

Milton Keynes Chess Club

Welcome Pack – November 2024

Welcome to the Milton Keynes Chess Club. This Welcome Pack is designed to give you as much information as you need to make your membership of the club as enjoyable and fruitful as possible. But if you have any questions, please talk to one of the Officers of the club, who will be happy to help in any way they can. You will find their names, and photographs to help you identify them, on the final page of this pack.

How is the Club run, and what does it do?

The Club has a Constitution, and a copy of the current Constitution is enclosed. It holds an Annual General Meeting, usually on the first Thursday of September each year, when a Committee is appointed to oversee the day-to-day running of the Club.

The Club runs a number of internal competitions each year, with different formats. There's a Club Championship, which involves a qualifying stage and then a finals stage, two "Swiss" tournaments, where each player plays five games against five different opponents, and two knockout tournaments. Other competitions are also run from time to time. And you can enter as many or as few as you like – just ask the Tournament Secretary for details.

But if you'd prefer to play informal "friendly" games, there are usually people in a similar position. So if you see someone who doesn't seem to be playing a game, don't be shy, ask them if they're playing a game already, and if they're not, if they'd like to give you a game.

The Club also runs a number of teams in the Bedfordshire League, which play against teams from clubs such as Bedford, Leighton Buzzard, and Luton. Matches are played on a home and away basis, and over recent years there have been between six and seven teams in each of the two divisions. We try to enter at least four teams in total, so that we can incorporate players of all strengths who wish to play.

When and where does the Club meet?

The Club meets every Thursday evening in The Berrill Cafe at the Open University, from 7:30pm until about 10:30pm (or whenever you want to leave). It closes between Christmas and New Year, but other than that it's open every week of the year.

You'll find that some weeks are much busier than others. During the League season (October to April) there are often two League matches on the same evening, and if these are at home then we have visiting team members as well as people playing internal club matches. On the other hand, if there are two away matches, the venue can be very quiet, with perhaps only 8-10 people turning up.

But whatever the turnout, there's always someone on hand to unlock our store cupboard, unpack the chess equipment and put it all away again at the end of the evening.

"Serious" games are played in the main area of the cafe. Anyone is welcome to observe any of the games in progress, but a strict rule of silence is observed, so that the players are not disturbed, and there can be no accusation of any assistance, however innocent, being given to any of the players.

"Friendly" games are played in the top area, as you walk in to the cafe, and this is also where players who have finished a "serious" game often come to analyse their game. Quiet discussion is allowed in this area, but please remember to take care with noise levels to avoid disturbing any remaining games. Occasionally you may hear a loud "SHHHH!" from someone – they're not being rude, they're just letting everyone know it's getting too loud for them to concentrate properly!

Are there any special events during the year?

Yes! There is an annual Christmas “Rapid chess” tournament, usually the Thursday before Christmas, with mince pies and other goodies, and everyone who stays to the end wins a prize – usually more than one.

There is also an annual stocktake of all the Club’s equipment the week before the AGM, which takes half an hour or so, and this is followed by a more frenetic “Rapid chess” tournament than the Christmas event, where you might play up to 15 games, but only once against any one player. The quicker you finish one game, the quicker you can start another, and the more games you play, the more likely you are to win the tournament!

What sort of strength are the players in the club? Won’t I feel totally outclassed?

There’s a wide mix of players in the club, ranging from near-beginners to county, national and international players. So whatever your strength, you’re likely to find someone who will give you a good game. However, we don’t teach people how to play from scratch – the club is set up to cater for players who already know the moves and have an interest in developing their passion for the game.

I’m still at school. Will I be able to join the club, and do you run a separate junior section?

We do not accept Juniors under 18 at this time.

We are very conscious of child and vulnerable adult safeguarding matters, and this requirement helps us, as an organisation, address any issues, however unlikely, that might arise. Our Lead Safeguarding Officer is Baird McClellan, and his deputy is Dominic Bartram

Do you run training sessions?

We don’t run formal training sessions, but you’ll find that if you talk to your opponent after your game and go through some of the ideas that both of you were considering, you’ll learn much more than if you just set up the pieces and start another game.

How do I get involved?

Please come along and introduce yourself to one or more of the Officers of the club. Talk to them about what you want to get out of the club, whether you’re interested in internal tournament games, League matches, “friendly” games, or any combination of these, and we’ll do our best to accommodate you.

Who are the current Officers of the Club?

The current officers are as follows:

Chairman – James Alexander
(photo below)

Secretary – George Ward
(photo below)

Treasurer – Alan Heath
(photo below)



Tournament Secretary – Adrian Elwin
(photo below)

Lead Safeguarding Officer – Baird McClellan
(photo below)



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