

ASA Guidelines for School Swimming

www.swimming.org/schoolswimming

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1. Introduction

The Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) is the National Governing Body for swimming in England. Its aim is to encourage more people to swim and have fun swimming more often - this starts with creating a magic 'first' moment.

The ASA vision for school swimming is:

'To ensure that every child has the opportunity to participate in high quality school swimming linked to community programmes, delivered by appropriately qualified people in a safe environment'.

The aim of this document is to provide up-to-date guidance and advice on the safe practice and best practice in the delivery of school swimming.

All schools must provide swimming instruction either in Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2.

In particular, pupils should be taught to:

- Swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25 metres
- Use a range of strokes effectively such as front crawl, backstroke and breaststroke
- Perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations.

Please note that this document will be continually updated and is only in electronic format.

2. Duty of Care

The delivery of a school swimming programme may involve a number of partners including school teachers, swimming teachers, local leisure providers, school swimming coordinators etc.

Where the school swimming programme is delivered by an external partner, i.e. school buy in a qualified swimming teacher, the school has a responsibility to ensure that the swimming teachers are appropriately qualified in the aspects being taught. They must ensure that the programme is appropriate to the needs of the pupils and the school.

Ongoing communications between both parties will help to ensure this requirement is met.

Some school teachers may also hold recognised national swimming teaching qualifications and can therefore assume responsibility for all aspects of the programme.

- The duty of care to students where swimming lessons take place at an onsite school pool, whether delivered by a teacher, support staff or visiting swimming teacher, remains with the school teacher even though someone else is teaching the class.
- Where lessons take place off site and are delivered by an external provider, the duty of care to students still remains with the school teacher. It is essential that school staff remain on poolside to provide an assisting role, even when a specialised aquatics teacher is employed to lead the lesson.
- Clear roles and responsibilities are essential for all adults involved in providing a lesson to students.

3. Responsibilities Given

School – The school should ensure that a nominated member of staff is the responsibility of swimming co-ordinator and applies the swimming pool safety policy and procedures in the school. All staff working with children must be vetted by the disclosure and barring service (DBS). This will comprise the proper operation of the school's own swimming facility or use of a third party pool, including monitoring and recording for the pool and sessions and the use of the following:

- Risk assessment
- Pool safety operation procedures (normal operating procedures [NOP] & emergency action plans [EAP])
- Monitoring of staff training and maintaining records of qualifications
- All swimming related information communicated to all relevant staff
- Conditions of pool hire.

School Teachers – It is essential that teaching staff remain on poolside to provide an assisting role. This applies to all activities within the school curriculum and to extra-curricular activities organised by the school. In relation to swimming, this means:

- Appropriate supervision of children when changing
- Control of all pupils at all times
- NOP and EAP are enforced
- Overall observation of the teaching of their children and the conduct of the class
- Work alongside a more qualified swimming teacher and be given a clear role.

Because of the special knowledge and understanding they have of their pupils, primary school teachers should accompany their own class to swimming.

For more information on the National Curriculum Training Programme (NCTP) visit www.swimming.org/schoolswimming.

Adults Supporting Learning (ASL) – Adults who accompany children to swimming lessons can be extremely helpful to support the delivery of school swimming and in the extended curriculum, whether on or off site. They should:

- Support and work alongside a more qualified teacher and be given a clear role
- Understand the limits of that role
- Be confident on the poolside
- Communicate with other adults on safety issues
- Have the necessary discipline and control standards
- Know, understand and apply the NOP and EAP

- Supervise changing areas
- Look after unwell children or children not swimming

Qualified Swimming Teacher – May be employed by a public pool or by a school to teach in their own school pool. They have a responsibility for ensuring the safe conduct of the class in the water and on poolside, in line with good practice and their training. They should:

- Plan, develop and monitor the swimming programme in line with the National Curriculum elements
- Prepare schemes of work appropriate to pupils age, ability and interest in line with the National Curriculum outcomes
- Communicate with the class teacher to check numbers of pupils before, during and after each session
- Identify specific groups for each swimming session
- Know, understand and apply the NOP and EAP
- Enforce emergency drills every term
- Provide lifesaving and first aid skills where necessary

Lifeguard provision – Whatever the aquatic activity, whenever there are students in the water a suitable qualified adult should be present on poolside who is able to affect a rescue from the water, carry out cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and effectively carry out emergency procedures.

The person responsible for lifeguarding of the class should hold the following awards as a minimum:

Programmed Activities	National Rescue Test for Swimming Teachers and Coaches" (NRTSTC)
Unprogrammed Activities	RLSS National Pool Lifeguard qualification
Shared space where programmed and unprogrammed activities take place	RLSS National Pool Lifeguard qualification

Programmed activities are defined as: sessions with a formal structure, which are supervised, controlled, disciplined and continuously monitored from the poolside.

Unprogrammed activities are defined as: sessions without a formal structure, such as public sessions or, "free" swimming when allowed as a contrasting activity at the end of a structured lesson.

Swimming lessons should never be taught without at least one other person present to assist with first aid and rescues if necessary.

More information on lifeguard qualifications can be found from www.rlss.org.uk.

4. Teacher to Pupil Ratios

Each swimming pool will have a designated maximum bather capacity appropriate to the size of the pool and activity taking place, which should be specified in the Normal Operating Procedure (NOP).

Pupil to teacher ratios must not exceed 20:1 and, in the majority of cases, primary school swimming should be less than this.

The following ratios are based on Health and Safety considerations and quality delivery of the lesson.

	Health and Safety	Quality Delivery
Non-swimmers and beginners – Young children, normally primary school age, being introduced to swimming who are unable to swim 10 metres unaided on back or front	12:1	8:1
Children under the age of seven – Irrespective of their swimming ability group size should be restricted	12:1	8:1
Improving swimmers – 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	20:1	12:1
Mixed ability groups – Pupils with a range of abilities (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	20:1	12:1
Competent swimmers – Those swimmers who can swim at least 25 metres competently and unaided on front and back, and can tread water for two minutes	20:1	15:1
Swimmers with disabilities – Each situation must be considered individually, as people with disabilities are not a homogeneous group. Care must be taken to ensure that there are sufficient helpers in the water to provide a 1:1 ratio for those needing constant support, and a sufficient number of other helpers to provide the degree of support required by the range of disabilities within the group	8:1 with 1:1 support in the water where required	6:1 with 1:1 support in the water where required

5. Qualifications

The teacher's role is to ensure the child makes significant progress and achieves in all areas of school curriculum. It is therefore vital that teachers are up-skilled and supported and not replaced or displaced by coaches.

Appropriately qualified coaches can help to up-skill teachers' technical knowledge in specific activities, but should support and not replace teachers in curriculum provision.

Class teachers (QTS) may be required to teach all of the areas of activity in physical education. They should have completed an initial teacher education programme and, where possible, have attended further professional learning that covered all the activities they will be required to teach. Local Authorities and school governing bodies may establish their own policies and insist on certain minimum qualifications before staff are allowed to teach some aspects of physical education, particularly those that involve a potentially greater risk as with aquatic activities.

It is wise for staff to be able to demonstrate that they are suitably **trained, experienced and qualified** to undertake the activities in which they engage with students. Those

teaching aquatics should hold recognised and current qualifications e.g. ASA National Curriculum Training Programme.

For more information on the National Curriculum Training Programme (NCTP) visit www.swimming.org/schoolswimming

Anyone teaching a physical education lesson should be competent to do so safely. This involves having the necessary skills, knowledge, understanding and expertise to plan, deliver and evaluate a physical education programme.

The Health and Safety executive highlights four means of demonstrating competence:

- To hold a relevant qualification
- To hold an equivalent qualification
- To have received appropriate in-house training
- To be competent through experience

However, these are not totally discrete alternatives. Qualifications, experience and training overlap to produce expertise in a particular aspect of PE.

	Qualification	Delivery Method	Information
School Teachers	Fundamentals of school swimming	Face to face E-learning	Provides the necessary skills to teach a group of children the FUNDamentals of swimming
	Fundamentals and Aquatic Skills of school swimming	Face to face E-learning + face to face	Provides the necessary skills to plan evaluate and teach a range of skills and strokes to groups of pupils
Adults Supporting Learning	Fundamentals of school swimming	Face to face E-learning	Allows the candidate to assist a more qualified teacher/ swimming teacher
	Fundamentals and Aquatic skills of school swimming	Face to face E-learning + face to face	Allows the candidate to teach a small group of similar ability pupils with the support of a more qualified teacher/ swimming teacher
Qualified Swimming Teachers	ASA Level 2 Teaching Swimming/Aquatics certificate		Allows the candidate to plan, deliver, monitor and evaluate a group of pupils of the same ability or a range of abilities
	CPD's relevant to school swimming		Gives the candidate additional knowledge to deliver lessons to a variety of pupils e.g. children to disabilities

All staff, whatever role they undertake, should be given the opportunity to update their skills in the appropriate areas regularly through local or awarding body professional development modules.

For more information on booking CPD courses visit www.theiosonline.com.

6. Risk Assessments

A risk assessment is the process of identifying potential hazards and evaluating the risk associated with those hazards. From here, you can weigh up whether you have taken the appropriate precautions to prevent harm.

At each pool and during each session, the children and staff participating will all have unique features that pose particular demands upon safety. Therefore, risks must be assessed for each pool and each session.

- **Hazard** – Anything that may cause harm such as the pool itself, chemicals, electricity or equipment
- **Risk** – The potential of someone being harmed by the hazard.

Risk management includes a five step process:

Step 1 - Identify the hazards

First you need to work out how people could be harmed.

Step 2 - Decide who might be harmed and how

For each hazard you need to be clear who might be harmed. It will help you identify the best way of managing the risk. This can be done by groups i.e non-swimmers.

Step 3 - Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions

Having spotted the hazards, you have to decide what to do about them. The law requires you to do everything 'reasonably practicable' to protect people from harm.

Step 4 - Record your findings and implement them

Putting the results of your risk assessment into practice will make a difference when looking after pupils and staff.

Step 5 - Review and update as necessary

It is essential you review what you are doing on an ongoing basis. Every year, review where you are to make sure you are still improving or at least not sliding back.

7. Pool Safety Operating Procedures

What are they? Written documentation that informs staff and users of the pools working practices.

Who is responsible for compiling them? Anyone with responsibility for a swimming pool i.e. leisure provider, schools, etc.

When are they renewed? On a regular basis and especially after any emergency.

What do they contain? Normal Operating Procedures (NOP) to maintain safety. Examples of what should be included:

- Plan of the pool
- List of key hazards
- Rules of supervision
- Systems of work and operational systems
- First aid supplies and training
- Details of alarm systems and other emergency equipment
- Conditions of hire

Emergency Action Plans (EAP) detail what everyone should do in the event of an emergency:

- Overcrowding
- Assault
- Lack of water clarity
- Fire
- Bomb threat
- Serious injury to a swimmer
- Discovery of a casualty in the pool

8. National Curriculum

The purpose of study is to ensure:

'A high-quality physical education curriculum inspires all pupils to succeed and excel in competitive sport and other physically-demanding activities. It should provide opportunities for pupils to become physically confident in a way which supports their health and fitness. Opportunities to compete in sport and other activities build character and help to embed values such as fairness and respect.'

The National Curriculum for physical education aims to ensure that all pupils:

- Develop competence to excel in a broad range of physical activities
- Are physically active for sustained periods of time
- Engage in competitive sports and activities
- Lead healthy, active lives.

School swimming should also be delivered with the PE attainment targets in mind.

Key Stage 1:

- Pupils should develop FUNdamental movement skills, become increasingly competent and confident and access a broad range of opportunities to extend their agility, balance and coordination, individually and with others. They should be able to engage in competitive (both against self and against others) and co-operative physical activities, in a range of increasingly challenging situations.

Key Stage 2:

- Pupils should continue to apply and develop a broader range of skills, learning how to use them in different ways and to link them to make actions and sequences of movement. They should enjoy communicating, collaborating and competing with each other. They should develop an understanding of how to improve in different physical activities and sports and learn how to evaluate and recognise their own success.

Pupils should also be given the opportunity to plan and discuss their own challenges, how they are going to achieve them and evaluate them after.

There are three key areas that can improve each child's swimming experience whilst swimming with their school.

• Reducing Ratios

There should be a maximum of 12 children with each Level 2 teacher, but ideally this should be as low as possible for non-swimmers/weak swimmers. Improver groups and beyond, the ratios can be higher up to 20 children to each Level 2 teacher.

• Improving Quality

Each qualified swimming teacher should have a proven track record of teaching nervous/beginners/improvers and the ability to develop and apply skills and expertise to resolve a range of issues.

• Increasing Frequency

It is agreed that the more intensive and regular the lessons, the more likely it is that the outcome will be successful.

For advice on the use of the Primary PE and Sports Premium in these areas visit www.swimming.org/schoolswimming.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Increasingly, children with special educational needs (including those with a statement of special educational needs) are being accommodated in mainstream schools. An awareness of some of the main issues associated with special educational needs will help the mainstream teacher of swimming.

Stimulating swimming lessons in a warm pool provides an ideal environment for learning. The aim of the swimming lesson should be to provide high quality learning in water to enable the swimmers to become as independent, self confident and skilful as possible. Alongside enjoyable and purposeful activity, teachers should be using each lesson to encourage socialisation and improved communication skills.

Teachers working with children with physical impairments should seek medical advice on the implications of their condition for the swimming programme. The school's Special Educational Needs (SEN) co-ordinator will have detailed information on their condition, which will normally be contained on the school's SEN register. Some children will also have individual education plans (IEPs) that specify learning targets and approaches.

Frequent repetition of activities will be beneficial and reassuring. Work at the pace of each individual. Pressurising swimmers to progress too quickly gains nothing.

Children with an exceptional ability have entitlement to a lesson appropriate to this ability. If they are not challenged they may become bored. Exceptionally able children should work towards the key stage appropriate to their ability, rather than their age.

Lack of comprehension and poor mobility can cause organisational and safety problems. It is essential to have an adequate staffing ratio both in the changing rooms and in the pool. Swimmers with poor balance and co-ordination are at greater risk of slipping on wet surfaces whilst moving between the changing rooms and the pool. Be on the lookout for epileptic seizures. Teachers should know how to recognise and cope with an epileptic fit in the water.

A risk assessment should be completed before any child with SEN attends school swimming to ensure the pool is suitable and specialised equipment such as a hoist, gradient steps, and suitable changing facilities are available.

Particular religions or cultures may require special provision, most typically in the form of:

- Certain types of clothing
- Segregated sessions

Such requirements should be respected and, wherever possible, accommodated within the physical education curriculum and the school timetable. Schools should have a policy on multi-cultural issues of this kind and there will be teachers who are able to give guidance.

9. Conditions of Hire/Service Level Agreements

Pool Operators cannot delegate responsibility for what happens in their pools, therefore if a school pool is hired to an outside organisation the school will need to ensure that the outside organisation will use the pool in a safe manner. Equally, if a school hires a pool from someone else, that organisation will need to make sure that the school is supported in the safe use of the pool. Conditions of hire should include:

- Name and address of the organisation hiring the pool
- Name and address of the pool being hired
- Name of the hirer's representative (the responsible person/ first point of contact) and contact details
- Details of who is to be responsible for what in the event of an emergency

(Normally it is the operator of the pool who is responsible for building related problems and the hirer for emergencies associated with the activities of the group)

- Any safety advice to be given to swimmers and any specific rules that should be enforced
- A signature from the hirer that they have received and read copies of the NOP and EAP
- Appropriate third party liability insurance.

Teacher position

In the situation where the teacher has responsibility for groups comprising of more than two pupils, the recommended teaching position is from the side of the pool as this provides the best position to oversee the whole group in terms of safety and to provide appropriate feedback on the performance of each person in the group.

This does not preclude a teacher being in the water to assist pupils either on a 1:1 or 1:2 basis or as an assistant to the class teacher. In fact, for groups of more than two pupils, a fully qualified teacher on the poolside supported by an assistant in the water may be ideal.

An appropriately qualified swimming teacher operating from the poolside supported by helpers in the water may provide the most effective learning environment for pupils in the early stages of learning to swim. Their position must be specified in the NOP.

Teacher clothing and equipment

Teachers should change into suitable footwear to be able to move easily around poolside and not bring outdoor dirt onto the pool surround on their feet. They should wear clothes suitable for the humidity and temperatures of the pool and appropriate to the possibility of having to go into the pool to rescue a child. For all teachers/helpers in the water, a t-shirt should be worn over the swimming costume.

For outdoor pools, a peaked hat and polarised sunglasses may be beneficial. If teaching for prolonged periods a suitable sunscreen should be worn bearing in mind the additional reflection of the sun's rays from the water.

Teachers should all be equipped with a whistle and familiar with the standard signals used in most pools. To use their whistle correctly and respond to a whistle communication from someone else:

- **One short blast** – calls for attention of pool users
- **Two short blasts** – calls for the attention of a lifeguard or member of staff
- **Three short blasts** – indicates a lifeguard taking emergency action
- **One long blast** – calls for the pool to be cleared.

10. Child Protection

Most schools will have well-established procedures related to child protection. However, consideration must be given to how these procedures may need to be adapted when pupils are taken away from the school for extra-curricular activities. In the context of swimming, this may include the use of public facilities and possibly shared changing facilities. A selection of guidance from the Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) is below:

The purpose of this guidance is to help safeguard the welfare of children using sport and recreation facilities through clarifying the roles and responsibilities of both the local education authorities and sports service providers. Whilst child protection incidents occurring during school use of facilities are extremely rare, there is growing recognition that schools and local authorities need to develop arrangements to promote the safety and welfare of children.

The principle that should underpin local arrangements should be that local education authorities (LEAs) and sports service providers work in partnership to safeguard children and young people. With the implementation of section 175 of the Education Act 2002, LEAs and schools will be required to establish arrangements for ensuring that their functions are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Swimming is an activity that regularly occurs as part of a school PE programme, particularly at primary school level and should be addressed within the safeguarding arrangements.

Safety Equipment

- All pools must be equipped with a means of raising an alarm and summoning support in the event of an accident or incident. Ideally, this will be an emergency button which activates a siren or a telephone giving direct contact with the emergency services
- There should be a long pole at either side of the pool to reach and rescue anyone in difficulties without getting into the water. Adequate buoyancy aids and first aid

equipment, including a blanket, should be immediately to hand

- Pool depths should be clearly marked on the walls of the pool and teachers should explain their significance to pupils, especially beginners
- In school open-air pools this could be a painted depth line on the fence so that children can stand next to it to see where the water will come up to when they get in
- All signs should be compliant with the Safety Signs and Signals Regulations
- A pool divider, usually a rope, should normally be positioned to separate deep from shallow water when non-swimmers are present
- All pools should be able to be locked off and isolated to prevent unauthorised access when not manned. Failure to achieve this is a major cause of accidents in school and private pools.

Swimming Attire

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 to minimise the effect of drag in the water. Sensitivity is required to ensure the correct balance when cultural demands require looser fitting garments and the need to be able to see the movements that limbs and joints are making in the water to ensure appropriate learning.

Children who swim frequently, or whose eyes are susceptible to irritation, may request to use goggles for swimming. Parents should be informed of their responsibility to teach their child to put on and take off goggles in the correct and safe fashion.

Goggles

While swimming goggles may make a child feel comfortable in the pool when learning to swim, if they accidentally fall into the water it is likely they will not be wearing them.

It is vital children are comfortable swimming with or without goggles so they don't panic in an unexpected situation. To do this they need to learn to swim without goggles.

- The decision to allow swimming goggles during lessons is down to the school's PE policy and communication with the school swimming provider
- Parents need to be informed of the reasons for not wearing goggles and children encouraged to take lessons without them
- If pool water is maintained in a good condition it should not be necessary for children to wear goggles at all.

For medical and other associated reasons some children need to wear goggles – such as prescription goggles.

If this is the case then:

- Choose a pair with British Standards Institution (BSI) instruction on the package for the correct way to put them on and take them off
- Choose a pair that fit properly. Leaking goggles could affect the child and waste valuable lesson time
- Ensure the child knows how to fit and adjust them properly
- Schools and teachers should adopt a policy with regards to the responsibility for fitting children's goggles.

Pool Rules

- Never leave the poolside unattended
- Always secure poolside against unauthorised access when it is not staffed
- Ensure the pool is under supervision at all times
- Divide the poolside into zones and use techniques to constantly scan the area. For example, counting heads and watching out for vulnerable or weak swimmers
- Keep alert and move position every five minutes or so - sit, stand, patrol
- Rotate off poolside at least once in every hour

There may also be rules for lifeguards to follow to ensure they remain vigilant at all times. Where appropriate these techniques should also be practised by school staff in supporting qualified lifeguards.

The CPSU document 'Standards for Safeguarding Children in Sport' relates to the prevention and minimisation of risk and provides guidance on the measures that help reduce the possibility of children being abused in sport and leisure. This is based on the recognition that some people pose a risk to children and young people and will use sport and leisure opportunities to gain access to them. It is possible to minimise the risks and to prevent abuse by putting safeguards in place. One method is to ensure that activities are planned to ensure children are appropriately and adequately supervised at all times.

It is recognised that there are a number of risks specific to the changing room area from health and safety to supervision ratios. The purpose of this guidance is to identify and promote best practice and to minimise these risks.

The presence of unsupervised children, particularly in open changing or shower areas, can cause concern for facility staff and members of the public.

Sport and recreation facilities may provide an environment within which adults who are motivated to harm children may choose to act. Therefore, providing proper supervision at the time a child is most vulnerable is important.

It is recommended that LEAs, schools and sport and recreation service providers put in place the following practices and procedures relating to changing.

- Where possible separate school changing areas should be made available. It is not appropriate for members of the public to share the same changing facilities as those used by school swimmers. Facility providers, wherever possible, should make arrangements for separate changing areas or changing times to be made available for school swimming sessions where a pool is used by members of the public at the same time. When this is not possible, appropriate supervision arrangements should be agreed between the pool and school.
- Design of the changing rooms should be considered in detail, and in many instances the redesign of changing rooms is the only solution to minimising risk. Ideally, changing villages should be designed with three elements: an all female section, an all male section and a buffer in between for family changing. Separate changing rooms for schools and groups should still be provided in addition to the village changing area. Two sets of showers should also be provided – one for pre-swim hygiene available for use by either sex en route to the pool, and single stall private showers within separate toilet areas for each sex for post swim showers.
- Within facilities providing 'village' changing accommodation or equipped with group or family changing, a responsible adult should undertake the supervision of the changing area. Group or family changing areas may be mixed and may require male and female supervision
- Club/school changing rooms should be included in the changing area and must be both secure and readily supervised by the responsible adult in charge of the class
- Where single sex changing facilities are provided, a responsible adult of the same sex accompanying the children should undertake the supervision of the changing area
- The swimming pool provider should have in place a child protection protocol that identifies the relationship between the LEAs child protection procedures and the pool's procedures for child protection
- The swimming pool provider should appoint a designated person with responsibility for child protection that should liaise with the school's designated teacher in the event of a concern.
- The swimming pool provider should have in place a child protection policy and procedure that clearly identifies which steps should be taken in the event of a concern being raised
- The swimming pool provider should publicise to all pool users which member of staff within the facility concerns should be reported to.

Additional Support Materials

- Health and Safety in Swimming Pools HSG179
www.hse.gov.uk
- Safe Practice in PE and Sport
www.afpe.org.uk

Are You Taking School Swimming Seriously?

The ASA's new School Swimming Charter aims to instigate a direct relationship with primary schools, working with them to ensure they have the necessary support and training required to deliver effective and quality school swimming programmes. In partnership with the ASA, schools will be able to state "We're taking school swimming seriously".

For more information on the School Swimming Charter visit www.swimming.org/schoolcharter.

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