

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY SKILLS AT KEY STAGE 1 OR 2

PARENTS

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS



Beyond the minimum requirements

Schools understand that within a class or year group there will always be a mix of swimming abilities. The school's obligation is to ensure every child meets that minimum standard, particularly in relation to water safety.

If your child has already received swimming lessons, or if they reach the swimming and stroke requirements quickly, schools should offer them other activities to make sure they continue to develop their skills.

It does not mean they stop going to the school swimming lessons.

SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY LESSONS

What should my child be taught?

The national curriculum lists three outcomes that all pupils must reach by the end of Year 6. These are **minimum** standards of swimming and water safety and will help to give young people the basic skills to be able to enjoy the water safely.

It is hoped that young people will want to develop their water skills further by taking part in swimming sessions outside of school.

The national curriculum requirements:

1

Swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of **at least** 25 metres.

2

Use a range of strokes effectively.

3

Perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations.

Understanding the national curriculum swimming and water safety requirements

Like any national curriculum subject, there are certain outcomes that pupils need to reach in order to pass the subject.

Unlike external swimming lessons where the swimming teacher has more time to focus on developing a young person's skills, the school programme is about introducing children to swimming and water safety and giving them the knowledge to keep themselves safe.

Primary school swimming is not about learning the perfect stroke, it is learning about how to stay safe in the water.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY

1

Swimming is a life skill with many physical, mental and social benefits.

2

Learning basic swimming and water safety skills could save your life.

3

Swimming is an activity that can be enjoyed throughout your life time.

For many young people, learning to swim is a key part of growing up. Swimming lessons often lead to Rookie Lifeguard courses, diving clubs or other water-based activities. Without basic swimming skills, young people may also be excluded from an increasing number of school activities and trips.

A big part of early swimming lessons involves learning how to enjoy the water safely. This means understanding what to do if you get into trouble and how to call for help. This is also known as 'safe self-rescue'.

With drowning being the third most common cause of accidental death in children, it is vital that young people are also made aware of the dangers of different types of water. For example, swimming in the sea with its currents, cold water and seaweed is very different from swimming in a pool.

The importance for all young people to learn swimming skills and about water safety was underlined by the Department for Education in 1994 when it made swimming and water safety lessons compulsory during primary school.

Benefits of water safety and swimming lessons:

- Learning to swim allows young people to have fun in the water with family and friends.
- Water safety is an essential life-saving skill.
- Learning about water safety in different water environments and situations is vital to staying safe in and around water.
- Swimming provides numerous physical and mental benefits throughout a young person's life. It is good for the heart and lungs, can help with muscle development, and is also thought to help concentration.
- Knowing how to swim provides access to many other water-related activities - and careers.

National curriculum requirement	What your child will learn
1 Swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25 metres.	<p>The ability to swim confidently from one end of a 25m pool to the other without touching the walls or floor. This is the minimum distance and many pupils may be able to swim further.</p> <p>How to maintain their strength throughout the swim so that they can comfortably achieve the distance.</p> <p>How to use their chosen stroke effectively throughout the swim.</p>
2 Use a range of strokes effectively.	<p>How to swim on their front and back using different swimming strokes.</p> <p>Which stroke to use when. For example, treading water to help with survival and self-rescue, front crawl to swim fast in a race.</p>
3 Perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations.*	<p>The potential dangers of water and how to act responsibly when being near different types of water e.g. canal, river, lake, reservoir, sea.</p> <p>How to use self-rescue skills and when to use them if they unintentionally fall into the water or get into difficulty.</p> <p>What to do if someone else gets into trouble in the water and who to call for help.</p>

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q My child was taught to swim before they started primary school. Why should they take part in the school lessons?

A Many children will have some swimming ability before they reach primary school. However, private swimming lessons differ from the national curriculum which focuses more on water safety and self-rescue skills. Even if your child is a confident swimmer, they may not be aware of the different types of water and what to do if they get into trouble. It is therefore important that **every** child takes part in primary school swimming and water safety sessions so we can be sure that **every** child in the country has these important skills.

Q My child has special educational needs, are they also allowed to go swimming?

A Yes - it is very important that **all** children have the opportunity to learn these important skills. Individual needs should not be a barrier for a pupil to attend school swimming lessons. Talk to your school if you have any concerns.

Q My child is disabled, is it safe for them to go swimming?

A Yes, public swimming pools are well equipped to support young people with a disability to access the pool. It is the schools responsibility to ensure this is in place and that the swimming teacher has had the required training to provide any additional needs and support.

Q My child is scared of the water and hates the idea of school swimming lessons. What can I do?

A There are lots of resources available to help you introduce your child to the water. Have a look at bit.ly/IntroducingSwimming for ideas, and talk to the school about your child's concerns. This way they can ensure the swimming teacher is aware and can support in the water.

Rio2016 [Olympic gold medal winner Adam Peaty](#) was afraid of water as a child. He worked to overcome it and became a champion. If you are nervous of getting in the pool don't worry, you're not alone and help is at hand.

A few tips to help overcome a fear of swimming

1. Start by getting your feet wet and try to gradually get deeper into the water
2. When you can stand in water deep enough splash water on your face as if you are washing it. At the same time think of positive images while you are splashing your face.
3. Next try to learn to hold your breath under the water and breathe out into the water. Basically, blow bubbles!
4. Hold the side and practice kicking with your body stretched out
5. Don't feel rushed to make progress.