

Taking School Swimming Seriously

The 2014 School Swimming Census



www.swimming.org/schoolcharter


the **asa**
swim for life



Taking School Swimming Seriously

In the last two years we have seen an incredible focus on sport in this country, a legacy of the passion and excitement generated in no small part by the London Olympics and the Glasgow Commonwealth Games. Within that time the ASA has been monitoring the progress of swimming within schools, to understand the uptake, barriers and difficulties faced by educators and parents alike.



This year sees the publication of the third annual ASA School Swimming Census. This reflects on some of the changes that have occurred over the previous year and is launched with a corresponding School Swimming Charter to drive the impacts required to continue momentum and make lasting change. The first Census outlined an

overview of the state of school swimming, whilst the 2013 report provided a high profile announcement of the shocking statistic that 51% of primary school children aged 7-11 years were unable to swim 25 metres unaided, the minimum requirement at Key Stage 2.

This report demonstrates some of the positive changes that have taken place and highlights some of the areas where support and development is still very much required.

Whilst in previous reports the Census has informed us that the number of children achieving the Key Stage 2 requirement has been static or has even decreased, this year there are signs of movement in the right direction – an increase in the number of children able to achieve the goals set out by the national curriculum. This is a small increase, but is a very positive and significant outcome to be celebrated. This now needs to be the impetus to increase the pace and ensure numbers continue to grow year on year.

Additionally, there needs to be a new focus – to take children beyond the ability to swim 25 metres unaided and ensure that they are capable enough to execute safe self-rescue in the event of any unexpected incident.

There are two main influential groups whose role it is to take up the baton of this challenge – politicians and primary schools. The ASA urges them to make further commitment to taking standards and requirements seriously by prioritising swimming and water safety for children. Specifically, we are calling on the Department for Education to instruct Ofsted to develop a more rigorous assessment and reporting process on the performance of curriculum swimming at Key Stage 2.

However, we recognise that there is a wider role to play in ensuring that children have the opportunity to learn to swim at school. The ASA will also be working closely with parents, swimming teachers and pool providers to make them more aware of the issues and to improve standards of school swimming.

Already, central government has shown support at the highest level for this initiative, as indicated by David Cameron in Prime Minister's Questions on 25 June 2014.

“We need to do more to teach swimming and life-saving skills in schools.”

Additionally, The Labour Party has released a report recommending a return to a two hour per week provision within the curriculum to focus on PE and sport.

The ASA has a unique responsibility to collaborate with primary schools in England to successfully support them in delivering swimming lessons to their pupils and to help them comply with the new curriculum requirements.

These new requirements, as outlined by the Department for Education in 2013, have now come into effect. All schools have to increase the attention they pay to swimming as part of their scheduling, to ensure that children leave primary school able to swim at least 25 metres unaided and are knowledgeable and safe around water. We believe the most effective way to do this is to ensure an allocation of at least 25 hours of study time per child.

We hope to help schools achieve this by providing a helpful set of guidelines and support through a direct relationship with the ASA.

As a result, in this report, we are launching a School Swimming Charter which will form the foundations of that relationship with primary schools to encourage and support more of them to ‘take school swimming seriously’.

Edward Lord OBE JP, Chairman, ASA Group Board

The 2014 Census

The sample

Of the primary schools sampled, 86% were state schools, 6% were independent schools and a further 6% represented free or academy schools. Special needs establishments and middle schools each accounted for 1% of the sample.

The majority of respondents were PE coordinators, head teachers and Key Stage 2 class teachers.

Whilst a percentage of schools offered swimming for all years through Key Stage 2, the highest incidence was in Year 4 (23%) as opposed to the lowest incidence in Year 6 (17%).

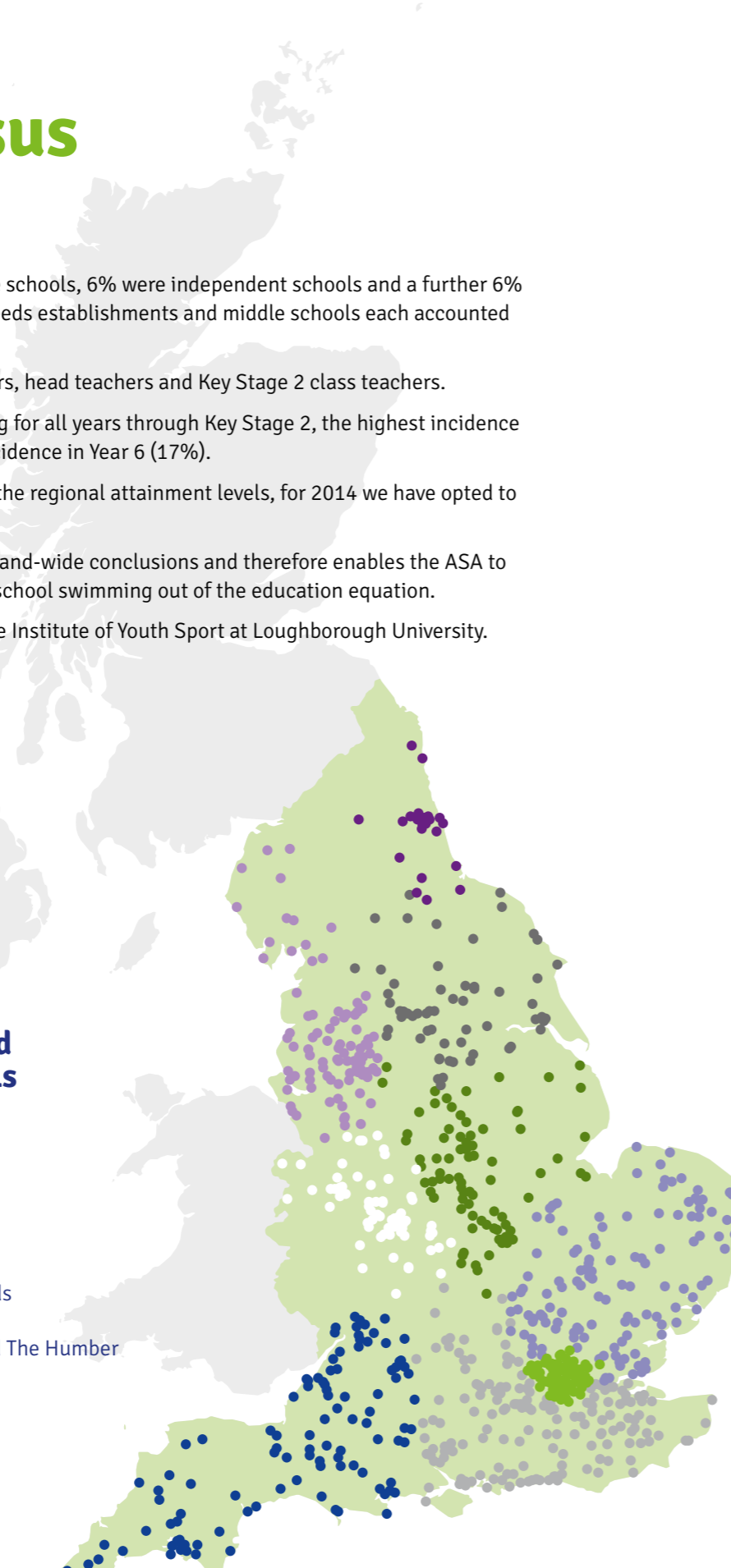
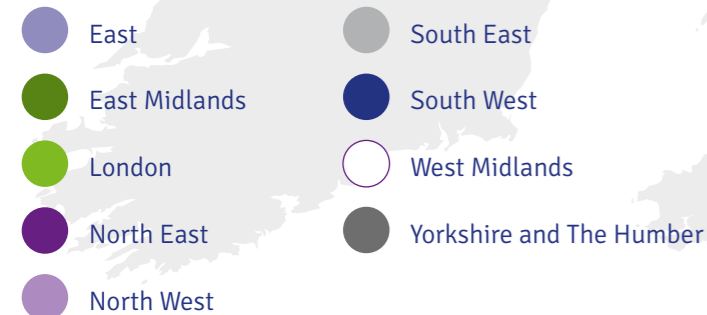
In previous years we have given a breakdown of the regional attainment levels, for 2014 we have opted to focus on the national picture.

The sample is statistically relevant to make England-wide conclusions and therefore enables the ASA to identify the key barriers and pressures pushing school swimming out of the education equation.

Research was carried out with the support of The Institute of Youth Sport at Loughborough University.



Respondents came from a broad cross section of primary schools across England



Key Outcomes

There is evidence of steps being made in the right direction

In the last 12 months there has been positive progress made in the number of children now leaving school able to swim 25 metres unaided. Whilst nationally, the 2013 census saw 51% of 7-11 year olds leaving primary school being unable to swim 25 metres, this year that figure has fallen to 45%.

Additionally, the average number of lessons made available in a school year has increased from 16 last year to 18 this year and the amount of time spent in the water is also on the increase.

We can therefore see some really encouraging improvements – an increase in the frequency and duration of lessons, and, more significantly, an increase of 6% in the number of children able to swim 25 metres unaided. This is a very positive step forward and certainly a reason to celebrate in the short term. However, we must maintain the momentum – and there remains a requirement for all parties to do more.

An increase of 6%

in the number of 7-11 year olds able to swim 25 metres unaided



This is just the tip of the iceberg with 45% of children between the ages of 7-11 still unable to swim 25m unaided



Schools who take swimming lessons seriously show greater levels of improvement and attainment

The ASA recommends that primary schools allocate at least 25 hours of study time per child for curriculum swimming.

At present, this still means that 55% of schools are not spending the recommended amount of time in the pool to enable children to have a sufficient opportunity to learn to swim unaided.

Around 1 in 14 primary schools – over 1,300 – offer no swimming provision at Key Stage 2.

It has been demonstrated that those schools who programme more time in the pool and take swimming seriously gain better results, with 60% of pupils leaving primary school with the ability to swim 25 metres unaided, rather than 55%.

If primary schools can commit to adopting the recommended approach, we estimate that approximately 200,000 additional children would leave primary school being able to swim and gain an active start to life.



The ASA recommends schools should allocate at least **25 hours** per child for curriculum swimming

In 2013, a Freedom of Information Act request to Ofsted indicated that curriculum time spent on physical activity is neither known nor monitored by educational and regulatory bodies.

Understandably, as a result, it is common to all schools that they are committing less time to swimming than to subjects where they are assessed through league tables – at present 6.6% of schools offer no swimming provision at Key Stage 2. We believe we can help to combat this by working closely with primary schools.

Understanding how the Primary PE and Sports Premium is utilised

The Primary PE and Sports Premium (the Sports Premium) offers valuable funding to help schools boost their available budget. Currently 18% is being spent on swimming, which is a step in the right direction considering it is the first year this funding has been available. However the majority of that was spent on transport costs and hiring of the facility, rather than the activity of swimming itself.

At present, only 14% of the Sports Premium has been utilised towards the upskilling of teachers to enable them to teach school swimming. If sufficient training could be provided for internal staff to

teach swimming, not only would there be a positive cost implication, but it could also be argued that there is already an established level of trust and relationship between pupil and teacher that would make the process more engaging for both parties.

Overall, budget is considered a barrier to swimming by 18% of schools, with parental contributions (14%) and time in school (11%) the other main barriers impacting school swimming.

However, 11% of schools believed that none of these factors are barriers to swimming. Within these schools, 60% of their pupils could swim further than 25 metres unaided and 54% achieved the Key Stage 2 national curriculum as a whole, both well above average.



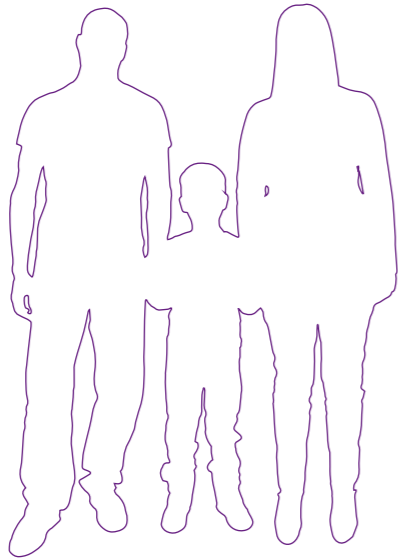
18%



of the Primary PE and Sports Premium is being spent on additional swimming, but the majority is spent on travel costs and pool hire

40%

of parents do not know their child's swimming progress or ability



Communicating ability both to parents and secondary schools

Whilst parents are regularly appraised and updated on progress in other national curriculum subjects, often they receive no indication of their child's ability or achievements in swimming. Currently, 40% of parents are unaware of their child's progress or ability when it comes to water safety and the life skill of being able to swim unaided.

As a result, swimming is often an 'invisible' activity – if parents are uninformed it is difficult for them to be engaged. The ASA suggests that swimming is included in the school reporting programme to ensure greater visibility and thus potentially create stronger interest for parents.

This lack of communication does not end with parents. Often when transitioning to secondary school, no record of a child's ability to swim progresses with them. In most cases (83%) we see that secondary schools do not know the level of swimming attained by their incoming students. It is the ASA's belief that this communication should come from the primary schools as they have first-hand knowledge of the progress made.

83%

of secondary schools do not know the level of swimming attained by incoming students



How children feel about being able to swim

Research* conducted with 5-12 year olds showed that nearly a quarter of children feel embarrassed about not being able to swim, which can impact on feelings of self-worth and capability. Others described a sense of isolation as a result of their inability to swim, feeling sad and left out when they are around friends that can, as they are unable to join in.

Swimming has a positive impact on personal development and well-being by improving confidence in the water – the research highlighted that swimming unaided gave children a greater sense of independence than other childhood milestones. Children feel a greater sense of achievement and self confidence when able to swim proficiently and are able to join in with others – no longer feeling on the periphery.

**British kids wish they could go swimming more often" (Speedo Research – September 2013)

200,000 additional school children

would leave primary school able to swim 25 metres unaided if schools took swimming seriously



Swimming and the National Curriculum

What are the statutory requirements?

The Department for Education has shown its commitment to improving school swimming by including swimming and water safety in the revised national curriculum for schools in England.

The revised curriculum, which came into effect in September 2014, states that:

“All schools must provide swimming instruction either in Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2. In particular, pupils should be taught to swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25 metres, use a range of strokes effectively such as front crawl, backstroke and breaststroke and perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations.”

The ASA supports this by suggesting that at least 25 hours of study time per child is devoted to curriculum swimming – this could be facilitated either in the pool or by utilising a small proportion of this time to learn about water safety in a classroom setting.

Additionally we recommend that schools use the journey to the pool as a further opportunity to encourage exercise – in particular those schools located within a mile of a pool.



The government will provide **£150m** per annum until 2020 to improve the provision of physical education and sport in primary schools in England

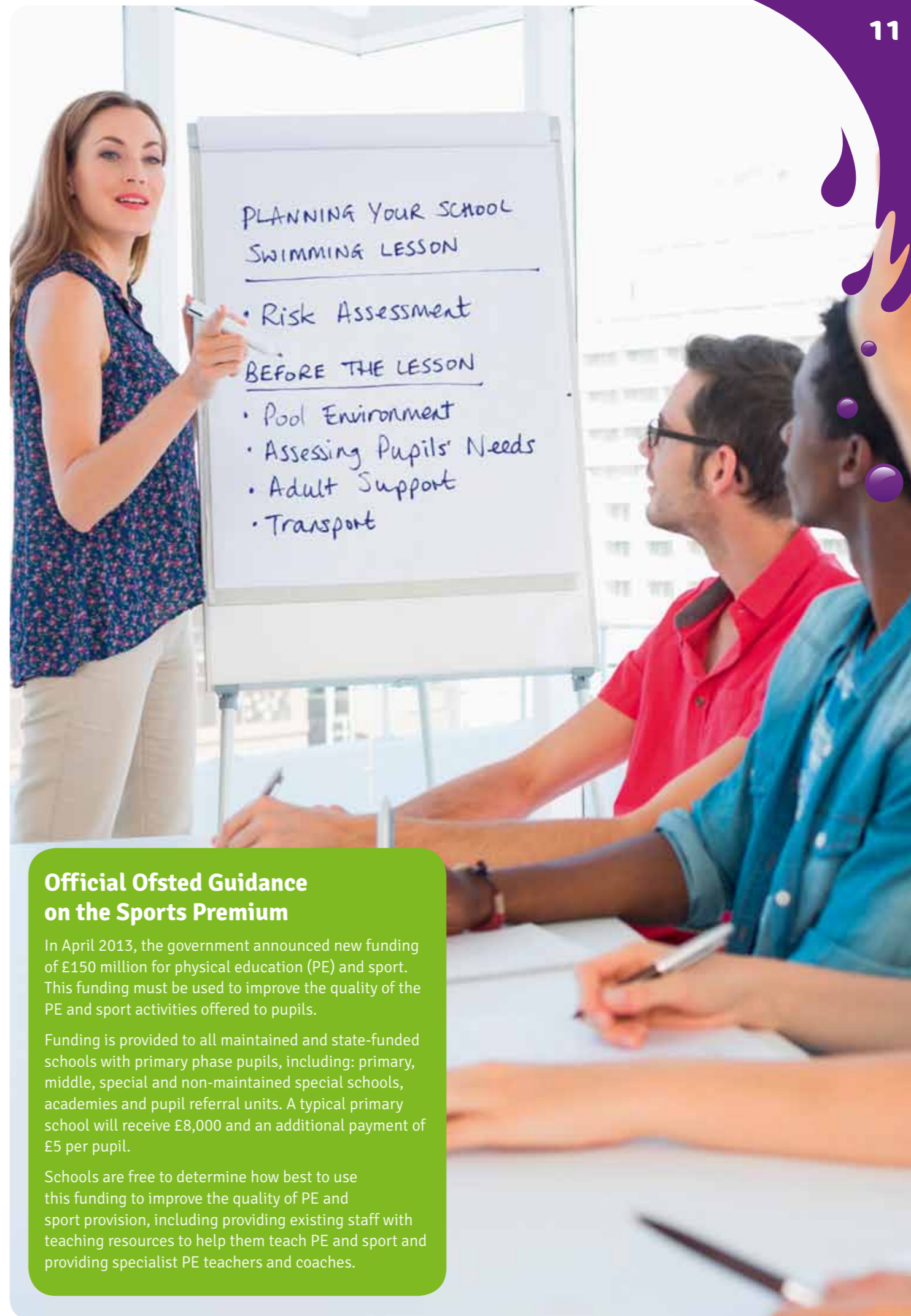
Now is the time for schools to take action

The government provides funding of £150 million per annum for academic years 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 to improve the provision of physical education and sport in primary schools in England – the Sports Premium. They have committed to continue the funding until 2020.

Some or all of this additional funding should be used to support swimming activities within schools:

- Top-Up Swimming is designed to enable every child to achieve the Key Stage 2 standard in swimming at primary school and to help develop other related skills such as water confidence and water safety. It delivers intensive swimming lessons for those who appear to be struggling to meet the Key Stage 2 requirements.
- Provide additional swimming teachers – this reduces teacher/pupil ratios and improves the quality of the lessons by allowing for greater individual communication and feedback.
- Training, personal development and keeping up to speed with best practice teaching methods will have a positive impact on the quality of the swimming provision. Funding could be used to ensure that staff are fully trained on new techniques and methodologies to ensure the best quality delivery.
- The number of sessions required to fulfil the Key Stage 2 requirement can be hard to achieve for some schools. Funding could be used to run additional sessions to help achieve the ASA recommended 25 hours per child.
- Increasing water time during the lesson also has a profound effect on the ability to deliver a successful swimming programme.
- Supplement the transport budget, enabling those schools that are further away from facilities to still have access to school swimming lessons.

Schools should visit www.swimming.org/schoolswimming for guidance on use of the Sports Premium.



Official Ofsted Guidance on the Sports Premium

In April 2013, the government announced new funding of £150 million for physical education (PE) and sport. This funding must be used to improve the quality of the PE and sport activities offered to pupils.

Funding is provided to all maintained and state-funded schools with primary phase pupils, including: primary, middle, special and non-maintained special schools, academies and pupil referral units. A typical primary school will receive £8,000 and an additional payment of £5 per pupil.

Schools are free to determine how best to use this funding to improve the quality of PE and sport provision, including providing existing staff with teaching resources to help them teach PE and sport and providing specialist PE teachers and coaches.

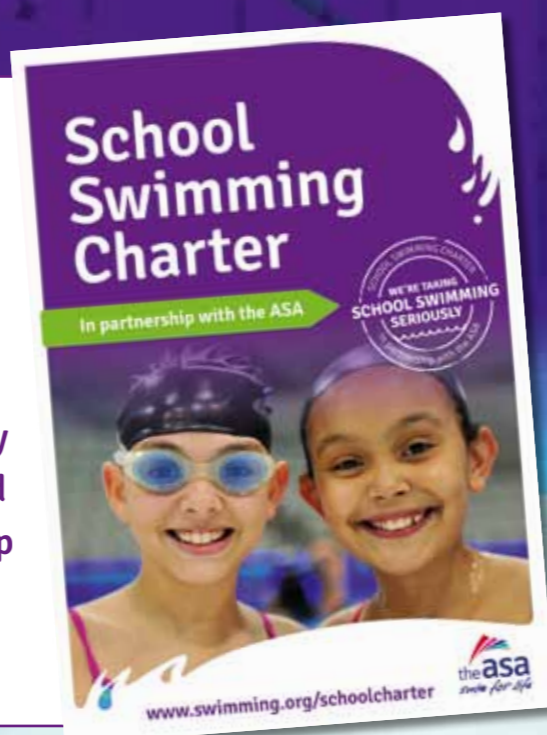
The ASA Supporting School Swimming

The ASA Vision for School Swimming

'To ensure that every child has the opportunity to participate in high quality school swimming linked to community programmes, delivered by appropriately qualified people in a safe environment.'

The ASA School Swimming Charter

The ASA's new School Swimming Charter aims to instigate a direct relationship with primary schools, working with them to ensure they have the necessary support and training required to deliver effective and quality school swimming programmes. In partnership with the ASA, schools will be able to state "We're taking school swimming seriously".



The ASA School Swimming Census

An annual survey of all primary schools in England to give a 'state of the nation' benchmark of the achievement levels of Key Stage 2 pupils in reaching national curriculum minimum standards.



The ASA School Swimming Manifesto

Aims to provide a common purpose for all those involved in the planning, preparation and delivery of swimming in schools. It also provides an outline of how the new School Swimming Charter will hopefully become an effective mechanism to help schools make the necessary improvements to their swimming programme and consequently improve the achievement levels of their pupils.

The ASA School Swimming Manifesto

The ASA six-point manifesto provides an overall focus for all our work in influencing parliament, central and local government and supporting primary schools to take school swimming seriously. It also provides a common purpose for all those involved in the planning, preparation and delivery of swimming in schools.

1

Every child learning to swim in primary school

We believe that every child in England should have the opportunity to learn to swim in primary school. By the end of Key Stage 2, each child should be safe in and around water and a key element of this is being able to swim a minimum of 25 metres unaided.

We call on parliament as well as central and local government to show their commitment to school swimming by reiterating this expectation to schools. Schools should then make the commitment to take school swimming seriously.

2

Robust monitoring of school swimming

We call on the government to instruct Ofsted to monitor the inclusion and delivery of swimming lessons as part of the PE inspections.

Responsibility should be taken by ALL those involved in school swimming, starting at grass roots with those delivering the lesson and including parents and class teachers to help them understand each child's achievement. Then head teachers need to understand the performance of the entire school for reporting to Ofsted.

3

Improve training for primary school teachers

Before qualifying, all primary school teachers should be provided with at least six hours of aquatics and water safety training. The ASA trained over 2,000 school staff in the last year (2013) via the National Curriculum Training Programme (NCTP). We want to work closely with government to ensure that teachers are more confident in the delivery of swimming lessons which is a statutory national curriculum subject. It is people who make things happen and school teachers, who already have an established relationship with their pupils, are absolutely the best placed people to make school swimming happen.

4

Swimming as a school budget priority

The ASA calls on head teachers to place school swimming as one of their school budget priorities. This will help ensure that every child has the opportunity to learn this vital life saving skill and take the first steps to leading an active and healthy lifestyle.

5

Support at secondary schools

We call for support for the thousands of children in secondary schools who are unable to swim. Being unable to swim marginalises young people from participating in not only swimming and aquatics, but also other water based activities such as canoeing, sailing and rowing. It also increases the risk of death by drowning. Those who do not learn at this age are likely to become one of the 1 in 5 adults who are unable to swim in the UK.

Reports on attainment levels should be maintained by primary schools and communicated to secondary schools as part of the transition pack upon leaving.

6

Help keep school pools open

The ASA is committed to working with the government to help keep school pools open, which are valuable not only for school swimming, but also community use. All schools considering the development or refurbishment of swimming facilities should consult the ASA's expert facilities team to help develop a feasibility study, business case and pool design. Schools considering the closure of pools should also consult with the ASA before closure to fully assess all the options available for the pool to remain open and continue to support swimming in the local community.

Use the resources provided on www.pool-watch.co.uk

School Swimming Charter

With the new national curriculum requirement now in force, it is time for primary schools to sit up and take notice. The ASA is here to help and support schools in meeting the new national curriculum standards through the School Swimming Charter.

The Charter has been developed by the ASA – not a faceless organisation but real people who are committed to helping save lives by ensuring children are safe in the water. Not only that, we help to introduce long term well-being by developing a skill that is both enjoyable and has extensive health benefits.

As we have seen, schools who take swimming seriously have achieved a measurable uplift in their attainment levels. Schools need to:

- **Choose** – make the decision to take school swimming seriously
- **Charter** – sign up to the School Swimming Charter at www.swimming.org/schoolcharter and be in partnership with the national governing body for swimming
- **Check** what the current swimming attainment levels are in the school and then...
- **Challenge** the swimming teaching provision by the local authority or pool operator if attainment levels are not satisfactory. Many pupils may not be receiving the best teaching provision for their needs because operators don't necessarily know what is best for the children – schools can use this opportunity to work together with operators to offer the best possible teaching provision and then...
- **Change** – take the initiative and plan any necessary action to improve the standards of swimming at the school
- **Champion** – nominate a member of staff to be a School Swimming Champion to drive forward school swimming for the school and work closely with the ASA
- **Channel resources** and use the Sports Premium funding to provide additional swimming activities within the school and maximise the impact and benefits
- **Chart progress** – continually review attainment levels and ensure pupils use their School Swimming Passports to keep a record of their achievements

We are advocating that primary schools sign up directly with us. With annual fees starting at just £50 + VAT per school, the package includes:

- **School Swimming Charter guide** – how to use the materials and resources to best effect
- **National Curriculum Resource Pack** – substantial practical resource to guide teachers through the national curriculum programme of study
- **Award certificates and badges** – for pupil reward and recognition
- **Waterproof Guidance Cards** – Award learning outcomes and key teaching points
- **School Swimming Passports and stickers** – for each child to record achievements
- **Aquasplash Festival Pack** – Activity Cards and DVD giving guidance on running a swimming festival – part of the primary school competition framework
- **Digital materials** – including class resources, unique school swimming stamp, school swimming guide for parents and much more...

School SWIMATHON

The chance for primary schools to take part in School Swimathon.

Schools can take the plunge and challenge their pupils to swim further than ever before, whilst improving their technique in the water. The ASA has a limited number of places for schools to not only take part, but also to receive resources provided by The Swimathon Foundation to motivate and reward pupils.

Schools can register their interest when signing up to our Charter at www.swimming.org/schoolcharter.

Aquasplash Festival Pack

SCHOOL SWIMMING CHARTER
WE'RE TAKING SCHOOL SWIMMING SERIOUSLY
In partnership with the ASA

Activity 1
Balancing Act
Equipment: Floats, Small rubber rings
Adaptations: Making it easier: Swimmers may walk or run. Use a small ring that fits loosely on the head. Making it harder: Swimmers to use different arm and leg movements. Swimmers must balance more than one float.

Activity 2
Competition challenges
How far can you go without the float falling off?
How fast can you go without the float falling off?
Can you beat this time and distance?
How fast can your team complete the task?
Can you beat this time by 1, 2 seconds etc?
How many floats can your team finish with?

How to run an Aquasplash Festival

Your guide to planning an Aquasplash Festival

The ASA School Swimming Award

Aquatics in the National Curriculum
Planning the Lesson

National Curriculum Resource Pack

A range of awards

School Swimming Award

Aquatic Skills Award

Self Rescue Award

SCHOOL SWIMMING PASSPORT
A Record of my School Swimming Success

Resources storage bag

the asa swim for life
WE'RE TAKING SCHOOL SWIMMING SERIOUSLY

Poolside teaching aids

Syllabus Guidance Card
Award 1
To achieve this award the pupil must meet the following criteria:
1. Enter the water safely (crawl, breast)
2. Move forwards, backwards and sideways for a distance of 10m
3. Keep the water and earth floor, wall, etc, at all times with feet
4. Show confidence in the water
5. Show confidence in the water with one and both hands
6. Take part in a teacher led partner-swimming game
7. Demonstrate an understanding of pool rules
8. Recognise and understand beach flags
9. Exit the water safely

We asked a selection of primary school head teachers and Key Stage 2 teachers what they thought of our **School Swimming Charter** proposal:

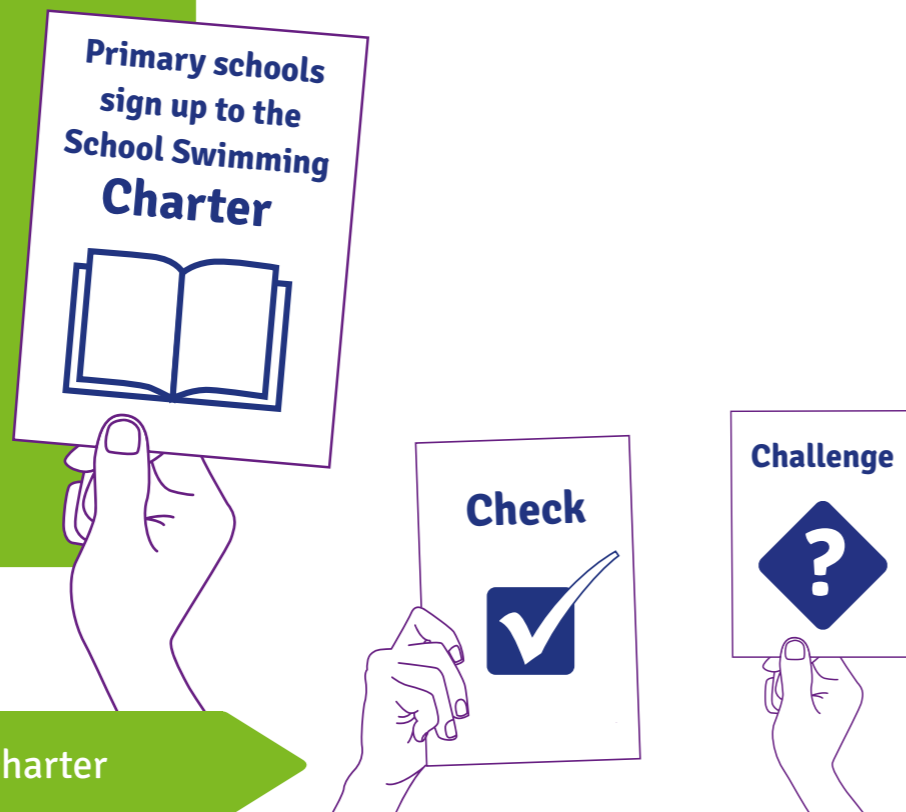
“I believe that swimming is an essential life skill: it could save your life. A bit like learning to walk: you don’t have a choice, you need to do it. So, the idea of children leaving primary school without this essential skill is quite unacceptable. However, as practitioners, our skills are pretty much focused on the academic side of learning. A skill as specific as swimming can be, for many, a very daunting subject to teach, and more importantly the children should be taught by experts. With this in mind I would be very interested for our school to take part.”

“At the moment I have had no training in teaching swimming and I struggle to find session plans. I would very much appreciate support materials.”

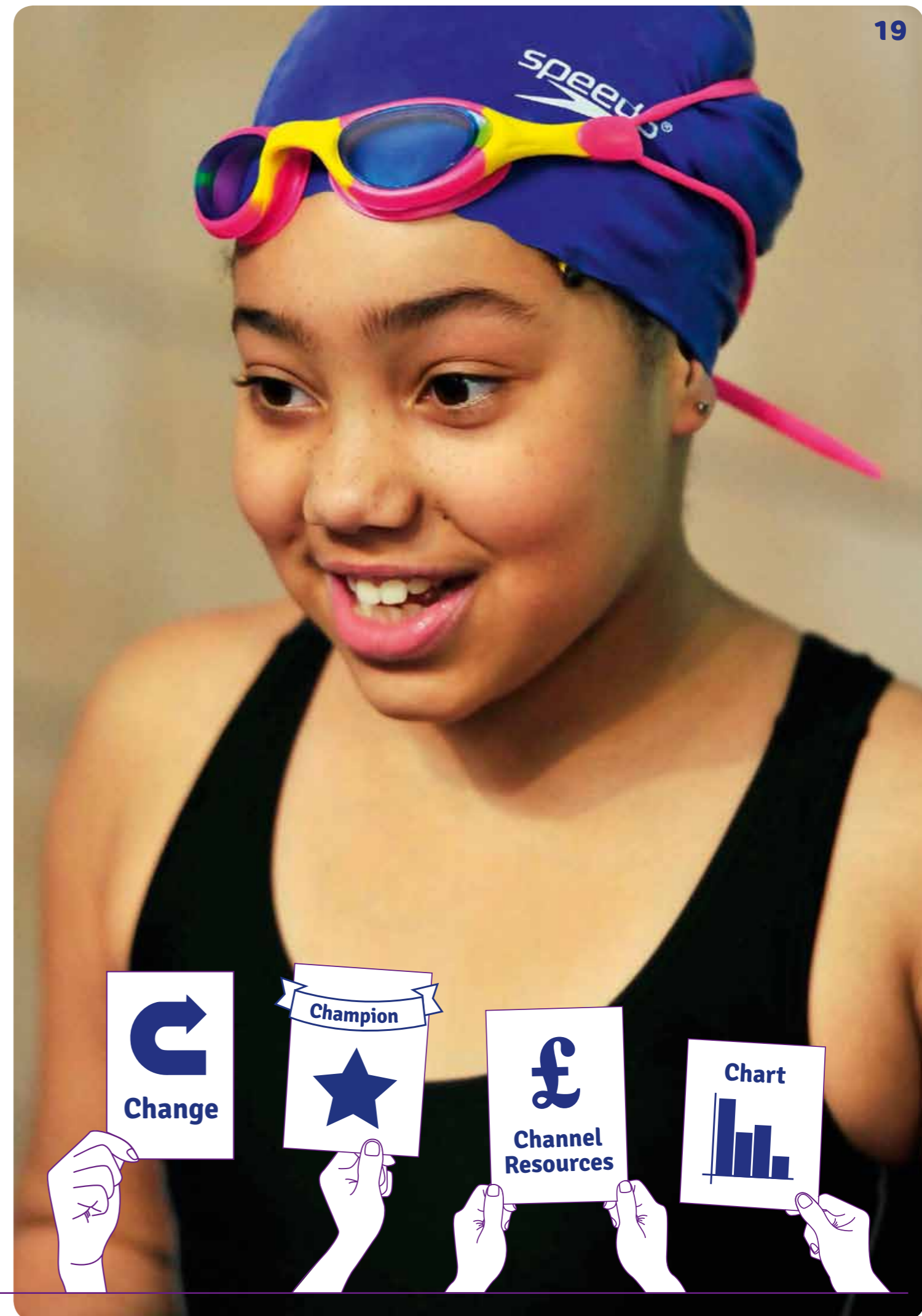
“The entire proposal seems an exciting and encouraging opportunity: the teaching and learning opportunities seem excellent, especially the teaching aids and opportunity for training. From a parents’ point of view I believe many would be committed to the charter. Most of all, I think it would be highly motivational for the children.”

Why should schools sign up?

- A guarantee that if schools deliver our recommendations they will be complying with the national curriculum requirements
- Show parents and the community that the school is taking action to improve school swimming
- Improved standards of swimming teaching and assessment
- Potential revenue from Awards sales
- Pupils will feel positive recognition of their progress as they are rewarded for reaching milestones
- Help parents to understand how well their children are learning and developing in the water
- Foster a higher level of engagement in pupils and teachers by providing lessons that are high quality, better resourced and structured
- Help with staff retention by providing training for class teachers on how to teach swimming
- Direct relationship with and support from the national governing body for swimming



www.swimming.org/schoolcharter



ASA Initiatives and Partner Activities

School Swimming website

Designed, developed and hosted by the ASA to offer advice, support and resources to schools in need of help in fulfilling the national curriculum requirements or who just need advice on the best way to approach teaching its pupils to swim. Launched in December 2013 it has already had nearly 11,000 visitors and offers a wealth of downloadable resources to schools.

Sign up to our School Swimming Charter here: www.swimming.org/schoolswimming



British Gas ASA Learn to Swim Pathway

The British Gas ASA Learn to Swim Pathway is the national syllabus to assist and support the delivery of swimming lessons. Used in more than 1,000 swimming programmes nationwide, as well as overseas, it is the most successful sports programme of its kind and has taught millions of children to swim. The Pathway consists of defined Frameworks for Foundation, Learn to Swim and Aquatic Skills, which take learners from their first splash to full competence in the water. Underpinned throughout by Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) principles, it fully encompasses all abilities and aquatic disciplines, including an Adult Swimming Framework for adults looking to learn or improve their skills in the pool. Speedo is also an official partner of the British Gas ASA Learn to Swim Pathway.



ASA Awards Scheme

The ASA Awards Scheme is designed to reward children when they are learning to swim. To complement the ASA Learn to Swim Framework, the ASA Awards Scheme

encourages and rewards children and young people through every stage. The scheme is one of the most successful of its kind within both British and international sports. Over two million certificates and badges have been awarded to date.



Swim Safe

Swim Safe contributes to one of the Key Stage 2 attainment outcomes of giving children the opportunity to swim in different aquatic environments. Supported by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), it offers a unique opportunity for 7-14 year olds to learn the importance of beach and water safety in coastal locations – for the first time this year also inland at Lake Windermere. Running six days a week during the summer, each session included a talk from RNLI lifeguards and in-water tuition from ASA qualified swimming teachers. 3,600 children enjoyed Swim Safe in 2013.



Get Safe

The ASA's national educational and water safety campaign to make children aware of the dangers posed by water. The campaign aims to ensure that young people are able to stay safe not just in the pool, but also coastal and inland waters. Taking part in Get Safe gives children the opportunity to participate in action-packed events in pool and beach locations such as boat rescues, swimming against a current, rescue techniques, water safety quizzes, resuscitation using manikins and fire and rescue safety talks. With over 400 events taking place in the last year, a significant number of children have enjoyed the benefits of Get Safe.



British Gas Pools 4 Schools

An innovative learn to swim programme launched in 2008 that takes mobile swimming pools to schools across England. It has delivered swimming in 32 locations nationwide with in excess of 32,000 children benefitting from the programme.

Delivered by the ASA and Total Swimming, a British Gas Pools 4 Schools pool is a specially designed portable teaching facility which accommodates a full class of children, allowing them to learn to be safe and confident in and around water. Installation of temporary pools for the length of a school term occurs in 'aquatically deprived' schools across England. Experienced teachers provide swimming lessons and activities ranging from mini-polo to aqua-aerobics, which also benefit the wider community outside of school hours.

Supported by athletes such as Mark Foster, the scheme has been so successful it won a Big Society Award from David Cameron in September 2013.

Make a Splash

Make a Splash

A ground-breaking programme that forms a key part of the Mayor of London's £40m Sports Legacy Fund. Delivered by the ASA and Total Swimming, it takes mobile 12 metre x 6 metre steel tank swimming pools into some of the capital's most deprived and disadvantaged areas. This provides an innovative and cost effective solution for delivering swimming in areas of need, where there is a lack of access to facilities. Each Make a Splash project creates opportunities for delivering school swimming programmes and also swimming lessons/activities for the local community. With over 20 projects running across boroughs in London between 2011 and 2015, over 24,000 young people will benefit.

Pool Watch

The ASA is passionate about keeping pools open and Pool Watch provides guidance and information to keep pools at the heart of local communities.

Pool Watch is a website dedicated to helping communities keep swimming pools open. If a local pool is under threat

of closure or if members of the community are looking to re-open an existing pool, the site gives them all the information and guidance they need to get started. If representatives of the pool are confident that there is a need and a demand for the pool and that it is financially viable to run, Pool Watch can also help provide the essential tools and information to help them build their case.

www.pool-watch.co.uk

School SWIMATHON

School Swimathon

Created by the ASA and The Swimathon Foundation, School Swimathon effectively boosts swimmer participation in children of school age. Allowing them to improve technique and water confidence, it builds to a final challenge to swim further than ever before. In 2014, 6,300 school children from more than 200 schools across England stepped up to the challenge of using their national curriculum weekly swim sessions to improve their ability and 'Swim their Best'. 86% of these swimmers saw an improvement in their swimming, with an average distance increase of 149% in comparison to their best distance prior to the campaign.

Each pupil that took part in the School Swimathon challenge received a swim cap and certificate to celebrate their achievement.

National Curriculum Training Programme (NCTP)

Equipping teachers and schools with the right skills and knowledge to deliver quality swimming lessons and make sure schools are on track to meet national curriculum requirements; the NCTP is open to anyone working in a primary school swimming environment.

School teachers, classroom assistants, learning support staff, nursery nurses, qualified swimming teachers, parents, PGCE students or other helpers will benefit from a brand new e-learning opportunity with some of the modules achievable online. Each study module covers a unique topic – the first of these is health and safety and how to ensure pupils are in a safe learning environment.

In the last year the NCTP delivered just short of 200 courses and trained over 2,200 individuals to help teach children to swim.

Case Study

Winchester Penguins Swimming Club Top it up...

Glenn Shepherd is the Aquatics Officer at Winchester Penguins Swimming club.

“We have a very big and unique community programme here. We are always looking to help our community with sport development projects and that is why we offer the opportunity to deliver school swimming and a ‘Top-up’ school swimming programme if the pupils are unable to swim 25 metres. This is known as our Swim For The Future programme. It is one of our key goals, as a community swimming club, that every school pupil can swim 25 metres before the end of primary school.”

At present there are four schools that take advantage of the ‘Top-up’ school swimming programme, which equates to about 60 children each year. The club also provides a Swim For The Future Playscheme. Glenn explains,

“This programme is scheduled in the school holiday periods and targets physical literacy, not just swimming. The children participate in an hour of land-based activity and then an hour of water-based activity, focusing on water safety as well as the ASA swimming framework. This programme is supported by one of the community groups within Winchester, and we offer the programme for free.”

Glenn feels that swimming makes a huge difference in every child’s life.

“It gives me great pleasure knowing our club works hard to achieve so much for our community. After each school has completed their lessons with our ‘Top-up’ programme, we go out to them and present certificates to the participants in assemblies to celebrate the fact that they have accomplished a really important life skill. The teachers are very supportive of the programme and they see a positive change in the confidence levels of the children.

Winchester is a very affluent area but there are also areas of low socio-economic status. Most of the schools we work with are from this demographic and have a mix of ability. Sport and swimming opportunities for most of these children are minimal. The programmes we offer has allowed these children the chance to socialise and share fun sporting experiences as well as learning and developing swimming – a key life skill. When they are taking part they become completely different characters and it slowly builds their confidence. It is a cliché to say, but sport really holds no boundaries.”

He believes that the only ways to really improve school swimming are to ensure school teachers become confident with teaching swimming and getting into the water with their pupils, and to help parents understand the consequences of their children being unable to swim.

“I would try to make sure everyone involved has confidence in doing it. As they say in China: “tell me, I will forget; show me, I may remember; involve me and I will understand”. I think that it is very important that the people driving and delivering the programme understand what they are doing and why. We, as swimming teachers and coaches, understand, but what about the school teachers and the heads of schools, or the parents? These are the individuals that need to be targeted. Statistics involving incidences of drowning as a cause of death in the young may help, but I firmly believe the only way to make a difference is to make it mandatory for PE staff to teach swimming, and teaching governing bodies and Ofsted need to drive this.”



Photo for illustration purposes only

He goes on to say that “schools need to make time for it and make it important. The ASA can help swimming clubs work with schools by providing a support programme to teach our next generation how to swim.”

Case Study

Making a Splash at Daubeney Primary School

Pupils from Daubeney Primary School in Hackney demonstrated the power of school swimming lessons when they collectively swam the distance from their school to the London Aquatics Centre four times over.

The BBC’s ‘The One Show’ followed the children’s journey from their first splash in the temporary pool to completing their ‘one length challenge’ after just eight weeks swimming tuition. A total of 13,500 metres were swum on the day by 540 school pupils, each child completing 25 metres each.

This impressive feat was completed in celebration of the Mayor of London’s Make a Splash programme which, in conjunction with the ASA, British Gas and Total Swimming, brought a 12 x 6 metre temporary teaching pool to the London Borough of Hackney earlier this year. Since the pool arrived in Hackney, over 1,000 children and members of the wider community have learned to swim and acquired a new life skill that will keep them both healthy and safe.

Hackney has some of the lowest learn to swim rates in London amongst children, with just 23% being able to swim the length of a pool by the time they left primary school in 2013. Schemes such as Make a Splash are enabling schools in areas like Hackney to have much needed access to pools and to support their children in learning this important skill.

Janice Thomas, Executive Head Teacher of Daubeney Primary School, said: “It’s been huge for Daubeney Primary School to be involved in the Make a Splash programme, it’s given the children an opportunity to swim regularly and to understand what it means to be safe in water.”

“I’m hugely proud of all them, they have grown so much in confidence and the majority of our pupils can now swim, whereas before this programme came to the school most couldn’t. This is a very special moment for Daubeney and I just hope that all our children remember this and can look back when they are older and know that Daubeney did it for them.”



The longstanding impact on children is tangible as Janice goes on to say; “for the children at Daubeney, it was the opportunity for all the children to learn to swim at the same time from nursery up to Year 6. It gave them the added confidence to learn to swim in a very short space of time which helped to raise their self-esteem and also made them willing to try other things. We didn’t just introduce swimming but water polo, water aerobics and other water-based activities. It gave them another skill which they wouldn’t have had otherwise.

The confidence follows them into other areas of their lives. A lot of our children are fearful of risk and we try to instil that taking risks and making mistakes is a good thing to do. I think taking the plunge, quite literally, is a good way to demonstrate that you have to learn to swim or you are going to drown. It is the same with maths; you have to learn from your mistakes. We had some children who were lacking in confidence in all areas. Swimming has made them more confident because they all went on to swim 25 metres, which they never believed they would be able to do.”

Children of all ages took part, ranging from four to 11 years old. They were accompanied by Team GB Olympian and former Commonwealth champion, Ross Davenport, who offered support and encouragement as well as getting involved with the swimming sessions.

Case Study

Building self-esteem and resilience Phillimore School, Sheffield

Phillimore School in Sheffield is a shining example of how swimming can be used to develop physical literacy in pupils which has a direct impact on their levels of self-esteem and confidence across all academic areas – teachers have noticed an increase in resilience, perseverance and belief in themselves.

Phillimore School is a larger than average primary school with approximately 400 pupils aged between 3-11. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and with English as a second language is well above the national average, as is the number of pupils with special educational needs and eligibility for free school meals.



Year 4 pupils swim throughout the academic year, which runs for 36 weeks on Monday afternoons. The children are transported by bus to a pool on the site of a special school approximately 10 minutes drive away. Sessions are organised and taught by an external provider rather than internal staff. The class is split depending on ability with one teacher taking the improvers who already have some swimming skills in place, whilst another teacher takes the beginners who need more guidance. A further member of the swimming staff oversees the sessions and is on standby to offer advice to individual pupils and support to colleagues should it be required.

For those who need even more support or have greater needs, the class teacher and the teacher responsible for swimming at the school, along with a member of the swimming provider's team, provide a separate class in the pool.

Jo Searle, the teacher in charge of PE said; "All school staff involved with the swimming lesson assist with teaching in the water, so we maximise the use of all staff time – this is the most valuable way that support can be used – in the water."

Most of the pupils have not been swimming prior to their first lesson and as a result, many find simply being in the water quite daunting. It can take several weeks to build their confidence enough to feel comfortable in the pool, however the long standing results are exceptionally positive, as Jo indicates:

"In many cases this is the one and only chance that children get to swim. Only a very small minority have had the opportunity to start to learn to swim before their school swimming lessons, so this part of the curriculum is vital for them to obtain this essential life skill. 79% of our Year 4 pupils met age related expectations by the end of 2013/2014.

They also gain improved health and fitness, as for forty minutes they are extremely active which directly impacts

on other areas of PE and school sport. I don't think it is a coincidence that we have got through to City finals in other sports.

An improvement in their physical ability also has a knock on effect in other areas of the classroom – teachers talk about improved resilience, perseverance and determination."

A challenge to be faced is that often new children arrive at the school half-way through the year, having never been swimming before. This can often mean that they are nervous and somewhat behind their peers who have already been to swimming lessons, which can be difficult for them, both in terms of ability and self-confidence. However, the school has found that exposure to swimming impacts hugely on all pupils' personal confidence in the longer term. Jo states:

"The sense of achievement when they learn to swim, even just those very hard first few metres, is amazing. It is fantastic for their self-belief, self-esteem and confidence levels – all those things – and they retain that. They don't just feel it with swimming – it goes through their whole academic life. We have a lot of children at school who are new arrivals in this country and new to English. The increase in physical literacy is key to sport participation and is also relevant to all other areas in school – teachers have noticed an increase in pupils being able to put pen to paper and believe in themselves."

Taking part in the annual School Swimathon cemented the sense of self-confidence and achievement that pupils developed throughout the year, which could prove to be life-saving in the future, as Jo confirms:

"Some pupils surprised themselves and us by swimming 25 metres for the first time – they didn't think they could do it. After they had got the first length under their belts with a bit of encouragement from us saying; "Try another length; keep going;" some of them clocked up about 600 metres, it was a real case of mind over matter. They are never going to lose that sense of achievement.



If they get into difficulty on holiday or fall into the local canal, they now know that they can swim to safety – whereas previously at the beginning of the year, the swimming teacher actually said to me that she would worry that should they get into trouble in the water, even the more able pupils wouldn't fight to survive because they didn't believe they could do it."

In order for schools to take swimming more seriously, Jo believes that Ofsted is the answer:

"Ofsted is a really quick win because it is, at the first level, a tick box exercise – is that school providing swimming? Yes – the box is ticked. Then, because swimming is a measurable activity, there should be some onus on schools to put information about results on their websites (as we do). This would be easy for Ofsted to check. Children should be assessed at the beginning and assessed at the end so it is obvious what is being achieved."

The idea of an ASA initiative that offers rewards to pupils and support for schools is a positive one, from Jo's perspective:

"The children like to work towards rewards as long as they are inclusive and not just for those who are the best. At the back of my mind I am thinking cost – is this going to be another pull on resources? But with the Sport Premium, maybe this is an area we could invest in and recognise our pupils' achievements. Celebrating success has a knock-on effect in the classroom and the wider school, by improving attendance, behaviour and raising attainment in other areas – anything that does that, is going to get a massive tick from head teachers and, of course, Ofsted."

Conclusions

It is understood that schools who take swimming seriously have much better attainment levels and outcomes. The ASA recommends that schools need to allocate at least 25 hours of study time per child for curriculum swimming and encourages politicians to support this recommendation to make it more attainable for schools where possible.

There is strong evidence of steps being taken in the right direction. As well as an increase in the number of schools reaching the recommended hours, there is also an increase (6%) in the number of pupils who are able to attain the achievement of swimming 25 metres unaided.

In order to maintain this improvement, we suggest that schools work with us to develop high quality swimming programmes and continue the success of Key Stage 2 school swimming.

This is especially key with the new requirement now in effect for all schools to give an increased focus to swimming, and in particular the ability to perform safe self-rescue. The ASA can support schools in achieving these new national curriculum goals.

There needs to be a more rigorous assessment and reporting process by Ofsted for curriculum swimming at Key Stage 2.

There also needs to be more focus on work by schools – this can happen in the classroom to integrate cross-curricular learning opportunities, and poolside to meet the recommended teacher pupil ratios and monitor, manage and deliver an improved quality of swimming teaching.

We advocate more collaboration between primary school teachers and pool operators with school staff having the confidence and background knowledge to not only help with the hands-on delivery of school swimming lessons, but also to challenge swimming teachers in the monitoring, quality marking, delivery and management of lessons.

We can help and support schools to qualify class teachers in swimming teaching via our National Curriculum Training Programme and support the best possible swimming provision for children.

The School Swimming Charter has our full commitment and needs yours to ensure that we can deliver on the promise that all children in England leave primary school able to swim.





The ASA

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