



# *Competitive Squad Handbook*

Updated June 2024

# Introduction



*Welcome to our AGC Squad!*

We would like to congratulate your child on being selected to be a member of one of our competition squads. We very much look forward to working together with you and your child on their competitive gymnastics journey.

Abingdon Gymnastics Club has been a leading gymnastics club in Oxfordshire for over 40 years. The club, previously running from a leisure centre, moved into a purpose built facility in 2009. We have grown hugely since then & are now home to over 700 members who attend weekly classes, enjoying the wonderful sport of gymnastics.

We offer squad programs in women's artistic, tumbling and teamgym & this handbook is designed to provide you with all the information you need to be part of one of those programs. The club aims to not only teach gymnastics, but, with a holistic approach, also play a part in developing lifelong personal skills and provide positive sporting memories that last a lifetime.

Please take time to read through this handbook thoroughly & keep it safe for future reference. The content of the handbook are as follows:

- Summary of squads - what we offer here at AGC
- Progression Pathway - Women's Artistic Gymnastics
- Gymnast expectations - including code of conduct
- Parental expectations - including code of conduct
- Membership, equipment & fees
- Social media & club photo/video policy
- Competition & events policy
- Welfare, complaints & grievance policy

By accepting your child's place within our squad program, you are agreeing to abide by all of the expectations & agree to follow all policies included in this handbook.

This handbook is specifically for our squads but you can find full club policies Y& contact details for our team on our website - [www.abingdongymclub.co.uk](http://www.abingdongymclub.co.uk)

# Summary of Squads



## Women's Artistic Squad

This program is led by Nikki Woodward, level 5 women's artistic coach & director of coaching at AGC.

We offer 6 competition pathways in our women's artistic program:

### **PREPARATION**

Our preparation program is designed for gymnasts aged 5-7 who have been talented identified through our recreational classes. In this group the children learn the fundamentals of gymnastics. Gymnasts invited to join this squad will typically train 3-4 hours per week & compete in 1-3 invitational or club competitions per year.

### **DEVELOPMENT**

Our development program is for gymnasts who are talent identified from either our recreational classes or our preparation program. The gymnasts in this group usually train from between 3-6 hours per week & it is for children aged 6-8. They will compete in 2-4 invitational, club and county competitions per year.

### **PRE-PERFORMANCE**

This group is for gymnasts who are working towards the British Gymnastics performance grades. Gymnasts will only be offered a place in this group for a maximum of 2 years. This group of gymnasts compete in county/regional events at the classic challenge levels up to and including copper level throughout the year, & will train three times per week.

### **PERFORMANCE**

This group is for gymnasts who are competing in the British Gymnastics performance grades. Gymnasts in this group will train three times per week and will also compete in the classic challenge pathway up to, and including Bronze level at county & regional events throughout the year. There is an opportunity to compete at national finals if the gymnast qualifies.

## PERFORMANCE PLUS

This group is for gymnasts who are competing at & working beyond the level of the performance grades & who are aiming to compete at national home nation events. The commitment level for this group is four sessions per week & gymnasts in this group will compete at county, regional & national events throughout the year.

## HIGH PERFORMANCE

We have two categories of high performance, Excel & FIG.

Gymnasts on the Excel pathway are working on the highest development level competition pathway offered by British Gymnastics. They will compete at county, regional and national competitions & the commitment level for these gymnasts is 4-5 sessions per week (dependant on age).

The FIG category is for gymnasts that have completed the Excel pathway, or qualified through the home nations to the British Championships. These gymnasts train for between 15-23 hours per week over 4-6 sessions and aspire to be members of national squad programs and compete internationally.

### *Important Note*

Women's artistic gymnastics is primarily an individual sport, with some team competitions available. All gymnasts are assessed as individuals & grouped accordingly. There may be some mixed training groups of gymnasts on different pathways & this is determined by the coaching team we have available at the club & the needs of the gymnast.

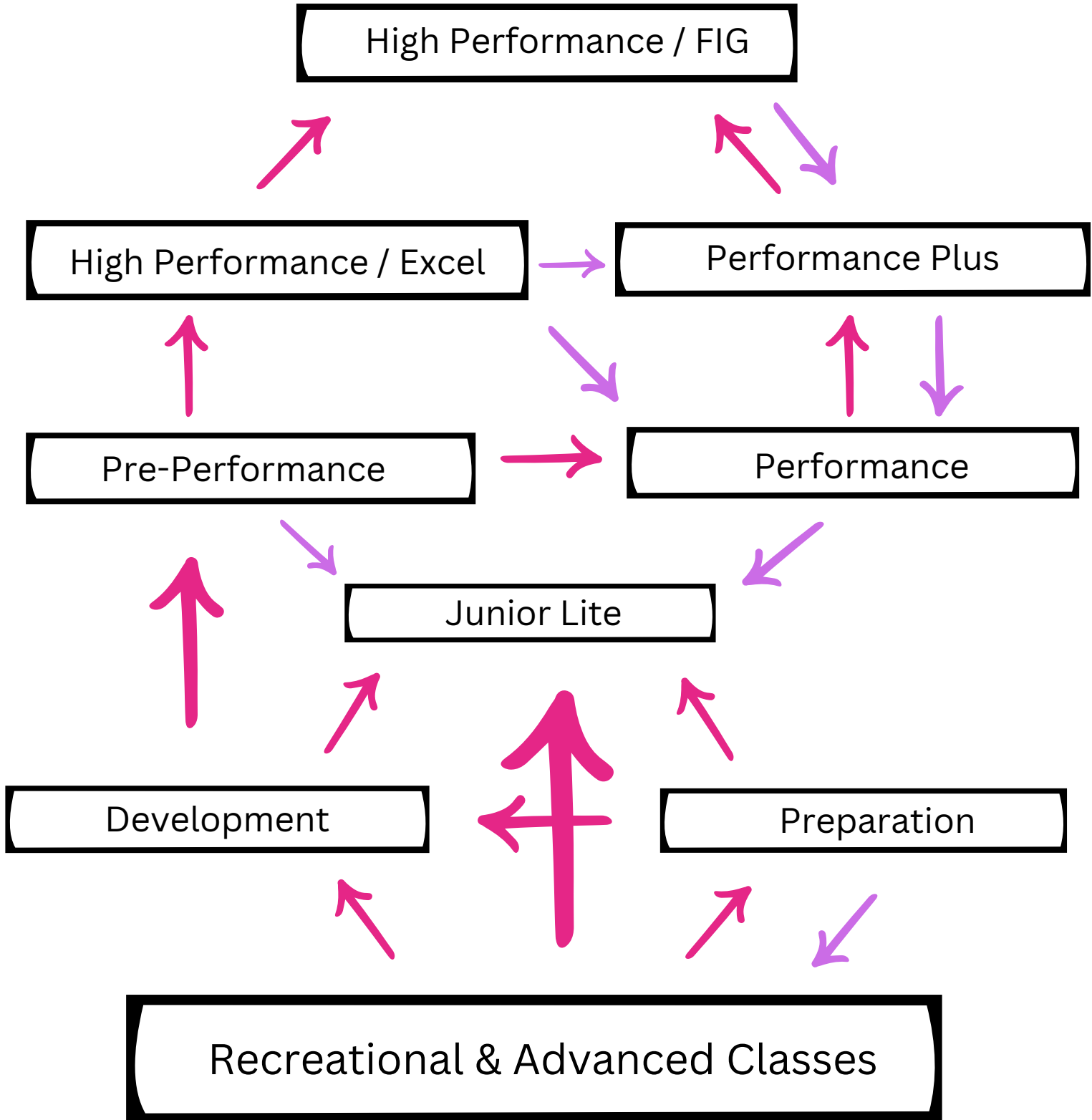
Squad gymnasts are re-assessed every 6 months & coaches reserve the right to move gymnasts into different training groups & onto different pathways at these 6 month intervals should there be a performance need to do so.

Gymnasts who accept a place in the WAG program are expected to have an average attendance rate of 75% throughout the year & full attendance in the 2 weeks prior to a competition. If you are unable to make this commitment then we ask that you do not accept the place.

Gymnasts who accept a place in the high performance (Excel/Lite) programs are expected to have an average attendance rate of 85% throughout the year & full attendance in the 4 weeks prior to a competition.

# Progression Pathway at AGC

## Women's Artistic Gymnastics



# Women's Artistic Lite Competition Squad

This program is led by Laura Davies, Women's artistic level 4 coach & we offer two groups within the program:

## **LITE JUNIOR**

This program is for gymnasts aged 8-11 and the commitment level is two training sessions per week, for a maximum of 6 hours in total. Gymnasts will compete in invitational, club & county events throughout the year. This competition category is only offered in Oxfordshire but it uses the widely recognisable British Gymnastics classic challenge rules. Gymnasts in this group compete in Tin & Zinc levels.

## **LITE SENIOR**

This program is for gymnasts aged 12-16 and the commitment level is two training sessions per week, for a maximum of 6 hours in total. Gymnasts will compete in invitational, club & county events throughout the year. This competition category is only offered in Oxfordshire but it uses the widely recognisable British Gymnastics classic challenge rules. Gymnasts in this group compete in Zinc & Copper levels.

## *Important Note*

Squad gymnasts are re-assessed every 6 months & coaches reserve the right to move gymnasts into different training groups & onto different pathways at these 6 month intervals should there be a performance need to do so. Gymnasts who are unable to train or compete at the level required for these groups will be offered a place within our advanced recreational program.

Gymnasts who accept a place in the WAG lite program are expected to have an average attendance rate of 70% throughout the year & full attendance in the 2 weeks prior to a competition. If you are unable to make this commitment then we ask that you do not accept the place.

# Tumbling Squad

Our tumbling program is led & coached by Laura Davies. We offer 2 programs within the tumbling program:

## **DEVELOPMENT**

Our development tumbling group is an invite only group for gymnasts from our recreational program that are identified as having a natural aptitude for the discipline. The development group is for children age 6+ and they compete in invitational, club & regional events. Tumblers in the development program train for between 2-4 hours per week.

## **CLUB & REGIONAL CHALLENGE CUP**

This group is for gymnasts age 7+ who are able to perform the tumbling runs required to compete at either club or regional level. Often gymnasts move into this group from the development program when the coach feels they are ready. It is possible for gymnasts from other disciplines to move into this group if they are able to meet the requirements.

The commitment level for this group is 2 sessions per week, a maximum of 6 hours & there is opportunity to compete at regional & national level.

## *Important Note*

Squad gymnasts are re-assessed every 6 months & coaches reserve the right to move gymnasts into different training groups & onto different pathways at these 6 month intervals should there be a performance need to do so. Gymnasts who are unable to train or compete at the level required for the competitive tumbling groups will be offered a place within our advanced recreational tumbling program.

Gymnasts who accept a place in the tumbling program are expected to have an average attendance rate of 75% throughout the year & full attendance in the 2 weeks prior to a competition. If you are unable to make this commitment then we ask that you do not accept the place.

# TeamGym Squad

Our teamgym program is led & coached by Aaron Eldridge. This discipline is a team sport & gymnasts must compete in both level & age categories in competitions. Therefore, the club often selects multiple gymnasts of the same age groups to make up our competition teams.

We offer 2 programs within the teamgym program:

## **DEVELOPMENT**

Our development teamgym group is an invite only group for gymnasts from our recreational program that are identified as having a natural aptitude for the discipline.

The development group is for children age 7+ and they compete in invitational & club events. Teamgym members in the development program train for between 2-4 hours per week.

## **COMPETITIVE MINI TEAMS**

This group is for gymnasts age 8+ who are able to perform the skills required on tumble, trampette & vault to compete at regional level. The gymnasts in this group usually come through from the development program or move across from another competitive discipline. The commitment level for this group is 2 sessions per week, a maximum of 6 hours & there is opportunity to compete at regional & national level.

## *Important Note*

Squad gymnasts are re-assessed every 6 months & coaches reserve the right to move gymnasts into different training groups & onto different pathways at these 6 month intervals should there be a performance need to do so. Gymnasts who are unable to train or compete at the level required for the competitive teamgym groups will be offered a place within either our advanced recreational tumbling or general program.

Gymnasts who accept a place in the teamgym program are expected to have an average attendance rate of 75% throughout the year & full attendance in the 2 weeks prior to a competition. If you are unable to make this commitment then we ask that you do not accept the place.



# Gymnasts Expectations



**Congratulations on being selected as a member of one of our squads! Here is some important information that you need to read & some rules that you'll need to understand and follow as a member of our competition squad:**

Gymnasts should arrive at training ready for their session. This means that hair should be tied up, jewellery removed and you should be dressed appropriately for sessions. Gymnasts in competition squads should wear leotards for all training sessions (leotards with open backs are not permitted at AGC)

Food and drink - Gymnasts must bring a refillable water bottle to all sessions. Fizzy drinks are not permitted. We adopt the British Gymnastics hydration policy and encourage gymnasts to get a drink as often as they need to during training sessions. Gymnasts who are training in a session that lasts for more than 3 hours are encouraged to bring a healthy snack with them to help fuel them during the session.

Gymnasts should notify their coach of any injury that may affect their training so that the coaches can adapt the session as necessary. Please refer to the BG policy on pain & injury as the club adopts this. Gymnasts should not attend training if they are ill & they should remain off training for 48 hours after a period of sickness and/or diarrhoea.

Coaches reserve the right to stop a gymnast from training if they feel that they are unfit to continue for any reason.

Gymnasts must not attend training if they are unfit through alcohol consumption.

Gymnasts should come to training with a positive attitude & show respect to coaches & other members of the club at all times. Gymnasts must follow the rules of the gym and look after all equipment.

Gymnasts should not practice their skills outside of the gymnastics facility for their own safety.

Gymnasts may be removed from the squad if their behaviour breaks our code of conduct on more than 3 separate occasions. The full code of conduct is on our website.

**And finally...**

**Gymnastics should be fun! If you need to talk to anybody about anything that is worrying you, please let us know and we will always do our best to support you! We hope you enjoy being a member of our squad, you have done brilliantly to be selected!**

# Parental Expectations



**We are excited to work together with you as we guide your child through their competitive gymnastics journey. We look forward to building a positive working relationship with you so that we can best support your child.**

**Our full codes of conduct are available on our website (which we encourage you to read), but here are some key bits of information for parents of squad members to understand and agree to:**

Parents are not permitted into the gym during training sessions. You are very welcome to sit in our waiting rooms and watch the sessions on the large monitors or through the window.

We schedule viewing weeks 4 times per year where you are invited in to watch.

We have a dedicated mobile phone for all squad communications & we ask that parents use this, or emails, to pass messages to coaches. The number is 07885285680. We ask that parents do not contact coaches on their personal numbers outside of working hours and only do so when away at events where the gym phone may not be present.

We have reviews twice a year for all squad groups. In some instances these are individual gymnast reviews and in others it may be a whole group meeting. If you would like more information around your child's progress outside of those times, please email your child's coach in the first instance and they will be happy to discuss with you. Parents should not talk to the coaches during active sessions as coaches must give the gymnasts their full attention for safety reasons.

Parents should not attempt to coach their children from the waiting areas or at home. Gymnastics is a very dangerous sport & our coaches are experienced and highly qualified. Coaching your child without any qualifications can cause not only a injury, but also poor technique.

Parents of squad gymnasts are required to volunteer at club events throughout the year & help with fundraising efforts. The squad program is heavily subsidised and the fees are greatly reduced so that we can offer affordable training to all. In return we ask for a small amount of your time.

We ask that parents provide positive reinforcement to their children & encourage them to foster positive relationships with their coaches and fellow gymnasts. Please be respectful about our club whilst you are in the facility and also when you are online.

Our coaching team are very dedicated and work very hard. Whilst we hope that this wouldn't happen, We do not expect any form of verbal/physical abuse to be placed upon our team and you may be asked to leave the club if you abuse any of our staff members. We have a complaints and grievance policy which you can find on our website & we would ask that you refer to this should you need to raise a concern.

# Membership, Fees & Equipment



**Monthly Fees** - Squad fees are payable on 1st every month. We ask that you set up a standing order and make your payment every month on this date. A £5 administration fee will be charged for any late payment of fees. Our fees are calculated and are based on training for 46 weeks of the year. This allows for the summer & Christmas shutdown periods, bank holidays & coaches annual leave/sick leave when training is cancelled. No refunds are made for cancelled squad sessions & there is no obligation for sessions to be made up unless more than 6 weeks worth of sessions are cancelled throughout the calendar year.

**Club membership** - The annual club membership is charged to all members once per year. The membership fee goes towards the upkeep of our equipment and facility & is non-negotiable.

**British Gymnastics membership** - all competitive gymnasts must have membership with British Gymnastics. This is completed directly with them via their website & is the parents responsibility to ensure it's paid annually. Gymnasts without this are not permitted to train or compete.

**Competition/Event Fees** - All additional competition/event fees must be paid in full & before the deadline. More information can be found on the competition & events page of this handbook.

We understand that competitive sport is expensive and we ask that you consider the affordability for your family before accepting a place in the squad. If you have any financial difficulties, please do let us know as we have a hardship fund which you can access.

## Equipment

The coaching team will inform you about what equipment your child needs for training. Please ensure that their equipment is in good working order & replace as necessary. If you are unsure of where to purchase the required equipment or what size your child needs, please contact their personal coach who will be able to help. Coaches will not allow gymnasts to train if they do not have the equipment they need to do so safely.

All competitive gymnasts are required to have a competition leotard & club t-shirt/jumper. Your coach can advise on where to get these from when they are needed. It's your responsibility to ensure that the kit fits & order new when the gymnast grows out of it. Please be aware that leotards are custom made for the club & therefore can take 6-8 weeks to arrive when we do an order.

For women's artistic gymnasts specialist choreographers are sometimes brought in to create fantastic, personalised floor and beam routines. All additional costs incurred will be passed onto the parents.

# Squad Social Media Policy



Abingdon Gymnastics Club utilises and encourages the use of social media. The club uses it to provide information and celebrate the success of our members. As parents/guardians you are likely to have your own accounts and we would encourage you to follow us on Facebook and Instagram for up to date news. We are also aware that many of the gymnasts have their own accounts and that is a decision for you to make as their parents as to when you feel they are old enough to do so.

We politely ask that gymnastics posts that are linked to our club are positive and supportive in nature. Should you have an issue or want to make a complaint we have a very comprehensive complaints policy (available on our website) and we would much rather talk to you and try to resolve any issues through a more appropriate channel (email, phone call, fact-to-face meeting).

It's not appropriate for parents or gymnasts to follow the coaches personal accounts & we ask our coaching team not to accept requests from gymnasts. We want to encourage friendly, healthy relationships between gymnasts and coaches but one that does not infringe on anybody's personal lives outside of their professional commitment to the club.

We are aware that there are lots of communities and forums online. If you have any specific questions about skill development, training hours or progression please ask us directly. Whilst those forums are great for making new friends and connections within the sport, there is a lot of mis-information shared and unintentionally this can create avoidable stress and worry.

If you are posting photo's of your child on social media at an event, please make sure that other people's children are out of view or that you blur or cover their faces. There are multiple reasons why people do not want their children's pictures online and we ask that you respect that when posting.

Staying safe online is really important, here's some tips you can share with your child:

- Don't give out any of your personal details - address/phone number/school etc
- Think carefully about which pictures/videos you share of yourself - once a photo is shared online it is available for download or can be saved by others.
- Keep your privacy settings as high as possible & don't share your passwords
- Don't accept friend requests from people you don't know & don't meet up with anybody you meet online - speak to your parents/carers if anybody asks you to
- Think about what you write before you post & respect other people's views - we don't always have to agree with one another but we can be respectful
- If you see something online that worries or distresses you, leave the site immediately & make sure that you tell an appropriate, trusted adult as soon as possible

# Club Photo & Video Policy



Abingdon Gymnastics Club has a photo and video policy that you will need to sign up to when you join the club. You have every right to not sign this if you are not comfortable with the terms and conditions. If you do sign it, this allows our coaches to take pictures and videos of your child during training and at competitions and events with AGC. We may post these on our website and social media platforms celebrating their success and to advertise the club.

Whilst you can retract your consent at anytime, we cannot guarantee that we can remove previous photos/videos that have been used or posted in the past. We will however not post anymore from the date of which you retract your consent.

You must not take any videos or photos in the waiting rooms or during squad viewing week. We do not have consent from every child & the club is very busy with more than 700 members weekly. In order to safeguard those who have not given their consent we have to adopt a no photo/video policy during training.

# Competition & Events Policy

Gymnasts in our competition squads are expected to take part in all competitions that the coaches recommend that they participate in. We will endeavour to get the dates to you with as much notice as possible but please understand that sometimes we don't have this information until the national, regional and county calendars are released. Gymnasts who regularly miss competitions, or the training sessions before the event, will be asked to move into our recreational program where that commitment isn't expected.

Competition fees are often non refundable and parents accept this upon entry. AGC will add a £5 fee onto all competition fees which helps to cover our admin costs and contributes to the cost of our coaches expenses.

If a gymnast is withdrawn by the AGC coaches, after initially being entered, the club will not be liable to refund the fee. Coaches may withdraw gymnasts if they are not physically or psychologically fit to compete for their safety, & this is a decision that is final. Coaches may ask for medical clearance if a gymnast is recovering from an injury and wishes to compete in a future event before the entry goes in.

Every event has it's own rules around spectator entry and tickets. Coaches will pass this information to you as soon as we receive it but this sometimes may be only a few days before the event.

As a squad member, gymnasts may be asked to compete out of county, and you may incur other costs such as hotel accommodation etc

The decision about which level a gymnast enters in a competition is one that is made by the coaching team at AGC. We will happily discuss our reasons for choosing the appropriate level for your child but we will never be pressurised into putting a child into a competition that they are not ready for.

If a gymnast wants to choose to move down a level this is always a request that we will support, & if we feel it's the right decision for them to do so we will also make this decision.

We want to ensure that all gymnasts have the best possible experience at competitions and the gymnast's health, welfare and happiness is at the heart of our decisions.

## *Welfare, complaints & grievance*

At Abingdon Gymnastics Club we aim to deliver an uplifting experience for all members. We do recognise that performance sport can create some level of stress at times and we want to be able to reduce that as much as possible by having open, honest communication with both gymnasts and parents.

We hope that you will feel comfortable speaking to your child's coach about any concerns that you have, but we also want to let you know that we have a welfare officer who is more than happy to talk to you & our board of directors are also available should you wish to talk to them. Our complaints policy is on the website & you can also contact British Gymnastics should you want to. All the details that you need to contact welfare, the directors or BG are available on our website.



**Thank you for taking the time to read the handbook.  
We hope that you are looking forward to joining the  
squad program at Abingdon Gymnastics Club & we can't  
wait to work with you!**