



Members Health & Safety Update

July 2026

A Message from the afPE H&S Team:

Welcome to our July Health and Safety Newsletter.

In this month's Health and Safety newsletter we are focusing on member questions relating to whether schools can use swimming pools in private homes. In addition, we have highlighted what statutory water safety education needs to be taught in the primary and secondary phase from September 2026.

Despite this being specific, the same considerations must be considered if considering the use of Pop-Up Pools. *A reminder that Bucks Council DO NOT recommend the use of temporary pools for any of its schools. For schools that decide to use such provision please refer to the latest Swim England guidance on temporary 'pop-up' pools. Guidance may wish to be sought from Bucks Council Health and Safety Team. (C2)*

Swimming pool usage in private homes

Question:

'We currently use a local sports centre and other than the cost of transport and time out of school the sessions and 2 instructors work well. However, a neighbouring house to school who have an inside swimming pool, has recently been bought and the new owners are offering the pool to be hired to schools and nurseries.

They have stated they will hire a professional and qualified swimming teacher and have changing facilities upgraded to allow groups to use them.

They are offering us use of the pool and instructor, but we have some concerns and would value the Association for PE's view on the use of private pools.'

Answer:

There are a number of issues and risks to consider here for the school. Despite good intentions, the risks associated with using a private domestic swimming pool for school swimming are generally too significant to manage safely or insure adequately. Such arrangements are therefore normally considered unsuitable and are not recommended.

We've outlined them below.

1. Safeguarding

- Domestic settings lack the controls of a public or school facility.
- Household members or visitors are not subject to DBS checks.
- Inadequate or inappropriate changing and supervision arrangements increase safeguarding risks.

2. Health and Safety

The facility must comply with HSE's 'Managing health and safety in swimming pools - **HSG179.**'

- Domestic pools are not designed for groups of children.
- Risks include unsafe access/egress, inadequate depth markings, slippery surfaces, poor lighting or ventilation, and unsuitable emergency arrangements.
- Emergency procedures are often below the standards expected for school swimming.

3. Water Quality and Hygiene

- Private pools may not meet public pool standards for water testing, treatment, and record keeping.
- Inadequate procedures increase the risk of infection or contamination.

4. Lifeguarding and Supervision

- Qualified lifeguards with appropriate, nationally recognised certification are required.
- Teacher supervision alone is insufficient.

5. Insurance and Liability

- Domestic insurance policies usually exclude school or commercial use.

- In the event of an incident, liability may be unclear, exposing the school and local authority to legal and financial risk.

6. Facilities and Equipment

- Changing rooms, toilets, and shower facilities are often unsuitable for pupils.
- Pool surrounds and equipment may not meet safety, accessibility, or maintenance standards.

7. Accessibility and Inclusion

- Private pools rarely meet disability access requirements.
- Pupils with medical conditions or additional needs may not be safely accommodated.

8. Management and Governance

- Lack of formal operating procedures, emergency action plans, staff training records, and documented risk management systems.
- Arrangement may conflict with school policies.

Water safety in RSHE (NEW statutory element)

From Sept 2026, updated RSHE guidance is statutory

It must be:

- Sequenced, evidence-based, and skills-focused
- Water safety is now mandatory content
- Delivered through the new Personal Safety strand
- Focus is on:
 - Real-life risk
 - Decision-making
 - Safeguarding and prevention
 - Why it's been introduced
 - Rising drowning rates (especially among children)

Recognition that:

Not all pupils can swim

Classroom learning is essential for risk awareness [rlss.org.uk]

What pupils should learn (practical content)

Core Water Safety Code (teach explicitly)

Typically includes:

- Stop and think (assess risk)
- Stay together (peer safety)
- Call 999/112 in emergencies
- Float to live / don't panic

(These are consistent messages across RLSS, RNLI, Swim England)

Knowledge & skills by phase***Primary (KS1–2)***

- Identify hazards:
 - Rivers, canals, seas, floods
- Understand:
 - Safe behaviours near water
- Know:
 - What to do in an emergency
- Basic concepts:
 - Cold water danger
 - “Don't jump in to rescue”

Secondary (KS3–4)

- More complex risk factors:
 - Cold water shock
 - Currents and hidden dangers
 - Alcohol and peer pressure
- Decision-making:
 - Risk assessment in social situations
- Emergency response:
 - “Throw, don't go” rescue principles
- Challenging myths:
- Even strong swimmers drown

Useful resources for schools

[PSHE Association water safety lessons](#)

[RLSS UK \(Water Smart Schools programme\)](#)

[RNLI / Canal & River Trust lesson packs](#)