitment to the RSW Swimming competition calendar is mandatory.
- Split programmes (training with multiple clubs or squads) are not permitted in this squad.
- Final squad selections are made at the discretion of the coaching team, based on potential, attitude, attendance, and commitment, and are subject to Executive Committee approval.

Aims

- Progression to, and success at, International Championships.
- Strong representation and medal success at Aquatics GB Championships.
- Selection for relevant National Development Programmes.

Fees

Monthly Training Fee / £150pm

Training fees are annual, split into 12 monthly payments. The squad trains around 48 weeks per year, with provision tailored to each swimmer. Fees are reviewed annually, with updates presented at the AGM.

Subsidy Information

All swimmers in this squad receive significant financial support from The Royal School Wolverhampton in the form of heavily subsidised training fees – a reflection of the school's commitment to supporting performance swimming.

Please note that the final decision regarding all squad placements, transitions, and movements rests with the coaching team. These decisions are made with careful consideration of each swimmer's long-term development, potential, and the overall balance of our programme.



STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS

At The Royal, we offer a comprehensive programme designed to help swimmers reach their full potential – and with that comes a clear expectation of commitment. This is not a participation-based programme; swimmers who join The Royal are choosing to prioritise their swimming over other sports and activities, to take their development seriously.

Progression requires consistent attendance, effort and engagement. Squad places are earned – and kept – by meeting standards in attendance, performance and behaviour.

We understand life brings challenges, and our coaching team will always offer support where needed. But to benefit from this programme, swimmers must meet its demands. If that's not possible, we'll happily support a move back to a home club where more flexible options may be available.

Attendance Standards

Consistent attendance is essential for progression. To help swimmers understand, we use a simple traffic-light

system:  *Green / 95% and above*

Excellent. Swimmers are on track for progression when appropriate.

 *Amber / 85-94%*

Acceptable, but improvement could be made. In cases of limited squad space, priority may be given to swimmers with green attendance.

 *Red / Below 85%*

Attendance needs immediate attention. Sustained low attendance could affect a swimmer's place in the programme.

Long-term illness, injury, and unavoidable family matters are always taken into account. Our goal is to support swimmers, not penalise them. Coaches apply discretion with compassion.

Further details of how attendance is tracked and managed can be found in our 'Attendance Policy'.

Performance Standards

As a performance programme, we work with swimmers to meet and maintain competitive standards:

- Benchmark performance levels are in our *Time Standards* and available in detail upon request
- Squad-specific expectations are set out in our *Squad Criteria*.

Progression is not based on performance alone, but also on consistency, commitment, and a willingness to work.

The Royal Culture

We're proud of the culture on display at The Royal. Every swimmer plays a part in maintaining the environment that helps our team succeed. Our values guide everything we do:

Competition Commitment

Competition at The Royal isn't about racing as often as possible – it's carefully planned as part of long-term athlete development. Swimmers follow a structured competition calendar, designed to build towards peak performances at key meets.

While swimmers may be invited to additional events by their home clubs, entering races outside our planned calendar can disrupt preparation and progress. Extra competitions carry a physical and mental cost, and unmanaged racing risks injury, fatigue, and burnout.

Our coaching team works hard to balance racing opportunities with preparation time – ensuring swimmers arrive at target competitions in the best possible condition, physically and mentally.

For this reason, racing at competitions outside of our calendar is not permitted unless first discussed with – and approved by a Coach.

Squad Eligibility and Invites

Squad places at The Royal are a privilege, not a right. Every swimmer benefits from significant investment and support from The Royal School Wolverhampton, and with that comes a shared responsibility to give their best effort.

Throughout the season, swimmers and parents are reviewed against key criteria:

- *Attendance* – Meeting consistent attendance standards.
- *Performance* – Achieving and maintaining performance standards appropriate to their squad.
- *Culture and Conduct* – Demonstrating our core values in training, competition, and daily behaviour.

Places are not automatically renewed. However parents will be notified privately and invited for a meeting if a swimmer's place is in question. Every swimmer is assessed holistically to ensure the programme remains appropriate for them.

We are proud to offer a performance environment where swimmers are supported, known, and challenged to be their best. But we also recognise that priorities can change. When swimmers feel they're no longer able to meet the commitments required, we'll always help them transition smoothly back to their home club – ensuring they remain in the sport and continue to enjoy swimming.

In return, we ask swimmers and families to value the opportunity they have. Access to full-time professional coaching and a fully supported programme is rare and should be treated with the gratitude, humility, and the commitment it deserves.



BEING A ROYAL SWIMMER

We're incredibly proud of the high-performance culture on display at The Royal. It's the foundation of our success on the national and international stage – and it's shaped by how we show up every day, both in and out of the water.

Our values are at the core of everything we do:

RESPECT

for yourself, your teammates, and the process.

Respect is the anchor of everything – respecting time, effort, rules, space, people, and your own goals.

COURAGE

to push boundaries, own mistakes, and race fearlessly.

Stepping outside your comfort zone, embracing feedback, and being willing to take risks for your growth.

PROFESSIONALISM

in your attitude, preparation and commitment.

It's about turning up ready, consistently, and holding yourself to high standards – even when nobody's watching.

TRUST

in your coaches, your training and your teammates.

Trust helps us work as one. You need to believe in the journey we're on together.

ENERGY

brings presence, purpose and positivity every day.

Energy lifts the group. We want swimmers who contribute to the environment, not just take from it.

These values aren't just words – they guide how we train, race, communicate and support each other. They help us protect the environment we've worked hard to build and ensure that everyone in the programme adds to it.

We've got high standards – and we're upfront about that. Our swimmers are here because they want to get better, and because they're ready to commit. These expectations are here to help you succeed, and to protect the environment that makes our programme special.

Full Commitment to the Programme

- You're expected to attend training – pool, gym, and land – as outlined in your Squad Criteria unless you're injured, ill, or have agreed time off.
- If you've got school trips, holidays or social plans, let us know well in advance. Life happens – but regular clashes shouldn't be the norm. In some scenarios swimmers are expected to make an effort to 'make up' sessions where possible. Guidelines on how to do this can be found in the Attendance Policy.
- Trust the process. That includes sticking to the plan on training intensity, technical work, and recovery. • Don't use private coaching, online programmes or other training without talking to your coach first. We need consistency to get results – and to make sure everything fits together.

Professional Behaviour and Attitude

- Turn up on time, with the right kit, ready to train.
- Know when it's time to focus – training isn't only a social session.
- Set high standards for yourself, especially when things get tough.

- Ask questions, apply feedback, stay engaged.
- Always represent The Royal with integrity – in training, at competitions, online and off.

Respect for Coaches, Teammates and Staff

- Respect is one of our core values – not just for coaches and teammates, but for your own goals and effort.
- Listen properly when coaches are speaking. Be coachable.
- Support your teammates – cheer for them, push them and hold yourself to the same standard.
- Respect the space, the facilities, and everyone who supports the programme.

Training and Recovery

- Complete the whole session as written. No shortcuts.
- Take recovery seriously – sleep, food, hydration, and following physio or rehab advice.
- If you're unsure whether an outside activity (like other sport or gym work) might interfere with training or recovery, speak to your coach for advice.

Accountability and Communication

- Let us know early about absences, illness, injury or anything that might affect your performance.
- If you miss a session, talk to your coach about how (or whether) it can be replaced. Ideally, within two days.
- Own your swimming. That includes reflecting honestly after a bad session or a tough race – and doing something about it.

Competitions

- Race with pride, full effort, and professionalism. You represent more than just yourself.
- Follow race-day protocols: warm-ups, nutrition, recovery, reporting to coaches, stay with the team.
- Prepare properly – mentally and physically – and debrief after races with your coach.
- Race analysis and strategy comes from the coaching staff. Parents can support emotionally, but swimmers should always go to their coach for technical/tactical input.
- You're expected to swim every event you've entered – including finals. Talk to your coach first if you're considering pulling out.
- Don't enter other competitions (including school meets or non-calendar events) without checking first. It could impact performance, taper, or your season plan.

Social Media and Public Representation

- What you post reflects on you – and on the team. Use social media responsibly.
- Keep content respectful and appropriate. No negativity about teammates, coaches, competitors, or the sport.
- Don't share training plans or internal team discussions without permission.
- Celebrate success, support the sport, and think before you post – what goes online stays online.

Team Kit and Appearance

- Wear the correct kit as outlined in our '*Kit Policy*'. It's part of being part of something bigger than yourself.
- When racing for your home club, wear your home club kit – not Royal kit. It shows respect to both teams.

Communication – Do's and Don'ts

Do:

- Speak directly (and respectfully) with coaches about training, racing, or concerns.
- Let us know in advance about absences or things that might affect your performance.
- Ask questions, stay curious, take feedback on board.
 - Be honest and constructive.
- Speak positively with your teammates.

Don't:

- Ignore coach messages or rely on parents to pass them on.
- Badmouth the programme, your teammates or your coaches – in person or online.
- Hide injuries, illness or wellbeing issues.
- Try to have big discussions mid-emotion (e.g. just after a bad race) – ask for a proper time instead.
- Expect replies at all hours – we'll respond when appropriate, but coaches also have rest days and boundaries.

Good communication builds trust. How you speak matters just as much as what you say.

Behaviour and Code of Conduct

- High standards apply on poolside, in the gym, on trips, at competitions, and online. Wherever you represent The Royal – even unofficially – you carry our values.
- Our Code of Conduct is there to protect the programme and the people in it. Swimmers are expected to follow it at all times.
- Breaches of the Code of Conduct or repeated issues with meeting our standards and expectations will lead to consequences – up to and including removal from the programme.

By choosing to swim at The Royal, you're choosing to commit to your performance, your team, and your goals. This isn't easy – but if you lean into it, it's worth it.

We're proud of the standard we've built here, and we're excited to have you help carry it forward.

Let's make it count.

We have something special here – but it only works if every swimmer brings their full commitment, every day. Hold yourself to a high standard. I promise we'll do the same.

Coaching Team

RSW Swimming



BEING A ROYAL PARENT

We're incredibly proud of the high-performance culture on display at The Royal. It's the foundation of our success on the national and international stage – and it's shaped by how we show up every day, both in and out of the water.

Our values are at the core of everything we do:

RESPECT

for yourself, your teammates, and the process.

Respect is the anchor of everything – respecting time, effort, rules, space, people, and your own goals.

COURAGE

to push boundaries, own mistakes, and race fearlessly.

Stepping outside your comfort zone, embracing feedback, and being willing to take risks for your growth.

PROFESSIONALISM

in your attitude, preparation and commitment.

It's about turning up ready, consistently, and holding yourself to high standards – even when nobody's watching.

TRUST

in your coaches, your training and your teammates.

Trust helps us work as one. You need to believe in the journey we're on together.

ENERGY

brings presence, purpose and positivity every day.

Energy lifts the group. We want swimmers who contribute to the environment, not just take from it.

These values aren't just words – they guide how we train, race, communicate and support each other. They help us protect the environment we've worked hard to build and ensure that everyone in the programme adds to it.

Your encouragement, commitment and trust play a crucial role in our swimmers' development, and we're proud to work alongside you in helping them reach their full potential – in and out of the pool.

To ensure that partnership stays strong, and that our environment remains focused, respectful and athlete-centred, we ask all parents to follow a few key principles:

Trust the Process

Training is designed with long-term progress in mind – technically, physically and emotionally. We ask that all technical or performance-related feedback comes from the coaching team.

Encourage Without Pressure

Back your swimmer unconditionally. Celebrate effort, attitude and progress. Avoid extra pressure around results, selection or times – our environment is already performance-driven; your job is to balance that with steady support.

Respect the Environment

For safeguarding and professionalism, parents are asked not to enter the training venue or team spaces at training or during competition outside of agreed times. If you'd like to speak with a coach, please do so through appropriate channels.

Communicate Appropriately

If you have questions or concerns, we're here to help – please contact a Coach and we'll aim to respond in a timely and constructive manner.

Be a Role Model

Your swimmer is always watching. Please reflect the values of Respect, Courage, Professionalism, Trust and Energy in your own conduct – at competitions, during team events, and online. How you behave sets the tone.

Celebrate the Whole Journey

Success in swimming isn't linear. There will be challenges, hard races and learning moments. What matters most is how your swimmer responds – so praise resilience, growth and perseverance just as much as medals or personal bests.

Communication – Do's and Don'ts

Clear, respectful communication helps us all work better together. Here's how to keep things positive and productive:

Do:

- Encourage your child to speak with their coach directly when appropriate – it builds confidence and ownership.
- Use email for questions or updates. Coaches will reply as soon as they can.
- Stay informed by reading team communications – we share info as early as possible.
- Raise concerns respectfully. We're open to feedback and always happy to listen.

Don't:

- Interrupt coaches during sessions or competitions– it disrupts focus and learning.
- Message coaches via social media or personal numbers, unless invited to for something specific.
- Speak on behalf of your child where they can take the lead – independence matters.

Our expectations of parents are high – but never one-sided.

Coaching Team

RSW Swimming



OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

High standards are a two-way street. We ask a lot from you, but you can expect just as much from us.

At The Royal, we believe in doing things properly. Our coaches work hard to create an environment that develops great swimmers and great people. Every swimmer is supported, challenged, and given the best chance to succeed. This is a partnership – we all have a role to play.

Here's what you can expect from us:

Professionalism

- We will plan, deliver and review every session with care and precision. Every session is part of a bigger picture.
- You can expect consistency, honesty, and high standards from all members of the coaching team.
- We will lead by example in the way we speak, behave and show up every day.

Athlete-Centred Coaching

- We'll keep the long-term best interests of the athlete at the heart of our decisions.
- We will challenge swimmers and help them develop the tools to thrive – as athletes and as people.
- Every swimmer will be treated with fairness and respect, regardless of age, background, or ability.

Communication and Clarity

- We will communicate proactively and clearly, with transparency around expectations, selections, and decisions.
- You will always be able to speak to us. We welcome calm, respectful conversation and we're here when you need us.
- You won't be left guessing – we will keep swimmers and parents informed and supported throughout the journey.

Care and Commitment

- We care about the people in our programme. Every swimmer matters, not just the fastest ones.
- We understand the pressure performance sport can bring – and work to balance ambition with wellbeing.
- We show up every day with the same commitment we ask of you.

A Team Culture

- We will build a team culture that is positive, ambitious, and safe – where everyone can do their best work.
- We actively work to break down any "us vs them" barriers. Swimmers, parents, and coaches are all on the same side.
- When challenges arise, we will approach them constructively and with integrity.



SAFEGUARDING & WELFARE

At The Royal, the wellbeing of every swimmer is our top priority. We are fully committed to creating a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment where all athletes feel valued, protected, and empowered to thrive – both in and out of the pool.

We follow *Swim England's Wavepower* guidance – the national safeguarding policy for swimming – and embed its principles into every part of our programme. All our coaches and support staff receive safeguarding and child protection training, and we work hard every day to build a culture of openness, respect and genuine care.

Who to Talk To

We know that sometimes things come up – whether it's something you've experienced, something that's been said, or just a feeling that something isn't right. Whatever it is, please talk to us. We've made sure there are clear and confidential routes for support, and we want you to feel comfortable using them.

Ruth Chapman
RSW Swimming Welfare Officer

Ruth is your first point of contact for any concerns related to welfare, safeguarding or swimmer wellbeing. She works independently of the coaching team and committee to make sure all matters are dealt with fairly, appropriately and confidentially.

Contact:
swimwelfare@theroyal.school
07967 452 355

Jonathan Crook
The Royal School Wolverhampton Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Jon oversees all safeguarding matters across the wider school community and works closely with our coaching and welfare teams to ensure alignment and best practice.

Contact:
jcrook@theroyal.school
07795 622 599

Whether you're a swimmer or a parent, please know this: your voice matters, and your concerns will always be taken seriously. We never want anyone to sit on something they're worried about. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and we're proud of the positive, vigilant and caring environment we've built – and that we'll continue to protect every single day.

Members of RSW Swimming can access all policies and procedures. Just request the most up-to-date versions at any time by emailing any member of staff.



HELPFUL INFORMATION

The Importance of Early Morning Training

Early morning sessions are a fundamental part of high-level swimming – and for good reason. They're not only a cornerstone of performance programmes across the world, but also a key tool in preparing swimmers for the realities of top-level competition and life beyond the pool.

Swimmers at The Royal can expect early morning training as a regular and essential part of their weekly schedule. Here's why it matters:

Competition Preparation

Most competitions begin early in the day, with swimmers needing to be physically and mentally ready to race sometimes as early as 8am. Morning training helps develop this readiness. At higher levels, swimmers often compete in heats and finals – requiring them to perform at their best twice in one day. Training at both ends of the day mirrors this.

Maximising Performance and Development

Training across multiple sessions in a day is necessary to reach the physical and technical standards of performance swimming. It allows us to maintain the volume, intensity and quality of training needed to progress at a national and international level.

Balanced Lifestyle

Morning training frees up evening time – a huge benefit for social and academic balance. It allows swimmers to stay on top of homework, revision and school responsibilities without having to compromise their training load.

Adaptation and Preference

While it can feel tough at first, most swimmers adapt quickly. In fact, many come to prefer morning sessions. The sense of productivity, the quieter training environment, and the positive start to the day often outweigh the initial challenge of the early wake-up.

Discipline and Routine

Morning training instils structure and self-discipline – two traits that carry over into every area of a swimmer's life. These habits are common in top athletes and build the foundations of long-term success in both sport and academics.

The truth is; to be competitive and develop in our sport, we can't simply replace training with sleep – not when the swimmers we're racing against are doing both.

The Truth About Sleep

We understand that early morning training can raise concerns about sleep – but with the right knowledge and approach, swimmers can meet their sleep needs and thrive in a demanding schedule.

Teen Sleep Needs

Research shows that teenagers need around 8-10 hours of sleep per night for full recovery and cognitive function. While this would be ideal, it isn't always practical and it's important to note that total weekly sleep and overall sleep quality matter just as much as hitting this number every single night.

Sleep Banking Works

Studies support the concept of sleep banking – the practice of getting more sleep in the days around early wake-ups or periods of increased training. By extending sleep when possible (for example, through naps or earlier bedtimes), swimmers can offset short-term sleep loss and maintain physical and mental performance.

Smart Sleep Habits Make a Difference

Simple strategies help swimmers stay rested:

- Prioritise consistent sleep and wake times (even on weekends). We don't mean wake up super early on a daily basis but try to keep the time you go to bed relatively similar every day.
- Avoid screens 30-60 minutes before bed.
- Create a cool, dark, quiet sleep environment.
- Use naps wisely (20-30 minutes post-school or early evening).

We Care About Wellbeing

Coaches at The Royal are highly experienced in managing swimmer load and adapting training when needed. We regularly check in with swimmers to monitor their wellbeing and make informed decisions to support them both short and long-term.

Our Position on Junior Sprint Specialisation

The rise of 50m events and the current focus on sprint racing have certainly made waves in the swimming world. But at The Royal, our coaching philosophy hasn't changed. We remain fully committed to a long-term, well-rounded development model for all junior swimmers.

Yes, we train for speed. Sprint work is an important part of our programme and is included consistently across all squads. But real sprint performance isn't built in isolation. It comes from developing excellent technique, high-quality skills under fatigue, and a strong aerobic base – all of which are central to our training.

We believe that *early specialisation in 50m racing is short-sighted*. It may bring short-term results, but it limits long term potential. Even Olympic medallist and World Champion Ben Proud has spoken candidly about the risks of becoming a "sprinter" too soon, and how it cost him opportunities later in his career.

At The Royal, we aim to build adaptable, all-round athletes who can race across multiple events and distances. By avoiding narrow specialisation too early, we keep doors open – and give swimmers the best chance of success when it matters most.

In short: we don't just train swimmers for today – we prepare them for their future.

Transitioning into RSW Swimming

Joining The Royal represents a step up in both training volume and intensity. This transition can be challenging – but it is also a vital part of your development as a swimmer. Prolonged transition periods often hinder progress and can lead to further complications down the line.

We understand that some swimmers may need time to adjust – socially, logistically or emotionally – and we support short-term transitional arrangements where appropriate. However, we recommend that any modified schedule or phased integration lasts no more than two months.

Trust in the process. Trust in the team. Trust in your own potential.

If The Royal Isn't the Right Fit

We know that our programme might not be for everyone. If, after giving it a genuine effort, a swimmer feels they cannot commit fully to the demands of our programme, we will always approach that decision with respect, understanding and support.

We will work with the swimmer and their family to help them transition smoothly back to their home club, and we'll continue to cheer them on from afar.

No matter the outcome, every swimmer who joins us remains a part of The Royal story – and we wish them success in every step of their journey.

Home Clubs

At The Royal, we are proud to work in close partnership with local clubs to provide a seamless and supportive performance pathway for swimmers across the region.

Every swimmer at The Royal must have an affiliated 'Home Club', which is typically the club they were with before joining our programme. Your Home Club remains an important part of your journey, and we ask all swimmers to retain this connection throughout their time with us.

If you believe there may be a valid reason to change your Home Club, please speak to the coaching team before making any changes.

Occasionally, you may be asked to train with your Home Club to ensure continuity in your training schedule. If so, we ask that you approach these sessions with gratitude and professionalism. These clubs play a vital role in your development and their ongoing support contributes to the strength of our wider swimming network.

As a swimmer within our programme, you represent not only The Royal, but also your Home Club – and your role in maintaining this connection is incredibly important. We ask our swimmers to remain loyal to their Home Club identity throughout their time with us. This includes representing your Home Club at appropriate competitions, staying involved when possible, and always acting as a positive ambassador for both them and The Royal.

This ongoing connection reinforces our promise to Home Clubs: that swimmers joining The Royal don't leave their clubs behind – they carry them forward with pride.

Site Access

Most of our training takes place on-site at The Royal School Wolverhampton. As an active school campus, access to the grounds is strictly controlled to ensure the safety and security of all students, staff and swimmers.

Swimmer Access

Access cards are issued, which permit entry to the pool building 15 minutes prior to a swimmers scheduled session and remain valid until the session start time.

If a swimmer arrives late, they will need to contact someone already in the building to be let in. For security reasons, access cards must not be shared under any circumstances. Lost cards should be reported to a coach immediately – replacements are available at a cost of £5. Upon leaving the programme, access will be revoked with immediate effect.

In September 2026 a review will take place regarding access cards to ensure that everyone has a card and the cards permit entry to the pool building 15 minutes prior to a swimmers scheduled session and remains valid until the session start time

Car Parking

Access to the currently limited sport centre car park is controlled by an automatic gate, which typically opens at 04:45 in the morning and 17:00 in the evening. Please note that swimmer access cards do not open the car park gate. If you are unable to park on the port centre car park we kindly ask you to park responsibly along Goldthorn Road, or on the car park at the front of the senior school, whilst being mindful of local parking regulations.

Please note, we cannot accept responsibility for vehicles parked on Goldthorn Road in the sports centre car park or senior school car park at any time.

Parent & Guardian Access

Due to child protection, health and safety policies; parents and guardians are not permitted to enter the pool building unless it is during public hours when facility staff are on site. Parents must not use swimmer access cards to gain entry under any circumstance.

We understand the value of seeing your swimmer in action and the pride in watching them train in our sessions. With that in mind, we will organise designated 'open sessions' throughout the season, offering parents and guardians a chance to observe training in a safe and structured environment.

Volunteers & Committee Members

Approved committee members and volunteers may be granted access to the building or swimming office outside of public hours to support the day-to-day running of the programme.

Programme Resources and Policies

All RSW Swimming policies and procedures are available to parents and guardians at any time. To view these policies and procedures please contact a member of the coaching team.



TIME STANDARDS

Purpose

Time Standards are used at The Royal to:

- Guide swimmer progression through providing realistic yet challenging expectations in line with national swimming standards.
- Provide a reference point for swimmers to set clear performance goals.
- Support transparent and consistent squad selections.

Time Standards do not:

- Guarantee swimmers will be moved between squads.
- Guarantee qualification for Summer Championships and/or finals.

Time Standards should not:

- Be used as the only source of reference for how well a swimmer is performing.
- Be used by swimmers and/or parents to compare or judge the progression of any swimmer at The Royal.
- Become a point of obsession for swimmers or parents. Time standards are a tool to measure progress, not the final destination. They should be used as a baseline benchmark, with the primary focus remaining entirely on daily training, technical mastery, and long-term development.

Structure

All Time Standards are based on Long Course performances only and we can provide this information upon request.

Each squad has a corresponding 'Squad Criteria' which outlines the minimum standards required for entry and continued selection for that squad.

Why no 50's?

We avoid early sprint specialisation for our juniors. While sprint training is integrated into our programme and hugely important to us, we focus on building well-rounded athletes with strong aerobic foundations to keep future pathways open and avoid limiting long-term potential.

Performance Levels

Platinum | Based largely on qualifying for a final at Aquatics GB Summer Championships.

Gold+ | Based largely on qualifying for Aquatics GB Summer Championships.

Gold | Based largely on qualifying for Swim England Summer Championships.

Silver and Bronze | Based on a percentage increase from 'Gold' Time Standards.