

## **Schools Forum**

### **School Swimming - Training**

#### **Background**

Schools Forum have raised concerns regarding training requirements contained within the Council's Safe School Swimming Pool Policy with a view that these are unduly onerous on schools. A recent meeting was held with representatives of Schools Forum, Teaching Unions, Deputy Director for Education and Health and Safety. It was agreed to report back to Schools Forum outcome of these discussions and set out the Council's position.

#### **Why we have a policy**

Under health and safety legislation, the Council has a responsibility to ensure safe swimming in maintained schools. The policy is also recommended good practice for all schools in Oxfordshire (academies and VA schools). These responsibilities extend to whether lessons are provided using third parties i.e. leisure providers or using own pool facilities.

The current policy requirements were introduced in 2014 following disbandment of Education's school swimming service and a number of serious safety and safeguarding incidents relating to management of school swimming including dangerous ratio's, no risk assessments, safety or lesson plans, teachers without DBS clearances.

The policy has been widely consulted with schools and reflects national best practice and learning from serious incidents including fatalities of children whilst participating in school swimming activities. The policy requirements are also supported by the Council's insurers and we have consulted with the Regional Education Safety Officers Group collective of LA's and found to be in line with similar policies elsewhere.

The Council has engaged Bucks School Swimming Partnership who are licensed by Swim England and act as its competent specialist advisers.

#### **Training requirements**

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, employers have a clear duty to take into account employees' capabilities as regards to health and safety when entrusting tasks. Schools must also ensure that employees are provided with adequate health and safety training if they take on extra responsibilities, such as the supervision of swimming sessions, thereby exposing themselves, and others, to risk. Any training should be repeated periodically to ensure continued competence. This aspect of the regulations is particularly significant in respect of school swimming

Teachers of Swimming who plan and lead lessons should be qualified to the Swim England Teacher of School Swimming and Water Safety course which completes the Swim England National Curriculum Training Programme.

The Association of Physical Education (afPE) guidance for swimming requires all school staff supervising or assisting with school swimming to have undertaken a minimum of Swim England Support Teacher of School Swimming.

The Council's Policy requires at least 2 members of school staff to be trained to ensure adequate cover of lessons although staff/pupil ratio's will be determined through risk assessment e.g. numbers of pupils participating, ability and needs, size of pool etc. The risk assessment and number of trained staff should be agreed by the Swim Teacher in advance. In some exceptional cases where there are very few pupils swimming then 1 member of qualified school staff may be sufficient to assist the Swim Teacher, however, is not common and must be supported by risk assessment.

It is worth noting the uptake of training by Oxfordshire schools has been consistently high with 34 schools completing during April and May 21.

Previously, c200+ Oxfordshire schools have completed the Support Teacher of School Swimming training and completed course evaluations are overwhelmingly positive.

The Council has not received any significant or widespread objection from schools to the requirements, although the requirement for training is included on the annual H&S monitoring form. Since September 2020, 94 maintained schools have received monitoring visits this academic year with only 2 identified as having no trained staff.

### **Training available for school staff supporting and assisting with swimming**

Schools are free to source their own training from competent providers, including:

BSSP offer regular 'in-person' courses in the region and throughout Oxfordshire:

- **Support Teacher of School Swimming**, £183 (6hrs) including practical [Link](#)
- **Support Teacher of School swimming (Refresher)** cost tbc approx. £45

Swim England offer E-learning (6hrs):

- **Support Teacher of School Swimming**, £40 (6hrs) [Link](#)

### **Training available for Teachers of Swimming**

BSSP:

- **Teacher of School Swimming**, £193
- **Secondary Teacher of School Swimming**, 193

Swim England:

- **SEQ Lvl 1&2 Teaching Swimming** [Link](#)

### **Position of the Council**

The Council has considered the concerns of Schools Forum in regard to the Safe Swimming Policy and in particular the training requirements for support staff.

The Council believes the training requirements are proportionate, follow authoritative guidance and best practice. This will ultimately demonstrate that the Council and Governing Bodies are discharging their duty of care by ensuring staff are competent and swimming activities are undertaken safely. In terms of the day to day operational management it is the Headteachers decision as to how they deploy their staff to resource swimming activity.

For clarity, the H&S Team will arrange for the above alternative options for training including those by Swim England to be posted on schools news, making clear that schools are not obliged to source from BSSP.

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