Swim England
School Swimming
Foundation Awards
A guide for school swimming teachers and assistants
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Introduction
This guide will support you in your delivery of the Swim England School Swimming Foundation Awards.

We recommend reading it in conjunction with the other supporting documents and resources, provided as part of the Swim England School Swimming and Water Safety Charter.

Visit swimming.org/schools for more information.

The Government has recognised the importance of teaching swimming and water safety at school by including it in the national curriculum.

This ensures that all pupils up to at least Year 6 – and sometimes beyond this – are given the opportunity to learn how to swim and to gain essential knowledge and understanding of water safety.

For pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, water is sometimes the only means of independent movement, or at least the feeling of being free to move with or without the help of an assistant.

For many, school swimming lessons are the only regular time they have in the water.

As well as teaching important lifesaving techniques, school swimming lessons provide a great opportunity for pupils to improve their learning in other areas of the curriculum, and to develop life skills.

For example, swimming with others is known to enhance communication and social skills, build self-confidence, and influences positive behaviour. It has been proven that swimming lessons boost self-esteem and overall health and fitness.¹

These outcomes are best achieved by delivering fun and engaging lessons that combine different activities with structured play, and pupils working together in groups and pairs.

¹Swim England Parents’ Perception Survey 2018 (1000 respondents)
About the School Swimming Foundation Awards

The Swim England School Swimming Foundation Awards have been developed for pupils with special educational needs, disabilities or other needs which mean they are unable or are finding it difficult to achieve the full national curriculum requirements.

There are six School Swimming Foundation Awards, each with a number of outcomes, which help pupils to progress in smaller steps and achieve personal goals, either with or without support or floatation equipment.

We have provided the following guidance for each Award outcome to help school teachers, swimming teachers and assistants assess pupils to their individual ability.

When working through the awards, teachers should encourage pupils to become as independent as possible, and use less assistance and/or floatation equipment wherever ability allows.

School Swimming Foundation Award 1

This Award focusses on orientation, helping pupils to familiarise themselves with a swimming pool environment. This includes the different sounds, smells, textures and people. Familiar adults can provide support to pupils at all times - through reception, changing areas and on poolside.

Pupils can complete the following outcomes with floatation equipment and/or support. To achieve this Award, eight of twelve outcomes must be completed.

1. Demonstrate familiarity with and respond to an object of reference, a sound, or visual aid indicating a visit to the swimming pool.

   This could be an image, a symbol or a noise that represents a swimming pool. Pupils may show signs of awareness through pointing, speaking, or facial expression.

2. Get changed calmly and appropriately with/without visual aids and/or adult support.

   Signs can be used to direct pupils to changing areas, toilets and showers. Visual aids of swimming costumes, trunks, swim caps, towels etc. can be used to help pupils identify their swimming kit.

3. Hold a familiar adult’s hand and move/walk safely and calmly to the poolside in response to an object of reference, a sound, or visual aid.

   The adult may be from the school or the pupil’s regular swimming teacher/assistant. The use of visual cards or verbal instructions may be used.
4. Demonstrate familiarisation with the poolside (e.g. shallow end/deep end, showers, toilets, etc.).

This could be through responding to visual signs brought to the pool or signs already around the poolside. Pupils can show familiarisation through pointing, signing, or giving verbal responses.

5. Sit on seating/a chair on poolside, or stand calmly for short periods with reassurance from a familiar adult and/or by holding a favoured swim toy.

The adult may be from the school or the pupil’s regular swimming teacher/assistant. The toy may be brought from home, or school, or it may be something they like and respond to from the swimming pool.

6. Sit on/by seating on poolside or stand calmly and begin to observe other pupils and familiar adults in the water with interest.

This may be supported by an adult on poolside encouraging pupils to show interest by using action or emoji cards, or by mimicking actions of other pupils in and around the water.

7. Sit calmly on poolside feeling the water and/or edge of the pool.

Feeling the water or edge of the pool can be with any part of the body - this may be with assistance from a member of school staff or the pupil’s regular swimming teacher.

8. Allow a familiar adult to sit alongside at the edge of the pool. Show interest when an adult demonstrates water activities (e.g. splashing with hands or feet, showering with a watering can, singing songs, etc.).

Pupils may show interest by holding their hands out, smiling, singing, and/or moving any part of the body when water touches it. Songs can include: ‘Twinkle Twinkle Little Star’ (relaxation song); ‘Wheels on the Bus’/’If You’re Happy and You Know It’ (action songs); ‘Five Little Ducks Went Swimming One Day’/’Ten Green Bottles’ (counting songs).

9. Begin to take part in activities at the edge of the pool with a familiar adult (e.g. splashing with hands or feet, showering the adult with a watering can, joining in with swim songs, etc.).

Pupils may begin to follow a verbal, visual or physical cue given by a familiar adult. They might participate in activity such as passing or throwing a ball to an adult in the water or joining in with a swim song. Songs can include: ‘Twinkle Twinkle Little Star’ (relaxation song); ‘Wheels on the Bus’/’If You’re Happy and You Know It’ (action songs); ‘Five Little Ducks Went Swimming One Day’/’Ten Green Bottles’ (counting songs).
10. Sitting at the edge of the pool, be at ease with water showered over the hands, shoulders, back or tummy for extended periods.

Pupils may demonstrate being at ease by holding their hands out, smiling, singing, or moving any part of the body when water touches it.

11. Sitting at the edge of the pool, participate in an action song which includes splashing feet, washing face and showering water over the body.

Pupils perform these actions with or without support from a familiar adult. Specific sounds or visual cards showing actions may be used to help pupils to copy the actions. Examples of action songs include ‘Wheels on the Bus’ and ‘If You’re Happy and You Know It.’

12. Leave the poolside calmly and safely with a familiar adult in response to an object of reference, a sound, or visual aid.

Pupils walk or are supported calmly to the changing areas. Toys, sounds, action cards, or other objects to signify it's time to leave the pool can be used. Time cards counting down from five minutes, four minutes, three minutes, two minutes, and one minute before its time to leave the pool can be useful in preparing pupils for their exit.

**School Swimming Foundation Award 2**

This Award focusses on developing basic movement and water confidence skills, for example moving around the pool using motivating object/favoured swim toy.

Pupils can complete the following outcomes with floatation equipment and/or support. To achieve this Award, seven out of nine outcomes must be completed.

1. **Enter the water safely with floatation equipment and/or physical support from a familiar adult.**

Entering the water can be by any means - hoist, steps, side, etc. Pupils may need different pieces of equipment and/or support from an adult to enter the water.

2. **Holding on to the wall or an adult's hands, begin to move/be moved around the pool.**

Pupils may begin to move/be moved in a flat/horizontal or upright position around the pool.

3. **With feet on the pool floor or whilst floating supported by a familiar adult, move a motivating object/favoured swim toy around the pool.**

Pupils may move the object with any part of the body with support and/or assistance from an adult.
4. **With two feet on the floor or whilst floating (with support if required) begin to use hands to make splashes, alongside a familiar adult.**

   A familiar adult can give assistance to the pupils to splash with their hands.

5. **Be at ease with water showered over the hands, shoulders and tummy in the pool.**

   Pupils should be at ease when water is showered over different parts of the body, responding with hand movements towards the water, pointing, or facial expressions such as smiling or laughing, or through verbal expression.

6. **Show an interest in swim songs and begin to join in/participate with simple actions.**

   Visual aids may be used to prompt actions. Pupils may copy the teacher’s actions. Pupils may show interest by smiling, laughing or using verbal expressions when joining in with the activity. Songs can include: ‘Twinkle Twinkle Little Star’ (relaxation song); ‘Wheels on the Bus’/’If You’re Happy and You Know It’ (action songs); ‘Five Little Ducks Went Swimming One Day’/’Ten Green Bottles’ (counting songs).

7. **Supported by an adult submerge shoulders under the water, whilst in an upright position.**

   An adult may give support to pupils to help them get their shoulders under the water. The adult must be at eye level with shoulders submerged.

8. **Holding hands with or supported by a familiar adult, jump up and down on the spot and begin to submerge the shoulders.**

   If pupils have difficulty physically jumping, then an adult can support the pupil and help them to perform smaller kangaroo jumps. If the pupil is unable to jump, gentle up and down bobbing movements in the water with or without support can be used.

9. **Exit the water safely with floatation equipment and/or physical support from a familiar adult.**

   Exiting the water can be by any means - hoist, steps, side, etc. Pupils may need different pieces of equipment and/or support from an adult to exit the water.
School Swimming Foundation Award 3

This Award focusses on developing safe entries and being at ease with water on the face. Pupils are also encouraged to join in with simple actions to swim songs.

Pupils can complete the following outcomes with floatation equipment and/or support. To achieve this Award, seven out of nine outcomes must be completed.

1. Enter the water safely.

   Entering the water can be by any means - hoist, steps, side, etc. Pupils may need different pieces of equipment and/or support to enter the water.

2. Be at ease with small amounts of water showered from overhead in the pool.
   Pupils should be at ease when water is showered from overhead. Pupils may respond with hand movements towards the water, facial expressions e.g. smiles, laughs, or verbal expression.

3. Bring the mouth to the water surface and make attempts to copy a familiar adult blowing bubbles.

   Different pieces of equipment can be used to encourage pupils to blow bubbles e.g. drinking straws, egg flips, etc.

4. Move towards motivating objects/favoured swim toys with ease and interact with them in own way, independently.

   Pupils can move in various ways towards the objects - walking, floating, sculling, using arms and/or legs, or supported by an adult. Pupils should then begin to interact with the object. For example, if the object is a ball, pupils may push or throw it; or, if the object is a toy animal, pupils may make the sound of that animal as they move it through the water.

5. Join in with simple actions from a favourite swim song.

   Pupils are encouraged to move different parts of the body in line with a song such as ‘Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes’ or ‘Hokey Cokey.’ Support can be given to the pupils and movements may be performed at a slower pace than the song.

6. Establish trust with a familiar adult and begin to allow them to support in new ways and help progress in the water (e.g. being towed through the water in different directions or rocked from side to side through the water).

   Pupils should allow an adult to support them in different ways and feel relaxed as they are moved around the pool. Pupils should show they are enjoying this activity by facial expressions, holding up emoji cards, vocal expressions, or showing other physical signs of being relaxed in water.
7. Whilst in an upright position and with the shoulders submerged, make a 360 degree turn clockwise and then anti-clockwise with or without adult support.

An adult may give support to pupils to help them get their shoulders under the water. The adult must be at eye level with shoulders submerged. The adult may guide the pupil round the entirety of the turn supporting hands, shoulders, or forearms.

8. Scoop water in the hands and ‘wash’ the face whilst in the pool, with support/help from a familiar adult if required.

Assistance may be needed to help pupils scoop water and bring it to the face. Initially, equipment such as a flannel or sponge may be used to gently wash the face, to help pupils become accustomed to having water on the face.

9. Exit the water safely.

Exiting the water can be by any means - hoist, steps, side, etc. Pupils may need different pieces of equipment and/or support from an adult to exit the water.

School Swimming Foundation Award 4

During this Award, pupils practice floatation and regaining an upright position from floating on the back. Pupils also develop movement around the pool, including push and glides.

Pupils can complete the following outcomes with floatation equipment and/or support. To achieve this Award, seven out of nine outcomes must be completed.

1. Enter the water safely and as independently as possible.

Entering the water can be by any means - hoist, steps, side, etc. Pupils should be encouraged to enter the water as independently as their ability allows. Equipment and/or support from an adult may be used.

2. Move around the pool with the shoulders submerged and the chin on the surface of the water.

Any method of movement can be used. This can be in an upright or flat/horizontal position.

3. With the chin in the water make attempts to blow or push an egg flip/small ball to a familiar adult.

Pupils must be confident with putting their chin towards or on the water. Encouragement should be given by the supporting adult. The adult may need to demonstrate whilst the pupil copies. If the pupil is unable to physically blow out, they can push the object with their chin.
4. **Float on front and/or back with floatation equipment and/or support from a familiar adult if required.**

When floating on the back, pupils’ legs must be off the pool floor, head back eyes looking up. Supporting adults can support either under the shoulders with flat hands or under the head.

When floating on the front, pupils lift the legs off the pool floor, with the chin or face in the water. Support can be given by holding pupils’ hands or elbows (long arm or short arm support).

5. **Float on the back and regain an upright, standing or safe breathing position.**

Floating on the back, legs must be off the pool floor, head back, with eyes looking up. The supporting adult can support either under the shoulders with flat hands or under the head. The pupil then starts to lift the head and lets the legs fall to the pool floor. Help can be given by supporting the shoulders/head and gently lifting the body. The pupil then stands, floats or holds the side in a safe resting position. Action/cue cards may be used to remind or prepare pupils of the next action where required.

6. **Float on the surface of the water on the back whilst an assistant/familiar adult creates turbulence to support movement through the water (turbulent gliding).**

The pupil floats on the back, whilst the supporting adult stands behind the head. The supporting adult places both hands in the water just under the pupil’s shoulders. The hands then rotate anti-clockwise over each other in a rapid backward rotating action, creating turbulence in the water. The pupil starts to move backwards. As this happens, the teacher slowly moves backwards, keeping the hands moving.

7. **Push and glide from/to the pool wall on the front or back.**

Pupils may be assisted in a gliding motion by a supporting adult. The supporting adult may start the pupil’s glide by gently pushing the pupil towards/away from the wall or to another assistant in the water.

8. **Join in with a movement game that involves splashing and kicking.**

This activity should involve a group of pupils, with assistance where necessary. Pupils should be encouraged to kick on their fronts and/or backs, splashing with feet and/or hands or any part of the body.

9. **Exit the water safely and as independently as possible.**

Exiting the water can be by any means - hoist, steps, side, etc. Pupils may need different pieces of equipment and/or support from an adult to exit the water.
School Swimming Foundation Award 5

During this Award, pupils learn how to perform key skills as independently as possible, such as entries, travelling 3 metres on the front and back, and joining in with group activities.

Pupils can complete these outcomes with floatation equipment and/or support. To achieve this Award, seven out of nine outcomes must be completed.

1. Enter the water safely and as independently as possible.

   Entering the water can be by any means - hoist, steps, side, etc. Pupils should be encouraged to enter the water as independently as their ability allows. Equipment and/or support from an adult may be used.

2. Travel around the pool with feet off the floor, shoulders submerged and the chin on the surface of the water.

   Pupils can use leg kicks and/or arm movements, including sculling, to travel around the pool. If on the front then the chin should be as near to the surface of the water as possible. If on the back, the feet should be off the pool floor, head back and eyes looking up ‘to the stars.’

3. Float on the back and rotate onto the front before regaining standing or a safe breathing position.

   When floating on the back, legs must be off the pool floor, with the head back and eyes looking up. The supporting adult can either support under the shoulders with flat hands or under the head. The pupil then starts to lift the head and lets the legs fall to the pool floor. The supporting adult may help the pupil by gently lifting the body. The pupil then stands, floats, or holds the side in a safe resting position. This should be performed with minimal support.

4. With the face in the water, identify objects on the pool floor.

   Pupils identify objects on the pool floor, using verbal signals, emoji/action cards or sign language. Objects should be brightly coloured and can be a variety of items, such as animal shapes, pictures attached to sinkers, objects on the pool floor that are different heights for easier reach, etc.

5. Push and glide from the pool wall on the front and/or back.

   Pupils should start to perform the push and glide with a controlled body movement, arms extended above the head and legs together (if possible).
6. **Travel on the back using arms and/or legs for 3 metres.**

   Pupils should travel on the back with feet off the pool floor. This can be a combination of any arm and/or leg movement. This should be performed with minimal support.

7. **Travel on the front using arms and/or legs for 3 metres.**

   Pupils should travel on the front with feet off the pool floor. This can be a combination of any arm and/or leg movement. This should be performed with minimal support.

8. **Join in with a group activity.**

   Simple, well-known games can be used, such as ‘What’s the time Mr Shark?’ or the ‘Hokey Cokey.’ Other activities from school can also be used.

9. **Exit the water safely and as independently as possible.**

   Exiting the water can be by any means - hoist, steps, side, etc. Pupils may need different pieces of equipment and/or support from an adult to exit the water.

**Water Safety Awareness Award**

During this Award, pupils will develop a basic awareness of being safe in and around water using the key water safety messages. This Award can be achieved by combining different activities at school, with basic safe self-rescue skills at the pool, such as floating on the back, rotation and travelling.

To achieve this Award, all outcomes must be completed.

1. **Respond to an object of reference, a sound, or visual aid that shows the colour for when it is dangerous to swim.**

   This can be any object, sound or visual aid that shows or represents the colour red – which signifies that it is dangerous to swim. Pupils may demonstrate recognition through sounds, pointing, other gestures, or holding up emoji cards, for example.

2. **Respond to an object of reference, a sound, or a visual aid that shows the colour for when it is safe to swim.**

   This can be any object, sound or visual aid that shows or represents the colours yellow and red – which signify that it is safe to swim. Pupils may demonstrate recognition through sounds, pointing, other gestures, or holding up emoji cards, for example.
3. **Show understanding of the key water safety message: ‘Always swim with an adult’**.

   This could be by making reference to a familiar adult – parent/teacher/carer – when asked who it is safe to go swimming with.

4. **Respond to an object of reference, a sound, or visual aid that shows the safest place to swim**.

   This could be an object, a sound, a picture or a symbol that represents: a swimming pool with a lifeguard patrolling; a beach with red and yellow flags flying; a beach with lifeguard on duty, or an open water environment with designated swim area and lifeguard.

5. **Respond to an object of reference, a sound, or visual aid showing potential water-related dangers around the school/home**.

   This could be an object, a picture a sound or a symbol that represents water-related dangers in the home such as a pond, a filled bath or a paddling pool. Pupils may demonstrate recognition through sounds, pointing, other gestures, or holding up emoji cards, for example.

6. **Be able to identify a lifeguard and swimming teacher**.

   Pupils might identify their usual swimming teacher at the pool by pointing, signing, or giving a verbal response. Identifying lifeguards can be done in the classroom first using visual aids, posters, pictures, etc. Once at the pool, pupils may identify the lifeguard on poolside or sat in the lifeguard chair by pointing, signing, or giving verbal responses.

7. **Answer the following questions on water safety by demonstrating or indicating with a visual aid:**

   a. What telephone number should you dial for help? 999/112
   b. What should you do if you fall into cold water? Float on the back, breathe calmly and relax as much as possible.

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**Glossary**

*Kangaroo jumps*: Pupils are supported by an assistant either face-to-face (palm-on-palm, or a noodle under the pupil’s arms) or from behind (palm-on-elbow, or holding a noodle around the pupil’s underarms). Whilst supporting the pupil, the assistant gently begins to jump up and down with the pupil. This can be on the spot or moving around the pool.

*Move*: Any means of movement around the pool with feet on or off the pool floor. With or without floatation equipment and/or support.
Travel: Movement around the pool using arms and/or legs, with feet off the pool floor and not making contact with the side of the pool. Travel uses minimal flotation equipment and/or support.

Turbulent gliding: The movement of a pupil through the water by turbulence created by the teacher. The pupil floats on the back, whilst the supporting adult stands behind the head. The supporting adult places both hands in the water just under the pupil’s shoulders. The hands then rotate anti-clockwise over each other in a rapid backward rotating action, creating turbulence in the water. The pupil starts to move backwards. As this happens, the teacher slowly moves backwards, keeping the hands moving. The pupil may wear flotation equipment. This can be used for pupils with no or limited propulsion from their arms and legs or as a relaxation/cool down.

Contact us

If, after reading this guide, you need additional advice or support on the School Swimming Foundation Awards, please contact us at schoolswimming@swimming.org.