



School Swimming Guide

A guide for everyone involved in
School Swimming at Key Stage 1 & 2



The National Curriculum states that by the end of Key Stage 2 all children should be able to swim a **minimum** distance of 25 metres unaided. It is therefore vital that schools offer a comprehensive and effective swimming lesson programme for all students up to the age of 11. This guide provides schools with suggested solutions to some of the barriers that schools face when trying to facilitate swimming lesson programmes. There are also case studies of schools that have successfully delivered swimming as part of the school curriculum, as well as practical advice on making swimming lessons as effective as possible.

The following issues are addressed:

- Lack of access to facilities.
- Pressures of the National Curriculum.
- Cost implications.

The ASA's key priorities for school swimming are:

- smaller class sizes
- more frequent lessons
- better quality lessons.

Anyone involved in school swimming should focus on these priorities when organising and facilitating pupils learning to swim.

The importance of swimming

Swimming is not just good for children's health; it is a skill that could ultimately save their lives. Drowning is the third most common cause of accidental death in children so it is vital that every child has the opportunity to learn to swim and gain core knowledge regarding water safety. 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.

1. Facilities

Lack of access to facilities is one of the key reasons why schools struggle to offer their pupils comprehensive swimming lessons. Whether it be the distance to the nearest suitable pool or dealing with issues regarding pool schedules there are a number of steps that can be taken to ensure lessons can take place consistently and effectively.

The ASA's recommendations on facilities

- Schools should make provision for all primary school children to have at least 24 hours of swimming to meet the National Curriculum Key Stage 2 swimming requirements.
- Investigate whether any other schools in the area have a pool that other schools can access. This may also cut costs.
- Block book pool time as early as possible. Pool operators often comment that it is becoming increasingly difficult to forecast demand and plan pool programmes for the following term. Early notification is therefore essential. Contact your chosen pool as early as possible to discuss timings that meet both the pool and the schools needs. The earlier the booking, the more chance there is of exclusive use, at least in certain areas of the pool such as a learner pool. Schools may also be entitled to a discount if they block book.
- Most pool operators seek to spread their swimming attendances over the day. The period between 9.30am to 11.30am and 1.15pm to 2.45pm is often a quiet period in public pools and is therefore an ideal time for school swimming lessons. Pupils' concentration is likely to be at its highest after swimming.
- Consider whether it may be possible to form partnerships with other schools and share pool time.

2. Swimming teaching

Most pool providers will allocate swimming teachers in the cost of pool hire. It is important to ensure that the swimming teacher holds a Level 2 Teaching Aquatics Certificate (ASA UKCC or equivalent).

The ASA's recommendations on swimming teaching

- Qualified teachers should teach to the national teacher pupil ratios, however to ensure quality teaching ideally these should be much lower.
- Where others are assisting it is important that the experienced teacher takes the non swimmers or lower ability groups.
- Swimming teachers and school staff should have the opportunity to attend relevant Continuing Professional Development courses to deliver the National Curriculum PE outcomes for swimming and its related disciplines.
- Swimming teachers should communicate and work closely with school teachers' and be able to offer help and advice.

3. School staff

Primary school teachers and teaching assistants play a key role in delivering swimming lessons. Some counties insist on school staff holding the National Curriculum Training Programme (NCTP) qualification before assisting in teaching. School staff should liaise with the swimming teacher to clarify roles on the poolside, link the lessons to other National Curriculum subjects and to offer advice with regard to pupils.

The ASA's recommendations on school staff

- School staff should take an active role in the swimming lesson and work closely with swimming teachers.
- Those supporting the swimming teacher may assist by taking a small group of similar ability pupils.
- Anyone involved in the delivery of primary school swimming lessons should take the NCTP qualification. The programme consists of two modules and once completed will provide the candidate with the ASA Certificate for Teaching School Swimming (Key Stages 1 and 2).

4. Transport

Transport can be the most costly part of school swimming and therefore all efforts should be made to reduce costs where possible. Consideration must also be given to safety and regulations set by transport companies and that of the education authority.

The ASA's recommendations on transport

- Centralised organisation of transport within Local Education Authorities or Local Authorities would be advantageous to reduce cost and ease organisation.
- Coach companies may have spare capacity during midweek days and buses can therefore be hired at reasonable rates.
- Schools should look to share transport where possible.
- An alternative area for consideration is community buses.

Case study: Nottingham City Council's school swimming programme

Nottingham City Council works in conjunction with the Children's Services Transport Team to offer schools a unique centralised transport system. The success of the programme has been a result of the following factors:

- The centralised system provides a 'one-stop-shop' facility, removing the need for administration, booking and organisation by the schools.
- Tender process for the whole of Nottingham City Council's school swimming programme enables the council to offer schools very competitive prices for transport.
- A dedicated member of staff deals with the swimming and other sport transport, allowing the system to run very efficiently.

5. Swimming and the National Curriculum

By the end of Key Stage 2, all pupils should achieve the National Curriculum standard of Level 4 in PE of which swimming is a key element. Despite this an alarming number of children do not receive swimming lessons and are unable to meet the minimum Key Stage 2 attainment targets.

As in all National Curriculum areas, pupils are encouraged to progress to the highest level possible. Where pupils continue to swim, or have already reached the attainment level, sessions must be planned to build upon the skills that they have already acquired.

With regards to water safety, the pupils are assessed following a programme of study based on the principles and skills of water safety and survival.

As a minimum, 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 25 metres
- use recognised arm and leg actions laying on their front and back
- use a range of recognised strokes and personal survival skills (for example, front crawl, backstroke, breaststroke, sculling, floating and surface diving).

With 14 subjects featured in the current National Curriculum at Key Stage 1 and 2 it is disappointing that swimming is often not seen as a priority. Swimming and water safety can however be used to link with other areas of the curriculum in a number of ways.

The ASA's recommendations on swimming and the National Curriculum

The main cross curricular links are:

- **Science** - investigating propulsion with arms and legs, exploring forces.
- **PSHE** - finding out why swimming is good for your health.
- **English** - evaluating, explaining and describing swimming activities; evaluation is highlighted as an appropriate activity in each year of the planning framework in teaching, speaking and listening at key stages 1 and 2.
- **ICT** - they could use ICT to design their own chart or certificate to measure their attainment and achievement; or use a word-processing package to design a poster about water safety or pool hygiene.
- **Maths** – pupils could be asked a number of questions, for example:

Can you estimate how far it is from one side of the pool to the other?

How much further do you need to swim to reach 25 metres?

How many widths of the learners' pool would you need to complete 25 metres – and then 100 metres?

What is the total distance swum by the group when making their furthest swim today?

Aquatics can also meet the outcomes of the other five activities in the PE curriculum:

- Dance - synchronised swimming
- Gymnastics - diving, synchronised swimming
- Athletics - competitive swimming
- Games - water polo
- Outdoor and adventurous activities - personal survival

6. Meeting the needs of all young people

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 swimming so boys and girls being part of the same session would not be permitted. With these factors in mind a number of considerations should be made.

The ASA's recommendations on meeting the needs of all young people

- In the first instance the family should be consulted regarding how they wish their child to participate in school swimming lessons.
- Guidance may be sought from the local council or interfaith groups.
- Making alternative arrangements such as single sex classes can often solve these issues.
- 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 form the same school).
 - Using same sex teachers for classes.
 - Adopt flexible clothing codes.

Case study: Golden Hillocks School Sports Partnership

Golden Hillocks School Sports Partnership is situated in Sparkhill, one of the most multicultural communities in Birmingham. Following a swimming audit it was discovered that only 2% of the children in the Partnership's Schools were achieving the minimum Key Stage 2 swimming attainment level. Sparkhill was therefore in danger of creating a society of non-swimmers. This would have the knock on effect of the community not producing lifeguards and swimming teachers for the future to combat the decline in swimming and support the needs of the community. The success of the programme has been a result of the following factors:

- The Partnership Development Manager developed a multi faceted approach to the problem with the active partnership of the local Leisure Centre Manager.
- The existing lifeguards were trained as Assistant Swimming Teachers to help with teaching ratios and absence cover.
- The pupil teacher ratios for the existing school swimming programme was lowered by employing more swimming teachers. The level of expertise of the school staff was increased by running several Top Up Swimming Courses for Schools.



7. Pupils with Special Education Needs (SEN)

Pupils with Special Education Needs should be identified to the swimming teacher well in advance of the 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, however some children may not be able to take part in this way. In this instance lesson programming should be reviewed.

The ASA's recommendations on pupils with Special Education Needs (SEN)

- 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.

Case study: Richmond Hill

Richmond Hill is a special school for children with severe and complex needs. Their school swimming programme has been a success as a result of the following:

- Each child had access to at least two terms or more of swimming across Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Three or more staff worked in the water with the children giving one to one support where required.
- In total six swimming lessons were ran over a typical week. Richmond Hill excels in their commitment for their children to learn to swim.
- Top Up sessions ran over a three week period on three consecutive days for an hour's duration.
- The pupils had access to nine sessions in total.

8. Reluctant swimmers

Not all children will take to swimming lessons immediately and all children will learn at different rates. Pupils may be reluctant to swim for a number of reasons which could include them having never swam before, swimming not been encouraged by the child's family or the child being afraid of the water.

The ASA's recommendations on reluctant swimmers

- Use the Small Steps approach to learning to swim which is based on certain key beliefs:
 - Every child can learn to swim.
 - The initial swimming learning experiences are very important.
 - Not all children learn at the same rate.
 - There are a wide range of pupil abilities included in mainstream schools.
 - Success and achievement are important motivators to improve performance.
 - There are essential developmental skills in swimming.
- Set clear and realistic goals. The swimming teacher must explain clearly to the pupil the steps that are being taken so that they know when a goal has been reached and it is possible to move onto the next goal.

9. Working with parents

In order to ensure swimming lesson programmes are successful parents must be kept informed of their child's involvement throughout. Swimming is normally one of the few off-site school activities. Unless a child is an extremely competent swimmer, many parents have slight apprehensions when they know their children are taking part in swimming.

In pilot schemes, it was found that the pupils who were unable to reach the Key Stage 2 attainment level were often pupils who came from family backgrounds in which swimming is not important. Often they were pupils who lacked either the support or the finance to swim as a family unit when they were not learning with the school. Keeping these parents informed is particularly important.

The ASA's recommendations on working with parents

- Inform the Board of Governors and the Parent Teachers' Association at an early stage about how the school proposes to run the programme. PTAs generally include key opinion formers among parents and can be the body that funds and provides resources for general school swimming lessons.
- Many local authorities now provide free swimming weeks or days and it is worth informing parents of these opportunities.



10. Beyond Key Stage 2

Transition planning from primary to secondary schools

The records that have been made in relation to pupils' attainment at Key Stage 2 swimming - whether they have taken part in additional swimming or regular classes - should be made available to each pupil's new secondary school. Attention should be drawn to any pupils who have not been able to attain the Key Stage 2 standard. This may have an impact on their ability to take part in other water based sports at secondary school and avoid them being exposed to any danger from water.

Details of summer swimming schemes for pupils

Primary school teachers should also recommend to both weaker swimmers and those pupils who have recently attended additional lessons, that they either take part in summer courses at their local pool or swim with their parents at the pool.

The standard of swimming 25 metres is a minimum, not a maximum requirement. A pupil who can just swim 25 metres will still be exposed to danger in water in the wrong circumstances. Pupils should be encouraged to practice their swimming in order to build upon the basic skills and make them a more competent swimmer.

There are two main ways of continuing to practice safely:

- Through unstructured swimming sessions at a local swimming pool.
- Through a structured British Gas ASA Learn to Swim programme. Parents should be encouraged to book these well in advance. Often summer crash courses are accessible through free summer swimming initiatives.

Further information:

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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