

# School Swimming

A guide for parents, guardians and carers



[www.swimming.org/schoolcharter](http://www.swimming.org/schoolcharter)

  
the **asa**  
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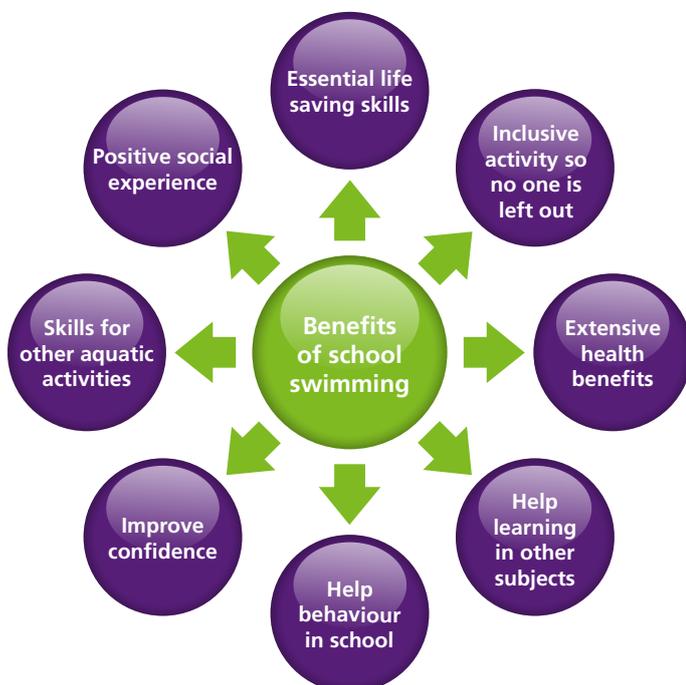


## Swimming and your child

By the time your child leaves primary school they should be able to swim a minimum distance of 25 metres (the length of an average pool) unaided. This is the national curriculum Key Stage 2 attainment level, yet an astonishing number of children leave school unable to meet this standard.

As well as being good for your child's health, swimming is a skill that could ultimately save their life. Drowning is the third most common cause of accidental death in children, and therefore it is absolutely vital that every child has the opportunity to learn to swim and gain core knowledge regarding water safety.

Even if your child can swim 25 metres, they may still be exposed to danger in water in the wrong circumstances. Your child should be encouraged to practice their swimming regularly to improve their basic skills and become a more competent swimmer.



## The School Swimming Charter

### How well does your child's school teach swimming?

Every child should have the opportunity to learn to swim – it's the only sport that saves lives.

The Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) is the national governing body for swimming in England and we provide primary schools with a unique package of support to help them improve and develop the quality of their school swimming programme.

Why not ask them if they are signed up? Use of the Charter demonstrates that your child's school is taking school swimming seriously and should be an important element of your checklist when you are considering the right school for your child.

### Take School Swimming Seriously

- Ask the class teacher about your child's swimming ability and how the school tracks progress
- We're here to help, so let us know if your child's school isn't offering any school swimming. Swimming is the only sport that should be taught in every school as part of the national curriculum so your child is missing out if they don't offer it. Email us at [schoolcharter@swimming.org](mailto:schoolcharter@swimming.org)
- Let your child's school know about the Charter and the support the ASA provide, they can sign up to receive help at [www.swimming.org/schoolcharter](http://www.swimming.org/schoolcharter)
- Commit to supporting your child in learning to swim proficiently in the water to ensure their safety. Don't forget, swimming is the only sport that saves lives



## School swimming – how the numbers add up

almost  
**800,000**

Children aged 7-11 years that are unable to be safe in and around water \*

**2,000**

School staff trained by the ASA to teach swimming in the last year

**25**

ASA recommended study hours for school swimming and water safety, per year

**25**

Minimum metres your child should be able to swim unaided by the time they finish primary school

\*The 2014 School Swimming Census

## What your child should be taught in their school swimming lessons

Swimming and water safety is a statutory element of the national curriculum. This means 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.

### What to expect from your school

- Advance notice about swimming lessons: where, when and for how long, who will be teaching the lessons (a class teacher or a swimming teacher)
- The basic structure of the lessons e.g. the first session is assessment of current ability, the following lesson the pupils will be divided into groups, etc.
- Regular updates on your child's progress
- If the school is part of the School Swimming Charter, your child can receive badges and certificates celebrating their progress

### What level should my child be at?

Children all develop at different stages and you should not get overly concerned if your child perhaps isn't doing as well as some of their classmates.

The national level of attainment is that all children need to be able to swim unaided (which means without floats or support of any kind) at least the length of an average pool by the time they are 11 years old.

As well as learning to swim, pupils must learn how to self-rescue in different water based situations. This requires pupils to understand how the skills learnt in their swimming lessons can be used in an emergency situation.

If you are unhappy with your child's progress, speak to whoever is responsible for school swimming at your child's school – it may be a 'School Swimming Champion', the head teacher or a teacher with responsibility for PE. Be constructive in your comments and try to pinpoint what you are unhappy with. Once you have identified the issues ask them to liaise with the swimming teacher or co-ordinator at the pool and discuss possible solutions.



## Don't forget to pack

- Suitable swimwear
- Goggles
- Towel
- Swim cap
- Money for locker
- Drinks bottle

## Your role is vital

As a parent, guardian or carer you play an absolutely vital role in encouraging your child to swim and learn about water safety, survival and lifesaving. There are several ways you can help your child.

### Swimming lessons at school

- Make sure your child has everything they need to participate in their school swimming sessions
- Find out details of the swimming programme and what your child's attainment level is
- Is the school in partnership with the ASA and using the School Swimming Charter Awards? It includes certificates and badges to track progress and motivate your child onto the next level. Ask the school if they have signed up.

### Swimming lessons at a local pool

- Don't just rely on school swimming lessons – sign your child up for additional lessons at a local facility as soon as possible – they can start to learn as a baby. Click [here](#) for a handy poolfinder
- Ask if the lessons at your local pool follow the British Gas ASA Learn to Swim Pathway. This teaches your child using fun and games so they enjoy learning to swim, and links in with what they will be learning in their school swimming lessons.

### Swimming as a family

- Visit a pool regularly to add to your child's swimming experience
- Go swimming as a family or with a group of friends to ensure that swimming is a fun, enjoyable and social activity
- There are lots of games you can play with your child to boost their water confidence – look on our website [here](#) for details.

### It's never too late to learn

Are you a proficient swimmer yourself? If not, set an example for your child and learn to swim – it's a fantastic experience, and not as daunting as you might think!

- Whether you're a beginner, a returner or a more advanced swimmer looking to improve, look for lessons that use the ASA Adult Learn to Swim Framework
- Once you can swim, a whole world of other activities open up for you – and your child will be impressed at how much you can join in with!

### Celebrate swimming successes

- Take an active interest in your child's progress in learning to swim and encourage them to do their best during lessons
- Recognise and celebrate their successes at home – and don't forget the small steps are just as important as the larger milestones
- If your child's school is part of the School Swimming Charter, they should receive a School Swimming Passport. This will chart their progress and is a permanent record of their school swimming participation, which should be passed on if your child changes school and when they move onto secondary school
- Share your child's successes in school swimming with us on Twitter @ASAaquatics #SchoolSwimming and Facebook at [www.facebook.com/ASAswimming](http://www.facebook.com/ASAswimming).



## Water safety – the essentials

A child can drown in less than 5cm of water, which is a sobering thought. The main way to help your child to be safe in and around water is to give them the opportunity to learn to swim. But there is a lot more you can do to help keep them safe.

When out and about, on holiday, at the beach or at the local pool, make sure your child knows and follows the SAFE code.

It's not only in swimming pools and at the seaside that you need to keep an eye on your kids. Water is everywhere - in your home and in your garden as well as in the wider world. It's important that parents remain vigilant around all forms of water, so visit our [website](#) for lots more tips to help you keep your child safe.



Consider what could be hidden under the water

Only swim where there is a lifeguard

Never swim alone

Never enter the water to save others

## Just keep swimming

Once your child has learnt to swim, don't stop there. It's really important to continue with their regular lessons, to take them beyond the ability to swim a length and ensure that they have the skills to save themselves if an unexpected incident should occur.

They could then move on to joining a local swimming club and develop their skills further. They could also take part in other aquatic activities such as diving, lifesaving, synchronised swimming or water polo.

Of course being able to swim also means they will be able to take part in more adventurous water based pursuits such as sailing, canoeing and surfing.

## What if my child has disabilities or special needs?

Swimming lessons provide all children with vital skills to help with survival and this is no different for children with a disability or special educational needs. Lessons provide a lot of pleasure as swimming is a real leveller and can help them have fun in a non-competitive environment. In fact, research has shown that swimming is the favourite sport of many disabled children and adults alike.

Check that your child's school is prepared in advance for taking them to swimming lessons and that they have considered any additional support that your child may need at the pool, such as a wheelchair hoist and additional staff. They may be able to provide a specially trained swimming teacher or have additional staff in the pool or on poolside.

Take your child to swimming lessons at a local pool as well - many offer both integrated and disability specific swimming lessons.

Further guidance is available [here](#)



## Read, write, swim!

Your child attends school to become literate and proficient in reading and writing to a specific standard as set out in the national curriculum. It's the same consideration for physical literacy – it's a key skill that needs to be taught in your child's school.

It begins in the playground in the early primary years with unstructured games such as catch, tag and hopscotch. As your child gets older, development of physical literacy continues on the pitch or playing field, with team games such as football, netball and hockey.

Physical literacy can then be transferred to the pool for the learning of water based skills. It's important for parents to understand that the better your child is at land-based skills, the better they will be in the water.

It's all about getting children off to the right start, because research has shown that without the development of physical literacy, many children withdraw from physical activities and turn to more inactive choices for their leisure time.

## Contact the ASA

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's access to swimming lessons at school, please contact the school directly in the first instance. If you would like our support, email us at [schoolcharter@swimming.org](mailto:schoolcharter@swimming.org).

### Further resources

The ASA is the expert in all things swimming, so check out our website for lots more advice and guidance. We provide a comprehensive Learn To Swim Guide For Parents which you can **buy online**, or you can **download** a Bite-size version of the Parent's Guide for free.

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