Frequently Asked Questions
School Swimming

1. Is swimming compulsory at Primary School?

Swimming is a **compulsory** part of the current National Curriculum for PE and will remain a **compulsory** part of the national curriculum. All pupils must be given an opportunity to swim at primary school.

2. Can schools charge for school swimming lessons?

As part of the funding settlement, **schools** get extra money in the 'per pupil formula allocation' for children to have **swimming lessons** so they cannot charge for School Swimming lessons but they can ask for voluntary contributions to cover the cost of transport.

3. Does my school have to publish data on School Swimming?

Maintained schools, including those that convert to academies, **must** publish information about their use of the Primary PE and Sport Premium. This should be published on the school's website. Since 2017, it is also a requirement to include the attainment figures of all year 6 pupils for swimming and water safety.

It is important that schools share these attainment figures for parents to be aware of their child's abilities. In place of a more formal reporting method, it also allows secondary schools the ability to access the information.

4. Whose responsibility is the collection of data on my pupils' Swimming ability?

Schools are responsible for collecting the data for each pupil. If school swimming and water safety lessons are provided by a third party, such as a pool operator or swim school, teachers should request this information at the end of each swimming term or block of lessons. Support materials for completing the reporting template are found here https://www.swimming.org/library/documents/559/download.

5. Can Schools use the PE Funding for School Swimming?

Schools cannot use the funding to teach the minimum requirements of the national curriculum - including those specified for swimming (or, in the case of academies and free schools, to teach your existing PE curriculum).

However, they can use the funding for the following with regard to School Swimming:

- Provide additional swimming provision targeted to pupils not able to meet the swimming requirements of the national curriculum – those pupils who have gone through the school swimming programme and have not yet reached the minimum requirements,
- Top-up swimming lessons in Year 6,
- Hiring qualified swimming teachers or coaches to work with primary school teachers, to enhance or extend current opportunities,
- Provide existing staff with professional development, mentoring, training or resources, to help them teach swimming and water safety more effectively,

- Introducing new sports or activities and encourage more pupils to take up sport, such as synchronised swimming or water polo,
- Supporting and involving the least active children by running or extending school swimming clubs,
- Enter or run more challenges, for example, Swim Safe session, School Swimathon or Big School Swim. For full guidance from Swim England on use of the PE Funding for School Swimming, please visit the link below: http://smartfuse.s3.amazonaws.com/445780ab19820fef0cf0e4d19f5d77ee/uploads/2018/08/Swim-England-Advice-To-Schools-On-Use-Of-The-Primary-PE-Sports-Premium.pdf

6. Can Parents withdraw their child from School Swimming Lessons?

Swimming is a statutory National Curriculum subject and as such, parents cannot withdraw their children from School Swimming. Where cultural concerns are raised by parents, Swim England advise that it may be worthwhile talking to local faith groups to help them to understand the importance of school swimming. Interestingly, 1 in 5 adults had a bad experience of school swimming - it can sometimes come from a lack of parental confidence in swimming, so establishing reasons for concerns and addressing these is key.

7. How many School Swimming Lessons should our pupils receive?

Swim England recommend that all pupils receive a minimum of 25 hours of School Swimming before end of Key Stage 2. The Swim Group Review of Curriculum Swimming and Water Safety lessons found that the average time in the pool is 33 minutes and the average number of lessons is 16, so these lessons must be effective.

8. Should Schools only take pupils School Swimming who are unable to swim 25m?

No, all pupils have an entitlement to School Swimming. Swimming the minimum 25m is unlikely to mean a child is safe if they found themselves unexpectedly in the water. National Curriculum Swimming requirements also include the ability to demonstrate Self Rescue Skills as part of Water Safety and the ability to use a range of strokes for different purposes e.g. Breaststroke legs for treading water. Swimming is 'Wet PE' and, as such, pupils can be given opportunities to develop a range of skills as part of school swimming e.g. 'compare their performances with previous ones'. Club swimmers for example, may never have received any Water Safety and Self Rescue Skills education.

9. When should School Swimming be taught?

It is up to primary schools to decide when, and at what point they wish to teach School Swimming, although many schools take their pupils in Year 3 so they have time to address pupils unable to meet the minimum requirements and put further programmes in place from years 4 - 6.

10. Should School Teachers be delivering School Swimming? Surely we should leave this job to the Specialist Swimming Teachers at leisure provider pools?

School teachers/staff know their pupils well - they know how to get the best out of them; they are used to organising activities and groups; they have many skills which would be wasted if they were not involved in the lesson in some way. They have duty of care for their pupils throughout the School Swimming lesson and thus **best practice is for School Teachers/Staff to work in partnership with their leisure provider Swimming Teachers.** This lowers ratios and enables faster progress. They should work under the guidance of their leisure provider staff during lessons but be involved in planning the programme - they are NC experts - the Swimming Teachers may not be.

11. What training do I need to undertake in Buckinghamshire to enable me to accompany my pupils to their School Swimming lessons?

In order to accompany pupils to their School Swimming lessons and work alongside and under the guidance of leisure provider staff, school staff must have undertaken, as a minimum, the Swim England Support Teacher of School Swimming Course (formerly Fundamentals of School Swimming). For School Teachers working at their own shallow tank school pools, the Bucks Safe Practice in School Swimming Policy recommends that they also undertake the Swim England Teacher of School Swimming Course.

12. When do the above certificates expire?

Swim England recommend that school staff refresh their training at least every 5 years. This can be done in the following ways (in order of recommendation):

1. Undertaking the Teacher of School Swimming Course,
2. Attending a second Support Teacher of School Swimming Course,
3. Undertaking the new Refresher Training (contact Swimming@ahs.bucks.sch.uk for further information on this course).

13. How many trained staff should a school have?

For all school swimming lessons, there needs to be a minimum of 2 members of school staff on poolside who have undertaken, as a minimum, the Swim England Support Teacher Course. Schools need to consider having back up staff trained to allow for absences or where the Risk Assessment identifies more staff are required.

14. Once I have completed the Support Teacher of School Swimming Course, how many pupils can I teach?

Swim England recommend that School Staff work to a ratio of 1:3 pupils under the guidance of a qualified Swimming Teacher. A completed Risk Assessment to determine competency, confidence, experienced, pupils, activity and organisation may result in a slightly larger ratio or even smaller one.

15. Once I have completed the Teacher of School Swimming Course, how many pupils can I work with?

Swim England recommend that School Staff work to a ratio of 1:8 pupils alongside a qualified Swimming Teacher. A completed Risk Assessment to determine competency, confidence, experienced, pupils, activity and organisation may result in a slightly larger ratio or even smaller one.

16. Our staff have the old Module 1/Module 2/Fundamentals of School Swimming/Aquatic Skills Certificate. Do they have to go onto the Support Teacher or Teacher of School Swimming Courses?

Please refer to question 12, which refers to expiry of these courses and how staff need to refresh their skills.

17. Can we take pupils for non-structured swimming lessons or 'free play'?

Unprogrammed school sessions, owing to their unpredictable nature should not take part during School Swimming. School Swimming should be programmed (i.e. with a formal structure, disciplined and controlled). This does not mean that they cannot be fun. Aqua Splash style relays, fun galas which are Risk Assessed can be great fun.

18. Are our Pupils allowed to wear goggles?

Guidance from Swim England on the use of goggles for School Swimming is as follows:

Goggles are not normally recommended for School Swimming lessons, where swimmers have poor control in the water (beginners), or for single short races in galas. The pupil's attention can be compromised by the need to adjust and replace goggles.

Wearing goggles in swimming lessons may make your child feel comfortable in the pool while they are learning to swim and may help them develop their aquatic breathing skills as they learn to put their face in the water. However, it is vital children are comfortable swimming with or without goggles so they don't panic in an unexpected situation.

Remember:

1. *Parents need to be informed of the reasons to not wear goggles and children encouraged to take lessons without them.*
2. *Some teachers say that goggles can help to reduce or prevent eye irritation. However, if pool water is maintained in a good condition it shouldn't be necessary for children to wear goggles at all.*

The Bucks Safe Practice in School Swimming Policy 2018 states:

The decision to allow swimming goggles during lessons is down to the school's PE Policy and communication with the School Swimming Provider. Pupils with medical eye conditions may need to be allowed to wear goggles. There may be particular situations, such as in hydrotherapy pools where the higher temperature may affect chemical balance and may cause eye irritation but this should be managed through water treatment strategies rather than recourse to goggles.

Any deviation from the guidelines should be noted in the risk assessment for the activity. Knowledge about individual children's needs remains critical in determining the wearing of goggles.

Parents are responsible for requesting permission that goggles be worn by their children and schools are responsible for collecting and recording such requests. **The Swimming Teacher will ultimately decide whether the wearing of goggles is appropriate for the activity being undertaken. Children will be asked to remove their goggles for self-rescue and water based games e.g. water polo.** For some swimmers where speed and competence increases, there may be a need for pupils to wear goggles. Club swimmers for example will benefit from the use of goggles due to the longer daily exposure to chlorine.

Wearing prescription goggles for pupils who are very short sighted, may result in a safer swimming environment.

The Swimming Teacher for the group is responsible for determining whether any pupil wearing goggles is using them safely and for a positive purpose. If they are not, then the goggles should be removed. Ill-fitting goggles may mist up or fill up with water, thus affecting visibility. School Staff should not fit or adjust a student's goggles.

Where parents request a child to wear goggles for their School Swimming lesson (for medical and other associated reasons; e.g. prescription goggles), they should be informed of their responsibility to:

1. *Choose a pair with BSI instructions on the packaging for the correct way to put on and take off goggles.*
2. *Choose a pair that fit properly. Leaking goggles could affect the child and waste lesson time.*
3. *Ensure your child knows how to fit and adjust goggles properly.*
4. *NOTE: teachers will not be responsible for fitting children's goggles.*

This should be included in the School's Risk Assessment.

19. We can't find our records of staff training and certificates

The Swimming Team at AVTP hold a Bucks School Swimming Database which lists candidate name, school, course taken and date. If staff change schools, if they could let the Swimming Team know, this would help us to keep our records up to date. Where School Staff may have lost certificates, these can be requested from http://swimenglandqualifications.com/replacement-certificates/.

20. What is a NOP?

This is the Normal Operating Procedure for each individual pool. The NOP outlines the day to day arrangements for participants' safety and should be followed by those who are responsible for groups using the pool. This can include elements such as teacher:pupil ratios; staff qualifications; requirements for lifeguarding; teaching/coaching qualifications; organisation and management of the class; changing rooms; pool depths; accident and potential risks including main hazards etc.

21. What is an EAP?

The EAP is the Emergency Action Plan for each individual pool. This document provides the basis for dealing with unforeseen difficulties and problems in the swimming pool. It covers emergency signals; actions pupils should take in emergencies; support available from pool centre staff; location and use of life-saving aids; procedures for contacting emergency services; procedures for recording accidents.

22. What is the PSOP?

The PSOP is the Pool Safety Operating Procedures which are a collection of the NOP and EAP. School staff and pupils should be aware of the implications of these and the actions which they should take in the event of an emergency. In addition to these, teachers should also be aware of guidelines provided by Swim England and the Bucks Safe Practice in School Swimming regarding aspects such as teaching from poolside; diving and jumping into shallow water and safe supervision for teaching and coaching.

23. Can a member of School Staff support a pupil in the water?

It may have been determined, as part of the Risk Assessment, that a smaller pupil; pupil with an additional need or disability; nervous non swimmer etc may require support in the water. This can be provided by staff from the school and they do not need to have undertaken Support Teacher of School Swimming Course to take on this role. They will be working under the guidance of the Swimming Teacher to provide the pupil with light support in the water and will be additional to the two members of School Staff on poolside.

As part of the Risk Assessment, it will have been agreed how the member of school staff will be supporting the pupil. When manual support is provided, it is important that you make sure that:

- you and your swimming assistants handle participants with empathy,
- you check that participants are happy for you to do so,
- you are aware of potential safeguarding implications and make sure that, for example, your hands are appropriately positioned and in full view at all times (using a flat open palm, back of hand or by using floatation/teaching equipment).

Supporting participants through physical contact can be helpful to their progress and, depending on the situation, it might be appropriate to support participants by the following areas of the body: hands; shoulders; head.

Please also refer to safety guidance from Swim England titled 'Teaching in the Water and the Handling of Children' - http://www.swimming.org/library/documents/1438/download.

24. Can a HLTA be the lead person taking a class school swimming?

The Bucks Safe Practice Policy and Guidance does state that **School Teachers** should accompany their own classes to their School Swimming lessons whenever possible, as they know their children well. However, The Association for Physical Education (AfPE) also state that staff should be confident and competent in their role and we are aware that this may apply to a HLTA. You will need to ensure that your Risk Assessment and School Policy supports the HLTA having Duty of Care for the pupils. The following list may also be useful.

School Staff must:

- Be given a clear role and understand the limits of their role,
- Be confident on poolside,
- Communicate effectively and appropriately with each other and Leisure Provider staff on safety issues,
- Be suitably dressed for their role,
- Ensure children are appropriately supervised when changing,
- Ensure children are under control at all times,
- Take head counts before, during and after sessions. This should be recorded in the swimming registers,
- Enforce the NOP and EAP; all staff on poolside should be aware of the emergency procedures of any external provision, ensuring that children are aware of what to do in the event of an emergency evacuation,
- **Remain on poolside to provide an assisting role to support the School Swimming lesson (they must hold a minimum of Swim England Support Teacher of School Swimming qualification),**
- Hold responsibility for reporting on the progress of School Swimming (through ongoing monitoring and guidance from Leisure Provider staff). Identify those pupils unlikely to meet the minimum requirements for National Curriculum Swimming,
- Be aware of the additional needs or medical conditions of the pupils they are teaching so that correct measures/precautions can be put in place with guidance from the Specialist Swimming Teacher.

When public pools are used for School Swimming, the **duty of care remains with the School Staff.** Specialist Aquatics Teachers may be employed to assist with the teaching of the lesson, but it is essential the School Staff remain on poolside.

25. Does Fundamentals/Support Teacher qualify staff to life-save?

The Support Teacher Course (previously Fundamentals of School Swimming) is a teaching qualification only, it **does not cover a member of staff to life save**. They would need to undertake a lifesaving qualification in addition to the teaching qualification - National Rescue Award for Swimming Teachers and Coaches (NRASTC). We run NRASTC training through our accredited trainer, Rob Lloyd of Vale Safety Training. Rob can be contacted as follows:

Telephone: 07515 169858
Website: www.valesafetytraining.co.uk
Email: rob.lloyd@valesafetytraining.co.uk

Please note that whilst a qualified swimming teacher can also hold the NRASTC qualification, they should never work alone and should always be on poolside with another qualified member of staff.

26. If I take the Support Teacher of School Swimming qualification, do I need to take part in the practical sessions?

Participation in the pool element of the course is obviously the preferred option as it demonstrates confidence in and around water, which AfPE cite as important for staff on poolside during School Swimming. It also enables candidates to experience first-hand School Swimming practices and practical participation often helps to embed ideas.

27. Can children wear earrings in the pool?

We advise that if a child cannot remove their earrings for medical reasons, that they tape them up and ensure that the swimming hat is pulled securely on to help the tape remain in place. The updated policy does state that pupils should remove all jewellery, but the above seems a sensible solution to enable the pupil to still swim, as long as the earrings are small studs and cover with tape easily. Parents should write a letter giving permission for their child to swim with earrings and stating they are aware they must cover these with tape (this is their responsibility), not the schools or yours.

28. Why do two members of staff need to be Support Teacher (Fundamentals) trained?

As per Policy, two members of school staff need to be trained to the Support Teacher of School Swimming qualification as a minimum. The reason that the Policy requests two members of staff to undertake this course is as follows:

- Staff have a duty of care for their pupils and must remain on poolside and have a full overview of the swimming lessons. They cannot simply hand pupils over to a Swimming teacher as they still hold ultimate responsibility (even though the swimming teachers have responsibility for the content). If a teacher is removed from poolside (first aid/ to take a pupil to the toilet/ behaviour etc), and only one member of staff with duty of care, remains on poolside, the lesson would need to stop.

Other reasons include:

- The policy identifies a range of roles and responsibilities for school staff taking pupils swimming (taken from AfPE 2016). The course covers these, helping staff grow in understanding and confidence in their role. Evaluations from these courses show that staff do feel more confident,
- It is recognised that school staff have great skills while working with their pupils - they know how to get the best out of them and they can help to bring about progress even through reinforcement and praise of the skills being taught,
- Ratios in teaching swimming are a very important factor - lowering ratios through school staff working under the guidance of specialist swimming teachers (this could be 1:1 feedback or through working with a small group of 1 to 3 pupils), can really help with progress.

School staff have a better understanding of National Curriculum PE (swimming is after all, 'wet PE') than most leisure provider staff - partnership working between the two is very important. Courses often reveal that school staff have ideas about National Curriculum activities and cross curricular themes they would like to bring into lessons. Schools are paying for a service and should be identifying NC requirements for PE (e.g. opportunities to collaborate, communicate, engage in competition etc).

Swim England recommend completion of the Teacher of School Swimming Course where staff are not working with qualified swimming teachers.

29. I have a Level 2 Swimming Teacher, do I need to have other trained staff on poolside?

Even if you use a Level 2 Swimming Teacher, you should have an additional member of school staff who hold, as a minimum, Support Teacher of School Swimming Certificate (previously Fundamentals) as per the Bucks Safe Practice in School Swimming

Policy. Your school staff hold duty of care over the pupils; they know them and how to get the best out of them. Even supporting pupils on a 1:1 level under the guidance of the Swimming Teacher can bring about progress.

Keeping small ratios (eg. using school staff to work with pupils, under the guidance of the qualified swimming teachers), can help to lower school swimming costs as pupils may reach minimum requirements earlier with targeted support.

In addition, if you have your own school pool you will need a NRASTC trained member of staff. This could be the Level 2 trained teacher or the Fundamentals trained staff member or could be an additional member of staff.

30. <u>What are the benefits of taking the Support Teacher of School Swimming Course?</u>

The Support Teacher Course (previously Fundamentals) is both theory and practical. We always stay in the shallow end and the practical sessions are aimed at providing ideas for activities but also the opportunity to try out the activity resource cards provided on the course. We never ask candidates to do anything they are uncomfortable with in the water.

The reason that the Buckinghamshire Policy request two members of staff to undertake the Support Teacher course is as follows:

- Staff have a duty of care for their pupils and must remain on poolside and have a full overview of the swimming lessons,
- It is recognised that school staff have great skills working with their pupils - they know how to get the best out of them and they can help to bring about progress even through reinforcement and praise of the skills being taught (the course gives candidates confidence in this),
- Ratios in teaching swimming are a very important factor - lowering ratios through school staff working under the guidance of specialist swimming teachers (this could be 1:1 feedback or through working with a small group of 1 to 3 pupils), can really help with progress,
- Evaluations from these courses show that staff feel more confident with their role and responsibilities on poolside,
- School staff have a better understanding of National Curriculum PE (swimming is after all, 'wet PE') than most leisure provider staff - partnership working between the two is therefore very important.

31. <u>What are the benefits of taking the Teacher of School Swimming Course?</u>

The Teacher of School Swimming qualification (previously Aquatic Skills Course) is not compulsory, however, Swim England/AVTP do recommend taking this qualification as once complete, school staff can work with up to 8 pupils (instead of 3 with Support Teacher) dependent on confidence, competence and risk assessments, under the guidance of the qualified Level 2 swimming teacher.

Benefits of training:

- It equips staff with skills to deliver high quality school swimming lessons,
- It is highly recommended as a minimum requirement for staff teaching in their own shallow tank pools,
- Ofsted have cited the training as a good use of PE and Sport Premium Funding,
- The holder is qualified to plan and evaluate lessons in line with NC alongside a qualified aquatics teacher,
- Staff can work with 1:8 pupils (dependent on risk assessment) – Support Teacher is 1:3 recommendation,
- The course covers key aquatic skills and strokes in more detail,
- Staff leave feeling more confident in their role on poolside.