



School swimming and water safety

A guide for teachers involved
in school swimming



This guide is designed to support school teachers and swimming teachers with their current teaching of swimming and water safety.

Swimming is a statutory requirement within the National Curriculum and every primary school is expected to deliver a school swimming programme. Despite this, a high proportion of children do not receive school swimming lessons.

Swimming not only provides numerous health benefits but it is also an essential lifesaving skill and should therefore be a high priority activity within physical education.

Teachers who are involved in facilitating swimming lessons for primary school children should be aware of the National Curriculum programme of study for swimming and water safety.

Swimming in the National Curriculum For Key Stages 1 & 2

Swimming and water safety remains a statutory element of the National Curriculum.

The statutory requirement is for all pupils to achieve a **minimum** standard of swimming ability before they finish Key Stage 2 (end of Year 6). The National Curriculum programme of study for swimming and water safety is detailed below:

Key Stage 1 (5-7 years of age)

If schools choose to teach swimming at Key Stage 1, pupils should be taught to:

- move in the pool (for example, jump, walk, hop, and spin, using swimming aids and/or support)
- float and move with and without swimming aids; and
- propel themselves in water using different swimming aids, arms and leg actions and basic strokes.

Key Stage 2 (7-11 years old)

During the course of Key Stage 2, pupils should be taught to:

- pace themselves in floating and swimming challenges related to speed, distance and personal survival;
- swim unaided for a sustained period of time over a distance of at least 25m;
- use recognised arm and leg actions, lying on their front and back; and
- use a range of recognised strokes and personal survival skills (for example, front crawl, backstroke, sculling, floating and surface diving).



1. What children should be taught at Key Stage 2

The National Curriculum defines a programme of study for Physical Education. Each task should cover the four aspects of knowledge, skill and understanding required by the PE National Curriculum, as shown in the diagram below. It is essential that swimming in schools use all four aspects. Core aquatic skills are the foundation to learning to swim, therefore there will always be an emphasis towards acquiring and developing skills, but this should not be to the detriment of the other aspects.

Attainment targets

Attainment targets set out the knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils of different ages and abilities are expected to have by the end of each key stage. They consist of eight level descriptors of increasing difficulty. Level descriptors outline the types and range of performance that pupils working at that level should typically demonstrate.

The majority of pupils at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are expected to work within levels 1 to 5.

Levels are mapped against Key Stage and age in the table below.



Range of levels within which the great majority of pupils are expected to work		Expected attainment for the majority of pupils at the end of key stage	
Key Stage 1	1-3	At age 7	2
Key Stage 2	2-5	At age 11	4

Water safety

Not only is swimming good for a child's health, it could also potentially save their life. Drowning is the third most common cause of accidental death in children in the UK and learning to swim and the basics of water safety is therefore vital. Lifesavers, The Royal Life Saving Society UK and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents have developed a joint Water Safety Code, which is endorsed by the ASA based on the word SAFE.

Children should be taught the Water Safety Code from the beginning of Year 1 and orally assessed on its content throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 to ensure an understanding of the principles and content.

The water safety challenge card illustrated below can be obtained from the ASA to help test children's knowledge.

-  **'S' SPOT**
spot the dangers
-  **'A' ADVICE**
take advice
-  **'F' FRIEND**
always go with a friend
-  **'E' EMERGENCY**
learn how to help in an emergency

[illegible]



Aquatic skills - the principles of movement in the water

A basic understanding of how the body moves in water is needed for teachers to be able to plan effective activities for swimmers.

What is Movement Literacy?

'The identification and understanding of the building blocks of movement'

"The development of core FUNdamental skills that go into the make-up of any specific movement"

All movements are made up of basic FUNdamental 'skills' or actions. These skills are the basis for learning more difficult practices later on.

These FUNdamental building blocks are defined as...

Agility, Balance, Co-ordination, Speed, Running, Jumping, Throwing, Kinaesthetics, Gliding, Buoyancy, Striking with the body, Catching, Kicking, Striking with an implement

Listed below are the main aquatic skills that pupils need to develop as they take their journey through school swimming:

- Entry and Exits
- Buoyancy and balance
- Rotation and Orientation
- Streamlining
- Aquatic Breathing
- Travel and coordination
- Water Safety
- Health and Fitness

Swim skills - building technique

The development of effective and efficient strokes on the front and back are major objectives of the swimming programme of study. Therefore this is a good time to work on developing sport specific skills and excellent technique on all four strokes. A multi stroke approach will ensure interest levels remain high with the result that swimming should continue to be fun.

Stroke development in relation to speed and distance

Wherever possible, children should be given the opportunity to sustain beyond the minimum requirement of 25 metres and to develop speed. These two components will provide children with the possibility of becoming involved in competitive swimming and other aquatic activities and will help to meet some of the health and fitness requirements of the National Curriculum. Further information on all the aquatics disciplines can be found at www.swimming.org

Introduction to other aquatic activities

The ability to swim is often a pre-requisite for many other aquatic activities. Introducing these activities widens the swimming programme and provides a more rounded swimming education.

Knowledge of local opportunities for further development

All children who have a particular interest in or inclination for other aquatic activities should be provided with sufficient information to allow them to pursue the activity outside normal school hours.

To ensure that all children receive the very best aquatic education schools should ensure swimming lessons follow the British Gas ASA Learn to Swim framework.

The Kellogg's Awards Scheme rewards children for their achievements. Schools can purchase certificates and badges to track their progress and motivate them onto the next level.



2. General principles and considerations

Both school and swimming teachers should consider the following when delivering a school swimming lesson programme. These should be used as guidance, and where there are county swimming policies in place they should be the first point of reference.

Illness

As a general rule, if pupils are well enough to attend school then they are able to swim, however there are some cases to consider below:

- An extended period of stomach upset
- Infectious diseases
- Open wounds
- Coughs and colds
- Sore eyes
- Ear infections

Shared use of leisure centres/pools

Where pupils attend lessons at a leisure centre it is important to not only ensure that they are comfortable in the environment, but that they are taught to consider other users.

Equipment and teaching aids

There is a range of equipment and teaching aids available to help develop skills and confidence in the water. However, over reliance on aids is not encouraged as children can become over dependant on them.

Examples of equipment and teaching aids include:

- arm bands/discs
- buoyancy suits
- floats
- noodles
- variety of different balls
- egg flips
- sinking objects, e.g. bricks, hoops, novelties
- hoops
- pool dividers
- pace clock/stop watch
- music

Pool organisation

Effective pool organisation is an integral feature of a good swimming lesson.

- Every child should be assessed regardless of stated prior learning.
- The organisation must reflect the needs of the whole class. The most able swimmers have as much right to a lesson that is stimulating and challenging as those who are in the early stages of swimming.
- Some pools are designed with shallow water at each end with the deepest water in the middle section. The group organisation will need to reflect this.

Position of teacher on poolside

Careful consideration must always be given to the most appropriate positioning on the poolside to ensure a safe environment, ease of delivery and observation. Teachers should address the space which they are working in and how it can best be utilised for the benefit of all pupils.

Effective organisation of groups

The environment and conditions within which the teacher works will have an impact on the way the group is organised. However, there are a number of strategies that can be adopted to help make best use of the time available. Working in pairs or groups will also encourage pupils to evaluate their own and others performance.

Service Level Agreements

A Service Level Agreement (SLA) is a negotiated agreement between two parties where one is the customer and the other is the service provider. This is essential to define the parameters of the service, for the benefit of both the provider and the recipient. It is important that an SLA is agreed by schools and the provider of the school swimming programme.



Communicating with parents

- Any parent/carer with a school swimming query should first contact the school. Swimming lessons are carried out in school time and the school remains responsible for the pupils learning, even if not directly teaching.
- The school is responsible for following up any query/complaint that they are unable to respond to with the leisure centre and the centre should respond to comments through the school.
- Parents should be made aware of the lesson days and times to ensure that pupils bring the correct kit.
- Parents should be notified of a child's progress and achievements to enable them to offer continued support with swimming outside of school.

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups

In some cultures, there can be little encouragement of swimming within the family unit. Many children from BME backgrounds may be non-swimmers when participating in school swimming lessons for the first time. For many faith groups, modesty is the key issue in regards to swimming and therefore mixed sex sessions would not be permitted.

With these factors in mind a number of considerations should be made.

- Consult the families of children from BME backgrounds regarding how they wish their child to participate in school swimming lessons.
- Seek guidance from the local council or interfaith groups.
- Make alternative arrangements such as single sex classes.
- Schools, local authorities and pool managers should work together to remove unnecessary barriers to learning by making the following considerations:

- Block booking separate classes for girls and boys (either from a number of schools or with different age groups from the same school).
- Using same sex teachers for classes.
- Adopt flexible clothing codes.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

- Pupils with SEN should be identified to the swimming teacher well in advance of lessons so they can adapt their lessons accordingly and ensure effective communication.
- Most children who require additional help will be able to join in with the rest of their class with activities simply adapted to their needs. Some children may not be able to take part in this way and in this instance lesson programming should be reviewed.
- In groups with a number of pupils with disabilities, the ASA recommends that the lesson should be led by a swimming teacher who holds disability specific qualifications or CPDs. For further details visit www.theiosonline.com

- If a number of pupils with physical disabilities will be attending the swimming lessons, care must be taken to ensure that the pool and surrounding areas are suitable. If hoists are required, it is highly recommended to visit the centre to check that these are operational.
- The ASA provide a range of resources including a swimmer identification toolkit and a booklet 'Inclusion of Swimmers with a Disability' which gives information and advice so that teachers can become better informed and have access to the best possible teaching practices. Email disability@swimming.org for more information.
- For further support there is a network of ASA accredited clubs that have specialist knowledge on swimming for disabled adults and children. For signposting to your nearest club please email disability@swimming.org.



3. The ASA National Curriculum Training Programme (NCTP)

The National Curriculum Training Programme has been developed to provide deliverers of school swimming with the knowledge and skills to be able to deliver high quality swimming lessons.

It is made up of two modules, taking 15 hours to complete. The qualification is designed to be delivered using a combination of theory and practical throughout both modules.

Successful completion of Module 1 will equip a person to actively assist and/or support a more qualified teacher. An ASA attendance certificate will be awarded to all successful candidates.

Module 1 covers:

- Organising swimming activities safely and effectively.
- Managing small groups, time, space, pupils and equipment.
- Developing FUNdamental skills through fun and games.
- Introducing basic stroke techniques.

Successful completion of Module 2 will equip a person with the skills to plan and evaluate a programme designed to meet the swimming component of the National Curriculum and to teach without supervision a range of skills to groups within a school swimming programme.

Module 2 covers:

- Developing key skills.
- Developing a school swimming programme.
- Applying practices and drills to develop the four strokes; front crawl, backstroke, butterfly and breaststroke.

On completion of the National Curriculum Modules 1 and 2, the candidate will be awarded the ASA Certificate for Teaching School Swimming (Key Stages 1 and 2).

This certificate is part of the ASA National Curriculum Training Programme and is recognised by the Department of Education and by the Professional Development Board for Physical Education.



Further information:

Further information is available in the School Swimming and Water Safety pack. Please contact the ASA for a copy.

To contact the ASA with matters relating to school swimming:

E-mail: schoolswimming@swimming.org

To contact the ASA:

Tel: **0871 200 0928**

E-mail: customerservices@swimming.org

We can support you with:

- School club links
- Awards and certificates
- Facilities information
- Advice on suitable accessories and equipment
- Finding qualified teachers (your local authority will also have this information)
- Teacher development and resources

Website: www.swimming.org

Other useful websites:

The Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS)
www.lifesavers.org.uk

Department of Education
www.education.gov.uk

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) www.rospace.com

Association for Physical Education (AfPE)
www.afpe.org.uk

The Institute of Sport & Recreation Management (ISRM) www.isrm.co.uk

National Water Safety Forum
www.nationalwatersafety.org.uk

British Gas Swimfit www.swimfit.com

The ASA

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