



Swimming Policy

Approved by Standards Committee in Spring 2019, reviewed January 2022 with the swimming risk assessment reviewed annually. Next review Spring 2025

INTRODUCTION

Swimming is an important life skill. It is also a highly beneficial activity as it provides skills for health and enjoyment, and gives access to many other water-based recreational activities. It is one of the few activities that people can enjoy all their life either on their own or with friends and family of the same or different ages, whether just for fun or competitively. We owe it to our youngsters to give them the best chance to learn to swim, as proficiently and as early as possible.

Nonetheless, it is a recreational and teaching activity which also carries with it the evident hazards of death through drowning or injury by brain damage through near drowning. The teaching and learning of swimming and water safety therefore requires the utmost care on the part of all concerned.

We have a responsibility to ensure that we take action to safeguard staff and pupils. Staff responsible for swimming lessons should be aware of:

- The swimming risk assessment
- Water safety procedures and pool rules
- Any special needs or medical conditions of pupils.

Amy Martin is the nominated member of staff delegated the responsibility of swimming co-ordinator to apply the swimming safety policy and procedures for our establishment.

It also includes monitoring and recording of:

- appropriate risk assessments
- being familiar with the water safety rules and procedures
- working with the lifeguards on duty and other swimming teachers
- entering the water and effecting a rescue if necessary
- planning, developing and monitoring the swimming programme
- preparing schemes of work and lesson plans appropriate to pupils' ages, abilities and interests
- identifying specific groups for each swimming session
- checking pupil numbers before, during and after sessions.

Teachers have a duty of care that operates for any activity in which children are involved; they cannot transfer that duty of care to anyone else. The law has described this as equivalent to the standard expected of a reasonable and careful parent. This applies to all

activities within the school curriculum and to extra-curricular activities organised by the school during and outside school hours, whether on or off the school site.

In relation to swimming this means that:

- children are appropriately supervised when changing
- checking pupil numbers before, during and after sessions.
- pupils are under control at all times
- normal operating and emergency procedures are enforced
- teachers have an overview of the teaching of children and the conduct of the class.
- Children are taught and encouraged to follow the water safety rules and procedures.
- Understanding and following appropriate risk assessments
- working with the lifeguards on duty and other swimming teachers
- entering the water and effecting a rescue if necessary
- taking into account any Covid protective measures in place

Class teachers should accompany their own class to swimming whenever possible, because of the special knowledge they have of their pupils.

Swimming instructors will hold a relevant national teaching qualification and may be employed by the school to teach. They have responsibility for ensuring the safe conduct of the class in the water and on the poolside, in line with good practice and their training, which includes:

- being familiar with the water safety rules and procedures
- working with the lifeguards on duty
- entering the water and effecting a rescue if necessary
- developing and monitoring the swimming programme
- preparing schemes of work appropriate to pupils' ages, abilities and interests
- identifying specific groups for each swimming session
- helping the class teacher to check pupil numbers before, during and after sessions.

A member of school staff must always be in charge and present when children are being taught swimming. This responsible member of staff will maintain their duty of care for the children and any other staff or volunteers assisting.

Other adults can be extremely helpful and may be absolutely essential, to support the delivery of swimming in the PE curriculum and in the extended curriculum, whether on or off site. Teachers cannot transfer their duty of care to these other adults, but where they have experience in the teaching of swimming they may be involved in it.

They can:

- supervise changing (not on own)
- look after any children who are not swimming or who are unwell.
- Support swimming teachers as appropriate

Additionally, those who have the necessary experience, expertise or qualifications to teach swimming may replace a teacher who does not. However the Headteacher must be aware that they hold the responsibility for ensuring that they are competent. The pool environment is more isolated than a classroom where they can more easily call upon qualified teacher support if required. Because the teaching of swimming and supervision of changing involves significant contact with children, all adults should be DBS checked (Disclosure and Barring Service).

Pool operators have a responsibility for the safety of all who use their pools. Whenever children swim, there must be someone present with appropriate life guarding, rescue and first aid skills.

Whoever it is, the person responsible for lifeguarding, rescue and first aid will:

- be familiar with the pool Normal Operating Procedure (NOP) and Emergency Action Plan (EAP)
- maintain constant observation of the pool and pool users
- carry out rescues and initiate any other emergency action required
- be able to effect a rescue from the bottom of the deepest part of the pool
- administer first aid
- prevent unsafe activities
- ensure that the pool is never left unsupervised whilst in use
- assist in the running of emergency drills
- secure the pool against unauthorised access when not in use
- communicate with children and/or teaching staff to achieve the above

Lifeguards must work with class teachers and teachers of swimming. Lifeguard instructions for safe conduct in the pool should be followed at all times.

STAFF TO PUPIL RATIOS

There must always be at least two adults present on the poolside. Staff should carry out and record a thorough risk assessment to help determine pupil: staff ratios. The following ratios are based upon safety considerations rather than teaching requirements:

Recommendations

Non-swimmers and beginners: 12:1

Young children, normally primary school age, or adults being introduced to swimming who are unable to swim 10 metres unaided on back and front.

Improving swimmers: 20:1

Swimmers of a similar ability to each other who can swim at least 10 metres competently and unaided on their back and on their front. It is recommended that the lesson be confined to an area in which the children are not out of their depth.

Mixed ability groups: 20:1

Pupils with a range of ability (from improving to competent) where the least able and least confident are working well within their depth. Swimmers' techniques, stamina and deep water experience should be considered.

Competent swimmers: 20:1

Those swimmers who can swim at least 25 metres competently and unaided on front and back, and can tread water for two minutes.

Competitive swimmers: 30:1

Training only with very competent swimmers.

Specialist swimming activities: various

As a school we have decided to ensure that these ratios are abided by. We will ensure that a ratio of 1 adult to 6 children for non-swimmers and beginners and 1 adult to 10 children for improving and advanced swimmers. Sometimes according to a specific child or groups needs these ratios may change such as 1 to 1 for a very timid swimmer.

SUPERVISION OF CHANGING ROOMS

Children should be supervised whilst changing.

- If children are using a mixed sex changing area with cubicles then a member of staff of either gender may supervise.
- If using open-plan single-sex changing areas then only staff of the appropriate gender should enter the changing room, unless in an emergency.

School staff sometimes have to operate a remote supervision procedure when gender balance is not appropriate. This can only happen where the children are responsible enough and mature enough to take on significant personal responsibility whilst changing. In order to protect themselves, two members of staff should operate together when controlling by voice through doorways, or entering changing areas in an emergency.

To ensure that the allocated member of staff is not left alone with a single child, all children must wait until everyone is together before moving off. All staff used to supervise changing rooms must be DBS vetted.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE TEACHING OF SWIMMING

It is essential that provision is made for lifesaving, first aid and resuscitation cover in all school swimming sessions. A lifeguard will be present for all sessions and will be responsible for lifesaving, lifeguarding and first aid (including resuscitation) skills.

Ideally the best qualified swimming teacher/instructor should teach the least able pupils. However this will need to take into account the ability of all staff in the team to effect a rescue (if necessary) at the depth of water at which they are working. Therefore, usually the two qualified swimming teachers will be responsible for the non-swimmers and beginners groups. Though if there are a large number of very able swimmers then one of the qualified swimming teachers might be assigned to work with this group in the deep end.

School Staff

Any adult teaching swimming lessons must be competent to do so by virtue of experience or qualification. Nobody should ever teach swimming without at least one other person present to assist with first aid and rescues if necessary. The numbers and level of support will depend upon the circumstances.

Other Adults Assisting (Not Leading) the Teaching of Swimming

Where an adult other than a teacher or swimming instructor assists with swimming they should be given a clear understanding of what is expected of them.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The pool, children and staff participating will all have unique features that make particular demands upon safety. Therefore the swimming risk assessment will be reviewed annually.

Risk Assessment for Pool Users

The school's swimming co-ordinator must undertake a written risk assessment, for the visit to the pool and the activities planned, as part of their lesson planning process and should take account of:

- the age and ability of the children in each class
- the activities they will be undertaking
- the qualifications of the people leading and supporting the session.

The risk assessment should be written before the swimming unit of work commences, though it may need to be revised in the light of experience. Any risks specific to individual children with special needs of any sort will be covered in Individual Education Plans (IEPs) or contained within the teacher's lesson plans. An on-going, unwritten risk assessment should be undertaken by individual members of staff, each time they attend the pool, to take account of the situation at that time and to take action to control any identified risks.

Using Pools on Educational Visits

Where school parties use swimming pools as part of an educational visit the above conditions should still be applied. Use is likely to be of a recreational nature. A qualified lifeguard must be on duty and teachers must work with the lifeguard to supervise the session. They should not stand together, or sit talking on poolside but should actively work together as part of a team safeguarding all the children. If the pool has no lifeguard cover and the school is providing its own lifeguard, arrangements should be made to ensure sole use of the pool, so that other guests do not increase the numbers in the water. Lifeguarding qualifications should be to the same standard as for a similar activity in the school's own or hired pool. Where the lifeguarding duty is given to an appropriately qualified student, the teacher will retain overall supervision responsibilities to guarantee appropriate levels of behaviour and adherence to pool rules.

Open Water – rivers, lakes, reservoirs, canals or the sea

Swimming and paddling or otherwise entering the waters of river, canal, sea or lake should never be allowed as an impromptu group activity. The pleas of young people to be allowed to bathe – because it is hot weather, for example, or after a kayaking exercise - should be resisted where the bathing has not been considered as part of the overall plan. Bathing activities should take place only when a specific risk assessment has been completed and control measures put in to reduce risks to an acceptable level. It is good practice that, wherever possible, group leaders seek out recognised bathing areas that have official surveillance i.e. qualified lifeguard cover. Even then, group leaders should be aware that young people may mingle with members of the public and be lost to view. Young people should always be in sight and reasonable reach of their supervisors.

The group leader should:

- be aware that many children who drown are strong swimmers
- ascertain for themselves the level of the pupils' swimming ability
- check the weather
- be aware of the local conditions – such as currents, weeds, rip tides, a shelving, uneven or unstable bottom – using local information from the lifeguard, coastguard, harbourmaster, police or tourist information office
- beware of rocks, breakwaters and other potential hazards
- look out for warning signs and flags: a red flag means it is unsafe to swim; yellow flags mean that lifeguards are on patrol in the area between the flags; a black and white flag means it is an area used by surfers and not suitable for swimming
- designate a safe area of water for use by the group;
- brief the group about the limits of the swimming area
- avoid crowded beaches where it is harder to see young people
- be aware of the dangerous effects of sudden immersion in cold water
- be aware of the dangers of paddling, especially for younger children
- ensure that young people have not eaten (for an hour) before swimming
- ensure the activity is suitable for the young people, especially any with special needs or disabilities
- adopt and explain the signals of distress and recall
- ensure that buoyancy aids, lifejackets etc. are used where appropriate
- carry out regular head counts
- be aware that it is not always possible to tell when someone is in difficulties.

Supervisors should:

- have clear roles – at least one supervisor should always stay out of the water for better surveillance, even where lifeguards are on duty
- take up a best position from which to exercise constant vigilance
- divide their careful watching between staff who stand in the sea and look landward towards the group and staff who stay on land and watch the group from that vantage point
- give the young people their full, undivided attention
- always follow the advice or directions of a lifeguard
- never swim themselves unless it is to help a young person in distress
- not join in any of the games with young people
- advise young people to stay well within their depth
- be prepared to act immediately when a young person appears to be in difficulties
- ensure that young people leave the water immediately if they get too cold, especially if toes and fingers look blue or feel numb – could suggest the onset of hypothermia
- recognise that a young person in difficulty may not wave or shout – all of their energies could be focussed on trying to keep afloat.
- Jumping and diving, as from sea cliffs or gorge environments should be treated as a specialist adventure activity and be supervised accordingly only by a competent and qualified adventure activities leader. Supervising a low key activity next to deep water

should receive extra consideration during the planning process and on the visit itself. (Refer to 2003 DfE and CCPR Water Margins document.)

Any open water activity will be reviewed and risk assessed individually.

SWIMMING CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

Pupils should wear appropriate costumes for swimming that conform to safety, cultural and teaching requirements. It is important that swimming clothing is relatively tight fitting so as to minimise the effect of drag that water-logged clothing can create. Sensitivity is required to ensure: the correct balance when cultural demands require looser fitting garments the need to be able to see the movements that limbs and joints are making in the water to ensure appropriate learning. Pupils should not be excluded from swimming because of verrucae or similar foot infections. Swimming can continue provided a verruca sock covers the infected area.

Jewellery

The wearing of jewellery whilst swimming is hazardous and must not be allowed, except where they cannot be removed for health, safety or religious reasons, when they must be made safe. This may mean taping over (for example) newly-fitted ear studs, medical bracelets or religious symbols, but staff must be aware that the usual tapes used for this purpose in PE lessons may come loose in water and a stronger, waterproof adhesive will be needed. If this cannot be achieved, the child may not be allowed to participate in swimming activities and may need to be given an alternative activity such as helping to evaluate the performance of other pupils.

POOL SAFETY OPERATING PROCEDURE (PSOP)

Schools using other schools' or public pools will need to be aware of the pool's NOP in order to ensure that they do what is expected of them to keep themselves and others safe and aware of the EAP to know what to do in an emergency. You must ask for copies of these documents before using the pool.

POOL RULES

Rules for Pupils

The pool rules should be explained to all pupils before their first swimming lesson of the school year. They should also be reminded at the start of each term, ideally when the emergency procedures are tested and checked with pupils. Rules will need to be determined by local circumstances, but should generally include:

- never go onto poolside until a member of staff is present
- do not enter the water until instructed to do so
- no running on poolside
- no chewing gum or eating sweets or other food on poolside
- no shouting or whistling
- no jumping in or diving, except under instruction
- no pushing others in
- no holding others under the water or deliberately splashing them
- no jewellery to be worn
- no outdoor shoes on poolside

- to pay attention on one short blast of the whistle
- to leave the pool on one long blast of the whistle
- all instructions from staff to be obeyed promptly.

Rules for Staff

There are rules to ensure that lifeguards remain vigilant at all times. The following should also be practised by school staff supporting qualified lifeguards:

- never leave the poolside unattended
- keep alert and never turn your back on the pool or cease watching the pool when on duty. Move position every five minutes or so divide the area up into zones and constantly scan the area, counting heads, watching out for vulnerable or weak swimmers.

DIVING

Additional hazards are created when swimmers are allowed to dive into the pool. These need to be carefully managed. The teaching of diving should only be undertaken by an appropriately qualified teacher or swimming instructor. No diving shall be permitted in shallow water. A minimum depth of at least the full reach height of the pupil (i.e. standing on the bottom of the pool with arms fully extended above the head) and never less than 1.5 metres depth of water and at least 7.6 metres forward clearance is required. The pool freeboard (height of poolside above the water level) must not exceed 0.38 metres. Only very flat horizontal dives (i.e. racing starts) should be taught in school swimming lessons and then only if the teacher or instructor holds an ASA Teacher Certificate (or higher) and is fully conversant with the contents of the current ASA Teaching and Coaching Regulations. (ASA is the National Governing Body for Swim England). Looking to check for clear water immediately before diving must be taught and strictly observed. Prolonged swimming under water following a dive must be discouraged. Any diving blocks or stages must conform to Federation International de Natation (FINA)/ASA regulations.

Record Keeping for Swimming

Records of incidents and accidents that occur in the swimming pool or pool area should be kept and made available at both venues. All the above records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN (CHILD PROTECTION)

The LA and the school have their own child protection procedures and so too should the pool. It is important that the pool procedures relate to those of the LA. Each school and pool being used by the school should establish a protocol identifying the relationship between their respective procedures. Ideally this should be within the conditions of hire.

Lindsay Douch as Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead has the responsibility for child protection during swimming and she will liaise with the designated safeguarding lead at the pool in the event of any concern about a child. The name of this person at the pool should be publicised to school and public users in order that concerns can be reported to them.

All persons working with children should have an Enhanced DBS Disclosure.

Care should be taken in changing rooms to ensure that the appropriate ratios and gender of staff are present to supervise children and that children are safeguarded from members of the public – see section 4. Supervision should be appropriate to the needs and age of the young people concerned and sensitive to the potential for embarrassment.

When supervising children changing or assisting them with their swimming, pool and school staff and any other adults present should avoid physical contact with children unless it is:

- essential to develop a swimming skill or technique
- to treat an injury
- to prevent an injury
- to meet the requirement of the activity (e.g. lifesaving)
- to lift or manually support a child with disabilities.

In these circumstances the adult should also explain the reason for the physical contact to the child. Unless the situation is an emergency the adult should ask the child for permission. If children have disabilities they and their carers need to be involved in deciding what assistance should be offered and the child should be treated with dignity and respect.

When supervising children changing, adults should:

- avoid any visually intrusive behaviour
- announce their intention of entering the changing room
- avoid remaining in the room unless pupil needs require it.

Adults should not:

- change in the same place as children
- shower with children.

Where children sustain an injury and any first aid is administered the parents/carers should be informed as soon as possible. Details should be recorded and retained by the school. Accidents and incidents which occur at a public pool should also be recorded by pool staff on their forms for their records.

In the event of a child needing to be taken to hospital for treatment, a representative from the school should always accompany the child. If this leaves the school group short of staff at the pool then the school should be informed to seek additional staffing for the group. The parent/carer of the child should be informed as soon as possible.

Staff and any other adults present should avoid placing themselves at risk by being alone with a child and should ensure that wherever possible there are other responsible persons around and that they are in public view.

Useful website:

<https://www.sta.co.uk/>

this site also includes a useful code of conduct