Swimming and water safety in the national curriculum

Delivering the lesson
Delivering the lesson

The information in this resource will help teachers, lesson providers and anyone supporting the delivery of school swimming and water safety lessons.

Aims of this resource:
- To provide an overview of Physical Literacy development.
- To provide greater knowledge of how pupils develop basic movement and sports skills - and why this is so important.
- Help you understand how the body moves in water.
- Explain the core teaching standards for delivering school swimming and water safety.
- Give you guidance on Key Stage 1 and 2 learning objectives.
- Greater detail on what should happen during a pool-based lesson.
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Physical Literacy

To create a nation of active and healthy swimmers, all pupils must be given a solid foundation in basic movement, sport and aquatic skills to build on later in life, this foundation is called ‘Physical Literacy’.

Research shows that without the inclusion and development of fundamental movement literacy skills, many children and young people withdraw from physical activity and sport and turn to more inactive and/or unhealthy choices during their leisure time.

Getting off to the right start

Physical Literacy is the development of basic movement and sports skills that allow a child to move competently and confidently and with control in a wide range of physical activities. Developing Physical Literacy also means pupils have increased awareness of what is going on in an activity setting - and have the ability to react appropriately.

Aquatic Physical Literacy

‘Aquatic Physical Literacy’ is the development of water based fundamental movement skills. Taking part in a combination of swimming and other sports enables a child to develop skills in a wide range of physical activities. It also refers to a pupil’s understanding of the pool environment.

Achieving Aquatic Physical Literacy gives children the skills they require to confidently and safely enjoy water based physical activities for health, fun, enjoyment and for potential swimming performance achievements.

Physical Literacy is a key factor of the Athlete Development Support Pathway (ADSP):
Most teachers will be working with pupils in the fundamental movement skills, and fundamental
sport skills stages of development.

These stages should be structured and fun with an emphasis on developing basic movement
literacy and fundamental movement skills such as:

- ABCs (agility, balance, co-ordination, speed)
- RJT (running, jumping, throwing)
- KGBS (kinaesthetics, gliding, buoyancy, striking with the body)
- CPKS (catching, passing, kicking, striking with an implement)

The fundamental movement skills and fundamental sports skills specific stage should continue
to develop both basic and more advanced physical literacy, whilst applying and developing
a broader range of sports specific skills.
Developing skills

Teachers need to be aware of the stage of learning their pupils are working at in order to deliver specific, relevant and effective teaching. Each stage of learning has individual characteristics, and teachers need to use specific strategies to produce skill improvement.

Beginner stage
- Parts of the skill are missing.
- Some parts of the skill are exaggerated.
- Co-ordination of movement is poor.
- Poor decision making ability.

The teacher should:
- Give participants opportunities to explore and experiment for themselves.
- Delay feedback to allow experimentation and self-learning.
- Include a wide variety of floatation equipment.
- Ensure some time every lesson is spent swimming without floatation equipment.
- Give praise for effort as well as achievement.

Intermediate stage
- Movement is better controlled compared to the beginner stage.
- Some parts of the skill are restricted or exaggerated.
- Overall results are getting nearer to competency.
- Swimmers need clear and constructive feedback at this stage to avoid developing bad habits – once inefficient motor patterns have become established they are very difficult to change.

The teacher should:
- Teach one component of the skill at a time, adding new components as and when the swimmer is ready.
- Use a games based approach to develop skills.
- Focus on building confidence and safety.
- If a participant learns a new skill, don’t move on, reinforce it.

Advanced stage
- Mechanically efficient and co-ordinated movements.
- Automatic performance [participants don’t need to think].
- Participant can think tactically and make good decisions under pressure.
- Confident and purposeful movements.
- All components of the skill are correctly performed.

The teacher should:
- Set challenges and encourage problem solving.
- Plan activities that represent the pressures and demands of intense competition.
- Encourage the participant to analyse own performance.
- Use a variety of skill analysis methods such as video analysis and extensive questioning.
- Ensure activities are fun and varied.
The Water Principle

The principles of movement in the water
A basic understanding of how the body moves in water is essential for teachers to plan effective activities for their swimmers.

Buoyancy and gravity
Buoyancy is ‘the power of a fluid to exert an upward force on a body placed in it’ and gravity is ‘the force that attracts objects towards the earth.’

Resistance
Water creates more resistance to a person than air does. Swimmers should acquire a good streamlined position early to minimise resistance when swimming.

Propulsion
This is the force that drives the swimmer forwards, it is generated by all parts of the swimmer’s body. The body will move forward in the water when propulsion is greater than resistance.
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The teacher
The teacher’s role is to ensure that pupils make progress and achieve their potential in every area of the curriculum. We strongly advise that anybody leading a physical education lesson, which includes swimming and water safety, meets these core standards.

Core standards of delivering a national curriculum school swimming and water safety lesson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core standards</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Policies and Procedures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>Swimming teachers have a considerable level of responsibility. The minimum age to teach swimming independently is 18.</td>
<td>Swimming teachers must hold a Level 2 Certificate in Teaching Aquatics School teachers delivering swimming as part of the curriculum should hold both the National Curriculum Support Teacher of School Swimming and Teacher of School Swimming Certificates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Safeguarding children and vulnerable groups</strong></td>
<td>Swimming teachers must comply with the requirements of the Disclosure and Barring Service and must have a DBS check completed.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Planning the swimming curriculum
When planning the programme of study for swimming, it is essential to have a sound knowledge of what the pupils can and cannot achieve, what their needs are and the school swimming targets. The person responsible for developing the swimming and water safety curriculum should also be aware of what activity pupils have done in the past and, specifically in the case of swimming, what they do outside of school. This should ideally be discussed between school staff, lesson providers and swimming teachers.

There are three stages to planning:

| Long term | Plotting the scheme of work over a school year or a key stage. Normally undertaken by the PE or swimming coordinator, working from the programme of study and the targets set. |
| Medium term | This includes units of work that cover periods of half terms or full terms. As with long-term planning, the PE or swimming coordinator is normally responsible for this stage of planning. |
| Short term | This involves planning for individual lessons on the basis of the medium term and long term plan. The swimming teacher is normally responsible for school. This should ideally be discussed between school staff, lesson providers and swimming teachers. |
## Key Stage 1 - learning objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mastering basic fundamental movement literacy skills</th>
<th>Medium term objectives</th>
<th>Short term objectives</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Master basic movements such as running, jumping, throwing, and catching.</td>
<td>Enter the water safely and confidently.</td>
<td>Enter the water by steps, ladders or swivel entry – and explain how these skills relate to safe self-rescue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become competent and confident in the water.</td>
<td>Help each other to travel in different directions.</td>
<td>Move in different directions around the pool, e.g. walking, running, hopping and skipping. Submerge to pool floor and blow bubbles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access a broad range of opportunities to improve agility, balance and co-ordination.</td>
<td>Fully submerge, develop aquatic breathing and ability to open eyes confidently underwater.</td>
<td>Experiment with arm and leg movements to travel around the pool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage in competitive and co-operative activities and team games in challenging situations.</td>
<td>Swim short distances without stopping to touch the ground.</td>
<td>Float on front and back – and explain how these skills relate to safe self-rescue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use arms to pull and push the water and use legs for a variety of kicking actions.</td>
<td>Explore and use skills, actions and ideas individually and in a combination.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Applying fundamental movement literacy skills to a variety of tasks

<p>| Choose and use the appropriate skills for different swimming tasks. | Feel how the water supports their body. | Talking about what their body feels like in water and describe how it feels different when moving in the same way in water and on land. |
| Use a variety of arm and leg actions to propel themselves through the water. | Use their arms help to stay upright and balanced. | Using different arm and leg actions to propel themselves through the water. |
| Develop balance and co-ordination in arm and leg actions. | Use different types of leg kicking action to help them move. | Gradually coordinating these actions, so they remain balanced and in control of their bodies. |
| Develop an understanding of buoyancy and propulsion. | Listen to other children's ideas on ways to travel in the water, and their ideas on what challenges to set themselves. | Stretching out and keeping afloat, using a number of body shapes - and explain how these skills relate to safe self-rescue. |
| Discuss ways of putting simple skills together to make movement patterns. | Using simple skills learnt to make a dance sequence. | |</p>
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<tr>
<td>Engaging in competitive and co-operative physical activities</td>
<td>Participate in competitive games and activities. Participate in co-operative games and activities.</td>
<td>Take part in mini-polo! Take part in tag games. Push and glide on front and back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop simple tactics for attacking and defending in team games such as mini-polo. Discuss and develop rules for team games and activities.</td>
<td>Describe the outcome of team games and activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Describe the rules of a game or activity.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Key Stage 1 and 2 - learning objectives

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing a broader range of aquatic skills</td>
<td>Discuss how using arms and legs effectively propels the body through water.</td>
<td>Demonstrate a streamlined body position on the front and back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swin competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25 metres unassisted.</td>
<td>Explore what types of strokes can be used on top of or underneath the water.</td>
<td>Use a variety of safe self-rescue skills including surface dives, HELP and huddle positions and survival stroke.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swim front crawl, backstroke and breaststroke to show effective propulsion.</td>
<td>Perform a combination of strokes, swimming actions and skills.</td>
<td>Scull and tread water with a variety of actions Retrieve an object from the pool floor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perform a safe self-rescue in different water based situations.</td>
<td>Swim front crawl, backstroke and breaststroke to show coordinated arm and leg actions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combining aquatic skills to perform more complex actions and sequences</td>
<td>Show controlled use of aquatic breathing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose, use and adapt skills for a range of swimming tasks.</td>
<td>Swim a set distance with and without flotation equipment and on front and back.</td>
<td>Discuss the demands of different challenges and choose safe and efficient ways to complete challenges successfully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose, use and adapt skills for a range of self-rescue tasks.</td>
<td>Meet set targets relating to distance and time, choosing an appropriate stroke and speed.</td>
<td>Work in groups or pairs to combine skills learnt to compose a synchronised swimming sequence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swim for a prolonged period of time e.g. five minutes maintaining good technique across a range of strokes.</td>
<td>Pace distance swims correctly to maintain consistent speed.</td>
<td>Use pace clock to time appropriate rest intervals.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discuss the dangers posed by water at local and national locations and discuss how to act in different emergencies.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Combine skills to perform a synchronised swimming routine.</td>
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<td><strong>Working together, communicating and competing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate fully in competitive games and activities.</td>
<td>Discuss strategies for defending and attacking.</td>
<td>Take part in water polo. Take part in relays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a strong team mentality.</td>
<td>Develop and set rules that are fair and consistent.</td>
<td>Take part in synchronised swimming sequences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show good sportsmanship and demonstrate fair play.</td>
<td>Develop a points system.</td>
<td>Take part in other competitive sports e.g. tennis, basketball etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Evaluating strengths and weaknesses**

| Identify strengths and weaknesses of own performance. | Use a range of vocabulary specific to swimming. | Develop an understanding of a variety of words related to aquatics e.g. aquatic breathing, propulsion, buoyancy, streamlining. |
| Suggest specific practices to improve own performance. | Correctly identify points of good and bad technique. Understand the use of repetition and drills. | Discuss what makes a ‘good’ swimming stroke. |
| | | Work in pairs and small groups to observe and describe the swimming actions of others. |

**Fitness and health**

Pupils should have an understanding of fitness and health and know that taking part in sport is fun and good for them. Pupils should be able to describe the short term effects that exercise has on their body, and how it reacts to different types of activity. This can be done by asking the children to describe how their bodies feel when they are swimming, what happens to their breathing? How the temperature of the water makes them feel?

**Equipment**

There are many types of equipment available for use in swimming which can help develop a pupil’s skills and confidence in the water. These include, noodle floats, egg flips, floating toys, sinkers, floating hoops, discs, and armbands.

**Pool organisation**

Good organisation is an integral feature of a high quality swimming lesson. To take full advantage of the water space available pupils should be grouped by ability and have their swimming ability assessed prior to the first lesson. The organisation of the pool 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 learning. All activities must also take into account pool design and water depth.

**Positioning of teacher on poolside**

Careful consideration must always be given to the most appropriate position for the teacher on poolside to ensure a safe environment, ease of delivery and easy observation by the children of demonstrations. Teachers must give thought to the dimensions of the space in which they are working and how it can be utilised for the benefit of all pupils.
Effective organisation of groups
The size, depth and arrangement of the swimming pool will affect the way in which swimming lessons are organised. Teachers need to give careful consideration to the appropriateness of activities and the environment to ensure that pupils are grouped in a way that makes the best use of the time and space available.

Swimmers should not be regularly observing from poolside and should be encouraged to work in pairs or groups where possible. Walking around on poolside once the lesson is underway should also be avoided as this is time consuming and increases the risk of slipping.

Assessment
The initial assessment of all pupils should be undertaken as a group activity to build confidence, this can be carried out as a game e.g. Simon Says. Pupils need ongoing assessment to monitor their achievements throughout the course of lessons. One final assessment at the end of the course alone does not give the pupil the best opportunity to demonstrate their acquisition of skills. Some pupils may not perform as well in a pressured environment and assessing in this way can be an ineffective use of pool time.

Pupils’ achievements should be recorded against the national curriculum outcomes. Teachers should keep in mind the expectation is that pupils must swim a MINIMUM of 25 metres unassisted with ease, to reach one of the Key Stage 2 targets. This means they must finish the distance as strongly as they started. Pupils should also be able to use a range of strokes effectively and have the knowledge and skills to perform safe self-rescue skills.

Assessments should be carried out by the teacher who normally conducts the swimming lesson and assessment records reported to the head teacher as per all other areas of the curriculum. The school’s method for reporting to parents is at the discretion of the school, but where pupils have not met the minimum national curriculum standard in swimming, parents should be informed and provided with details on how to further develop their child’s skills.
The Swim England School Swimming and Water Safety Charter

To help schools meet the outcomes and expectations of the PE national curriculum, we developed the Swim England School Swimming and Water Safety Charter. Following the Charter will help teachers to deliver an effective school swimming programme which meets the curriculum standards for swimming and water safety, enabling pupils to:

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

There are six progressive Awards, each one with specific assessment criteria.

In addition, pupils can progress onto the Aquatic Skills Award and every pupil can progress onto the Safe Self Rescue Award (as this can be done with or without floatation equipment) to achieve their statutory Key Stage 2 attainment level.
National curriculum swimming outcomes

School Swimming and Water Safety Award 1 outcomes
Pupil can complete these outcomes with or without floatation equipment or support:

1. Enter the water safely.
2. Move forwards, backwards and sideways for a distance of 5 metres, feet may be on or off the floor.
3. Scoop the water and wash face, be comfortable with water showered from overhead.
4. Blow bubbles a minimum of three times rhythmically, with nose and mouth submerged.
5. Take part in a movement game.
7. Recognise and identify the purpose of beach flags.
8. Exit the water safely.

School Swimming and Water Safety Award 2 outcomes
Pupil can complete these outcomes with or without floatation equipment:

1. Enter the water safely.
2. Move from a horizontal floating position on the front and return to standing.
3. Move from a horizontal floating position on the back and return to standing.
4. Push and glide on the front in a horizontal position, to or from the pool wall.
5. Push and glide on the back in a horizontal position from the pool wall.
6. Travel on the back for 5 metres.
7. Travel on the front for 5 metres.
8. Float on the back.
9. Know how to signal for help.
10. Exit the water safely.

School Swimming and Water Safety Award 3 outcomes
Pupil can complete these outcomes without floatation equipment or support:

1. Jump in from poolside and submerge (minimum depth of 1 metre).
2. Fully submerge to pick up an object.
3. Perform a tuck float and hold for five seconds.
4. Push from wall and glide on the front with arms extended.
5. Push from wall and glide on the back (optional with arms extended).
6. Perform a rotation from the front to the back, then return to standing.
7. Perform a rotation from the back to the front, then return to standing.
8. Identify an open water hazard near your home or school.
9. Exit the water safely.
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School Swimming and Water Safety Award 4 outcomes
Pupil can complete these outcomes without floatation equipment or support:

1. Jump into the water, submerge, surface and swim back to the point of entry (minimum depth 1 metre).
2. Push and glide towards the pool floor with arms extended.
3. Perform a sequence of changing shapes (minimum of three) whilst floating on the surface.
4. Push and glide on the front with arms extended and log roll onto the back.
5. Push and glide on the back with arms extended and log roll onto the front.
6. Travel 5 metres on the front, perform a tuck to rotate onto the back and return to the side.
7. Travel 10 metres on the front with feet off the pool floor.
8. Travel 10 metres on the back with feet off the pool floor.
10. Exit the water safely without using steps.

School Swimming and Water Safety Award 5 outcomes
Pupil can complete these outcomes without floatation equipment or support:

1. Jump into the water, submerge, surface and swim back to the point of entry (at least full reach depth).
2. Perform a horizontal stationary scull on the back.
5. Kick 10 metres butterfly or breaststroke on the front or on the back.
6. Travel on back and log roll 180 degrees in one continuous movement onto front.
7. Travel on front and log roll 180 degrees in one continuous movement onto back.
8. Swim 10 metres, choice of stroke is optional.
9. Give two examples of where it is safe to swim and why.
10. Exit the water safely.

School Swimming and Water Safety Award 6 outcomes
Pupil can complete these outcomes without floatation equipment or support:

1. Perform three different shaped jumps into deep water (to include a straddle jump).
2. Perform a head first scull for 5 metres.
3. Two out of following three must be completed.
   a. Swim 10 metres front crawl.
   b. Swim 10 metres backstroke.
   c. Swim 10 metres breaststroke.
4. Tread water for 30 seconds.
5. Perform a handstand or forward somersault, tucked in the water.
7. Swim 10 metres wearing clothes – as a minimum T-shirt and shorts.
8. Exit deep water without the use of steps.
School Swimming and Water Safety Self Rescue Award outcomes

By completing this Award, in clothing and in the order listed without pause, pupil should be able to:

1. Enter the water using a fall in entry.
2. Float on the back or scull.
3. Tread water for 20 seconds with one arm in the air and shout for help.
4. Swim 15 metres on the front rotate and swim 15 metres on the back to a floating object.
5. Take up the Heat Escape Lessening Position (H.E.L.P.).
6. Swim 10 metres retaining a floating object.
7. Take up the Huddle position.
8. Swim using a long arm front paddle (survival stroke) to the side.
9. Climb out, from water of at least full reach depth without using the steps.
10. Discuss as a group when these skills might be used to self rescue in different water based situations.

School Swimming and Water Safety Aquatic Skills Award outcomes

Pupil can complete these outcomes without floatation equipment or support:

1. Enter the water safely.
2. Submerge to pick up an object from the bottom of the pool (full reach depth).
3. Swim 25 metres (choice of stroke is optional).
4. Swim 50 metres (choice of stroke/s may be used).
5. Participate in a game of mini-polo.
6. Discuss in your group the tactics and skills used and evaluate them.
7. Perform a movement sequence of one minute in a group of three or more, incorporating a number of different skills, for example: sculling, treading water, floating, rotations.
8. Exit the water safely.

Summary

Taking part in a combination of swimming and other sports enables pupils to develop skills in a wide range of physical activities. Swimming should not be seen as an individual subject, but instead should embrace and address many other subject areas.

School swimming programmes that do this are not only more successful but create a more diverse and enjoyable learning experience for all. It is important that school swimming is delivered with the support and encouragement of parents and carers.

To create an active and healthy swimming population, all pupils must be given a solid foundation in basic movement, sport and aquatic skills to build on later in life. This foundation is called Physical Literacy.

Physical Literacy is the development of basic (fundamental) movement and sport skills that enable a child to move confidently and with control in a wide range of physical activities.

Without the inclusion and development of basic movement literacy skills, many children withdraw from physical activity and become unable to confidently and safely enjoy water-based physical activities for health, fun and enjoyment.