

Information Sheet for Parents

Dormansland Urban Saints



Dear Parents/Carers

We are delighted your son/daughter has re-joined/joined our Urban Saints' Group! This sheet gives you a little background information about the Urban Saints charity and our local group in particular.

Who are Urban Saints?

Urban Saints (which was called Crusaders until 2006) is a long-established, national organisation that helps set up and support local youth and children's groups with a Christian emphasis. Some groups may be linked to a particular school or church, whilst others are run by leaders from a variety of churches in the local community. There are over 1,500 local groups connected in some way with Urban Saints throughout the UK, run by over 15,000 voluntary leaders serving about 90,000 young people.

Urban Saints' supports local groups like ours by ensuring that all leaders and helpers aged 16+ have been through the statutory safeguarding checks, work to recognised best practice standards and are trained in running safe, inclusive groups for young people. Urban Saints also provides access to a range of camps across the UK, residential centres, overseas trips and other activities for young people.

Who runs our local Urban Saints' Group?

As with all Urban Saints' Groups, ours is run by a team of volunteers primarily drawn from Dormansland Baptist Church. All live, work or study locally, and all love working with young people and want to provide a really welcoming, exciting and enjoyable experience for those in our group. All leaders aged 16+ have been through the relevant DBS safeguarding checks and we follow the guidelines given in Urban Saints' Safeguarding Policy. Older teenagers from within the group are encouraged to help with the younger age groups – training and support is provided for them.

Who can join the group?

Any young person in school years 5 to 7 can join Dormansland Urban Saints as long as we are not full. We try to be as inclusive as possible and parents who have a child with additional needs who wishes to join the group are welcome to contact the leaders to discuss how best they can be accommodated. Although the group has a Christian emphasis there is no requirement that members or their parents attend a local church.

Our group meets on Fridays in term-time from 19:00 to 20:15 at Dormansland Baptist Church. There is no fee to join but we do charge £15 per term to offset some of the costs e.g., the purchase of equipment and other running expenses. The group is run on a not-for-profit basis.

We expect all young people who attend to co-operate with the leaders at all times. Our rules are very simple and are based on respect for each other, the property we each own and the buildings where we meet. Attendance at the group signifies a willingness to abide by the rules given by the leaders. Young people who persistently cause disruption or damage may be banned from attending in the future.

What sort of programme does the group offer?

Our group provides a welcoming, caring environment in which young people can enjoy a variety of supervised games, sports, crafts and other activities each week. Because we believe that spiritual well-being is an important aspect of any child's development, we also spend a short time looking at life issues affecting young people and give help and guidance from a Christian perspective. Camps, trips and other events may be arranged during the year. In the summer months we also use Dormansland Recreation Ground for games and to enjoy the play equipment. By completing the group membership form you consent to your child taking part in these activities and walking to and from the recreation ground with the group.

The children are provided with water and squash and occasionally enjoy snacks e.g. party food or cooking activities. Please speak to a leader if your child cannot take part in these activities. There is also a tuck shop with 2p, 5p and 10p sweets available.

What about safety matters?

The safety and well-being of those who attend our group is of the utmost importance to us. Urban Saints provides us with very comprehensive guidelines regarding the safe running of local groups and we pride ourselves on the level of care we provide here at Dormansland Urban Saints.

For the normal weekly meetings our responsibility for the young people begins when they enter the Dormansland Baptist Church, which should not be before 19:00. We will provide appropriate supervision for all the young people whilst they are engaged in group activities, but any who choose to go offsite during a group session independently do so at their own risk.

Our responsibility ends when young people leave the premises at the end of the group meetings. We ask that you arrange with your son/daughter whether they are to be collected or whether they have permission to go home on their own. Please let us know if they are to be allowed to leave on their own, and whether this is a permanent arrangement or depends on specific circumstances that you will let us know about. We will assume that a child's parent/carer, or someone else known to the child, will be the one collecting them, and we will not allow a young person to leave with someone they do not know unless the parent has told us in advance that this will be happening. If a young person is expecting to be met and they haven't been collected 15 minutes after the group has ended, we will contact the parents by phone unless they have informed us that they will be late, in which case at least two leaders will wait with the child until the parent arrives.

How do we communicate with parents and young people?

On the *Parental Consent Form* that you will be asked to complete when your son/daughter joins our Group we ask for your contact details so that we can let you know about our Group activities and are able to contact you in an emergency. In addition, you can also opt in to receive other general information about Urban Saints nationally.

At Dormansland Urban Saints we also like to keep in touch with our group members electronically. We only ever contact young people in relation to their membership of the group and this will be limited to email, Messenger or WhatsApp for those over 13 or 16 respectively (see below). When out on a trip, for example, it is useful for the team to be able to contact group members – and for them to contact the team – if there is an emergency. It is also sometimes helpful to pass on short messages or reminders about upcoming activities in between group meetings, and for those who have told us they are sitting school exams, for example, a 'hope it goes well' message from the team is one way we can offer support. We always keep messages short and factual, we don't send or respond to communications between 10pm and 8am, and we abide by any minimum age restrictions required by social media platforms (currently 13 for Facebook, Messenger and Instagram, and 16 for WhatsApp). All electronic communications between team members and young people are logged and one-to-one communications are shared with the wider team as part of our accountability process.

The *Consent Form* mentioned above is where parents (and young people aged 13+) may give permission for opting in to these communications.

How does a young person join Dormansland Urban Saints?

We ask that a parent who wishes their son/daughter to join the group contact one of the Main Leaders via email first to check there are vacancies – contact details are given below. We will then send them a *Parental Consent Form* which should be completed and sent with their child when they come to the group for the first time. If we are full then the child's name can be added to our waiting list and we will then inform the parents once a space becomes available.

Contact details – Main Leaders

Name: Liz Hellier **Email:** dormanslandurbansaints@gmail.com **Phone:** 07971 871189

Name: Chris Halford **Email:** dormanslandurbansaints@gmail.com **Phone:** 07581 098891
