

# The Urban Movement Academy: More Than Just Exercise

Over recent years the number of young people suffering with mental health problems has increased significantly and for those waiting to receive any form of NHS treatment, the wait can be long and distressing. To ease the pressure of that lengthy wait, research has shown that physical activity is an effective way for many young people to manage their mental health, without the side effects associated with pharmaceutical medication. Regular exercise also reduces the likelihood of re-occurrence and relapse whilst reducing the longer-term risk of physical health conditions and weight gain.

When a young person gets involved in an exercise routine that they enjoy and which also enables them to meet other, like-minded youngsters, this can help reduce feelings of depression, anxiety, and tension. They can increase their self-esteem, their concentration which helps them through their school work, improve their sleep and generally manage their overall physical health and well-being.

If you are looking for a unique and different form of exercise programme for your child or teenager to participate in, have you considered involving them in Parkour? In Oxfordshire, The Pump House Community

Project in Swan Lane, Faringdon has been running the Urban Movement Academy (UMA) with Parkour classes successfully since 2011, involving young people from all over Oxfordshire. All classes are carried out with fully trained coaches.

Parkour or Free running was founded in France back in the 1980s. Although this non-competitive physical form of training has grown in popularity, there are only a handful of locations in the South of England where children and young people can participate at an official Parkour Centre – The Pump House Project is one of them with others located in Southampton, London, and Cardiff.

Those taking part in the Urban Movement Academy can train to move freely over and through any terrain using only the abilities of the body, mainly through running, jumping, climbing and quadrupedal movement. The participant focuses on developing the fundamental attributes required for such movement which includes functional strength and fitness, balance, spatial awareness, agility, co-ordination, precision, control, and creative vision. As a sport, it encourages self-improvement at all levels – it challenges one's physical and mental limits but also offers ways to overcome those obstacles. Your child will grow in confidence, determination to succeed and take responsibility for their own actions. They will also learn respect for others and be able to express themselves, be part of a community, discover the joy of play and creativity, all within a monitored safe environment.

The UMA students who attend classes each week at The Pump House Project range in age from 5 to 18 years, but some don't leave UMA then! With over 60 young people each week training with UMA, often students have gone on to become trained Coaches with Parkour UK.

Sarah Stoves, Manager of The Pump House Projects explains more about the Urban Movement Academy: "With children as young as five starting training with us





there is a strong focus on teamwork, despite this being very much a solo sport. They learn to be respectful of each other's space and learning ability, actively support and encourage each other in their personal achievements and goals which are all transferrable beneficial skills in their school classroom. As the children get more involved over time, for many of the students they take their participation very seriously, building on their commitment to the Academy, the sport and each other. Seeing the older students being able to take the opportunity to train to Level 1 has brought me unprecedented joy and a sense of achievement both for and in them. The commitment and strength of character to undertake the 5 days of training, away from home when training to become an

Assistant Coach, sees them going from a teenager to an adult. Practitioners find that what they learn participating in Parkour helps them in their day-to-day lives outside of the sport and helps them cope with whatever their lives bring to them."

The Pump House Project is a charitable community hub established with the aim of giving people, both young and old, who live in and around Faringdon a safe place to use, not only as part of the Urban Movement Academy but also for the many other activities held each week.

Freedom of Movement classes are held on a Friday evening from 6pm until 9pm for those aged 11 years and over at a cost of £8.00 per hour. The Urban Movement Academy runs on Saturdays from 10am until 5pm. These guided Parkour sessions are for those aged 5 to 18 years. Groups are selected not only by age but also ability to ensure the safety of the participants. Generally, the classes held earlier in the day/evening are attended by the younger children, they run for one hour at a cost of £8. The later classes include students who have, in many cases, been partaking in the sport for some years and enjoy taking time to work on particular moves under the guidance of their coach, with less structured teaching. These classes last for 1.5 hours at a cost of £12.



To book or find out further information about being part of the Urban Movement Academy and Freedom of Movement classes, please email [sarah.stoves@thepumphouseproject.org.uk](mailto:sarah.stoves@thepumphouseproject.org.uk) or call 01367 243245. For further information about The Pump House Project please visit **Facebook @ThePumpHouseProject** or **Instagram @the\_pump\_house\_project** to see what other events they are holding each month.