

# New Members

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome you and your son/daughter to 1<sup>st</sup> Gossoms End Scout Troop. We hope that they enjoy their stay with us.

This letter is to let you know what will happen in the first few weeks at Scouts if you are new to Scouting and to advise you of some differences from Cubs.

Please complete the [Health/Contact form](#) and return via email or by hand before you start at Scouts.

## 1. Meetings

Scouts meet on a Thursday evening between 7pm and 9pm.

Please arrive 10 minutes early as meetings start at 7pm

If you are late, please wait by the front door until flag break is finished.

We are often outside the hut so please ensure that your child is dressed appropriately for the weather. Some meetings are in Uniform and others in activity dress (casual clothing that is suitable for the activity) If you have a camp polo top or hoodie from a previous Easter or summer camp these are ideal to wear on activity dress nights.

We also meet on occasion away from the hut, at the Phasels Wood Campsite or Northchurch common for example. We say at the end of every meeting what is happening next week and details of the terms programme can be found on our website in the calendar [www.1stgossomsendscouts.org.uk](http://www.1stgossomsendscouts.org.uk)

## 2. The First Six Weeks

During the first five to six weeks your child can attend both Cubs and Scouts in order to get used to the change. If you are a direct entry you just attend Scouts.

The Scout section is different to Cubs in that the Scouts have to do much more for themselves as we move the programme on and they start to learn new skills. They also have to adapt to both new leaders and an older age range. It is impossible to decide if Scouts is for you by attending one meeting, which is why we say try it for six meetings.

Cubs start linking at Scouts either on the first Thursday of term or the first Thursday after half term once they are at least ten and a half. Due to the large number of Scouts it is not possible for them to start linking any earlier. Please wear your Cub uniform to the uniformed meetings until you are invested.

### 3. Investiture

After the first five to six weeks they will be invested into Scouts and they will make the Scout promise. The period may sometimes be shorter or longer depending on our programme as with some evening activities it is not possible to fit in investitures as well.

For this they will need a green Scout shirt, which can be purchased at **The Complete Outdoors** at Bourne End.

A neckerchief and badges are provided. We can provide a woggle for £1.50 or this can be bought at the above or from most Scout Campsites

The investitures take place at the end of the meeting, usually from 8.45pm and parents are welcome to watch if they wish. Please check with a leader for the timings because if we have a lot to invest we will start earlier.

### 4. Subscriptions (subs)

Membership Subscriptions are due after investiture for new members that haven't come up from Cubs.

If you are coming up from Cubs and have already paid your Cub subscription no further payment is required until next January.

Thereafter subs are collected once a year on the registration evening held in January. The amount is currently set at £144 per year. This money covers: -

- Annual fees to District, County and National bodies for insurance and leader training. This is called a capitation fee, and currently stands at £37 per year.
- Money is also required to cover the main bills of the hut such as rates, electricity, water and insurance. There is also an on-going amount of general repair and maintenance. However, for major repairs the group still has to look to fund-raising and donations.
- Badges.
- Neckerchiefs
- Equipment needed for Troop meetings.

[Gift Aid](#) - Please complete the Gift Aid form if you are a UK tax payer

This allows us to get the income tax you paid back on the subs. This gives us approximately £28 extra per person, for just a signature on your part.

See here for the latest info

<http://www.1stgossomscouts.org.uk/group-membership.htm>

## 5. Other activities

The Scout Leaders generally organise one weekend camp per month (subject to work and other commitments). There is also a weeklong Easter camp and 1 or 2-week Summer camp. We also try to run international camps at a minimum of one every 3 years.

These camps are optional but are very desirable and beneficial enabling the Scouts to put the skills they have learnt during the weekly meetings into practice. There will be an additional charge, the cost dependant on the location and activities. See the **Online booking** in the Scouts section of the website for more information.

## 6. The Programme

Next weeks programme is announced at the end of the previous meeting. We also have it on our website for the members that forget before they get home. Please look at the website before phoning a leader up as it can be difficult to get ready for a meeting if we have 40 phone calls to answer. Reminders are sometimes sent out by email and txt so make sure we have your address/number.

## 7. Discipline

With large numbers in the Troop discipline is essential. As Leaders we need to be able to trust the Scouts to get on with activities. If we cannot, then it is not possible to run some of the more adventurous activities. Simply, we will not tolerate the following behaviours:

### **Bullying.**

Scouts are intelligent enough to know when their actions make others feel bad.  
IT MUST NOT HAPPEN.

### **Talking during the brief periods that we require silence.**

We must give the rules out to every game and instructions for every activity, and we must believe that the Scouts have heard them. If they are talking, they are not listening and we will not continue with that game or activity.

## **Simple disobedience.**

Our rules are sensible and justifiable. If asked to do something, they are expected to do it. Leaders will be happy to explain the reasons for rules.

## **8. Absence/Lateness**

If your child is unable to attend a Scout meeting for any reason (Illness, School event, or not allowed out as homework hasn't been done) please let a Leader know before the meeting. We spend a lot of time planning the Scout programme and it is not always possible to run the activity we planned if half the troop is missing. The Leaders would appreciate as much notice as possible for events like school concerts or other regular commitments that clash with Scouts. Especially when we are meeting out of the hut please try and give us more than 10 minutes warning as it is difficult to reorganize the planned groups and appropriate supervision if lots of Scouts drop out at the last minute.

If you are doing another activity (like football) that means that you will be a few minutes late each week please let a Leader know about it so your patrol is not marked down at inspection.

Scouts who miss three meetings in any month may forfeit their place in the troop unless they have contacted their Patrol Leader or Scout Leader before the event. Obviously we will take exceptional circumstances into account.

If your child decides that they wish to leave the Scout Troop we would really like to know why. It may be that Scouts clash with another activity they do or they no longer enjoy Scouting. Whatever the reason we would like to know as it's possible something has upset them that we are unaware of and may be able to do something about.

## **9. Scouts cycling to Scouts**

We are happy for Scouts to cycle to and from Scout meetings with parents' permission but we feel that they must wear a helmet and have working lights if it is dark.

A high-vis top is also advisable on the darker nights if the scouts can be persuaded to wear one!

Scouts should be reminded that if they find the need to cycle on the pavement for safety reasons they should cycle at a speed that will not cause distress or alarm to any pedestrians.

Also that when they are in Scout uniform, cycling or walking, that they are representing the group and their actions will reflect on the group and I would prefer not to receive phone calls or emails from upset members of the public voicing their concerns.

## 9. Parades and Other Events

The Group parades formally twice a year. The first, in April, is for the St George's Day Parade (St George is the patron saint of Scouting). The second, in November, is the Remembrance Day Parade. We consider these to be important events and expect all Scouts to attend.

There are other events that take place during the year such as District & County events, camps and competitions. Details of these can be found on the website.

## 10. Uniform

For regular Troop nights the required uniform is: Scout shirt, Group necker and woggle, Scout or black school trousers and clean black school shoes.

(available from The Complete Outdoors, Bourne End or from

<http://shop.scouts.org.uk/> )

We suggest that the Scouts wear a t-shirt under their uniform shirt, so that they can take the shirt off if we are running around. No football shirts please.

Please ensure that your child's name is clearly marked on shirts and neckers.

Details of where badges go on the uniform are on the website.

Please label all of your child's clothing. Every year we end up with lots of un-named items which no ones claims!

## 11. Criteria for choosing a Patrol Leader (PL) or Assistant Patrol Leader (APL)

Please note that PL's and APL's are not chosen by age or the time they have been in the Scout troop, the criteria we use is;

- Their attendance over the last year - it is important for them to be present the majority of the time.
- Their attitude in wanting to help look after and teach their patrol and encourage teamwork.
- Setting a good example for younger scouts to follow.
- Have they gained additional experience by coming on the camps we run, sailing days and other District and County events or do they just attend on Thursday's

It is quite common for younger children who have come on more camps and have a higher attendance to be a PL or APL when there are older Scouts in their patrols with less experience.

PL's & APL will be on trial for their first term to see how they get on and will either then be made up to full status or if we think they are struggling and not doing very well someone else may get a trial before deciding.

Even after being made up to PL or APL do not assume this will be forever. Some PL's become complacent and start ordering their patrols around or their attendance drops off and other Scouts who demonstrate more potential will be given a trial.

It is important that we have the best possible person doing the job of PL & APL, especially as we have a large troop with 30-40 members.

## **12. Mobile Phones**

We have reviewed our mobile phone & tablet policy after consulting with some parents and decided that it would be best if Scouts did not bring them to meetings.

They are becoming a distraction during some of the activities and it is not always possible for the leaders to police what they are being used for.

If Scouts bring a phone or internet enabled device with them to a Scout meeting it should be labelled, turned off and put in a box in the leader's room until the end of the meeting.

Phones are generally not needed for Scout meetings though we understand some parents like their children to carry them if they walk to and from Scout meetings unaccompanied.

Scouts will still be allowed to bring them for the drop off and hike back to the hut nights but they are only to be used if there is a problem.

If brought on camps they need to be kept in box looked after by the leaders and they can only be used when there is adequate supervision available.

Whilst we will take care of Scout's property we cannot be held responsible for any damage or theft that might occur to equipment, in this unlikely event, whilst in our charge.

In the past phones and tablets have been allowed to camps for keeping the scouts entertained so they could play games on the long journeys.

As we are not able to supervise what they are used for when we are driving we can no longer allow this and instead will make available our camp games box which has a large selection of travel games and playing cards.

If a Scout needs to contact home during a camp and they do not have a phone with them a leader will lend them theirs or find a public phone box that they can use.

If anyone is caught using one when they shouldn't be it will be confiscated and the parents informed.

## **13. Online booking (camps & sailing)**

We have an online booking section on our website which shows the camps and events that we have planned and all the information you need to know about them. It's quicker & easier to make a booking online and if events are over subscribed we can easily see the order people booked.

## **14. Duke of Edinburgh Award**

If you stay in Scouting and move on to Explorers at 14 you will have the opportunity to do your Duke of Edinburgh Award within Scouting rather than through your school.

This offers many advantages as in Scouting we tend to have a higher standard as a lot of the activities are part of our normal scouting program, we have much smaller training groups than schools do and it is much cheaper!

If as a Scout you have taken part in some of our Easter & summer camps and come on our backpacking camps you will have an advantage over most people who are starting from scratch.