
OCoP No. P7: RECREATIONAL SWIMMING - APPENDIX 1

The following is extracted from [Part 3 of a 3-part supplement to *Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits: A Good Practice Guide (HASPEV)* **as current guidance to teachers:** See also *HASPEV; Health and Safety: Responsibilities and Powers;* and the other parts of this supplement: *Standards for LEAs in Overseeing Educational Visits and Standards for Adventure*]

Heads of Centres should make visiting leaders & supervisors aware of this guidance information.

Swimming in the sea or other natural waters

Swimming and paddling or otherwise entering the waters of river, canal, sea or lake should never be allowed as an impromptu activity. The pleas of children to be allowed to bathe – because it is hot weather, for example, or after a kayaking exercise - should be resisted where the bathing has not been prepared for. **In-water activities should take place only when a proper risk assessment has been completed and proper measures put in to control the risks. The activities should be formal and supervised.**

It is good practice that, wherever possible, group leaders seek out recognised bathing areas that have official surveillance i.e. qualified lifeguard cover. But, even then, group leaders should be aware that pupils might mingle with members of the public and be lost to view. Pupils should always be in sight and reasonable reach of their supervisors.

The group leader should:

- be aware that many children who drown are strong swimmers;
- ascertain for themselves the level of the pupils' swimming ability;
- check the weather;
- be aware of the local conditions – such as currents, weeds, rip tides, a shelving, uneven or unstable bottom – using local information from the lifeguard, coastguard, harbourmaster, police or tourist information office;
- beware of rocks, breakwaters and other potential hazards;
- look out for warning signs and flags: a red flag means it is unsafe to swim; yellow flags mean that lifeguards are on patrol in the area between the flags; a black and white flag means it is an area used by surfers and not suitable for swimming;
- designate a safe area of water for use by the group;
- brief the group about the limits of the swimming area;
- avoid crowded beaches where it is harder to see pupils;
- be aware of the dangerous effects of sudden immersion in cold water;
- be aware of the dangers of paddling especially for young pupils;
- ensure that pupils have not eaten (at least half an hour) before swimming;

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- ensure the activity is suitable for the pupils, especially any with special needs or disabilities;
 - adopt and explain the signals of distress and recall;
 - ensure that buoyancy aids, lifejackets etc. are used where appropriate;
 - carry out regular head counts;
 - be aware that it is not always possible to tell when someone is in difficulties.

Supervisors should

- have clear roles – at least one supervisor should always stay out of the water for better surveillance, even where lifeguards are on duty;
- take up a best position from which to exercise a constant vigilance;
- divide their careful watching between staff who stand in the sea and look landward towards the group and staff who stay on land and watch the group from that vantage point;
- give the children their full, undivided attention;
- always follow the advice or directions of a lifeguard;
- never swim themselves unless it is to help a child in distress;
- not join in any of the children’s games;
- ensure that no child is allowed to wade out or swim further than his or her waist height;
- nevertheless, be aware that it is possible to drown in one’s own depth, and to act immediately when a child appears to be in difficulties;
- ensure that children leave the water immediately if they get too cold, especially if toes and fingers look blue or feel numb - could suggest the onset of hypothermia;
- recognise that a child in difficulty is unlikely to wave or shout – all of their energies will be in trying to keep afloat.

It is good practice for the group leader, or another designated adult in the group, to hold a relevant life saving award, especially where lifeguard cover may not be available.

Please confirm that you have read and understood this guidance

And that you have undertaken an appropriate risk assessment

And that you have the permission of parents / guardians and your Head teacher to supervise recreational swimming whilst at the centre.

Signed Institution

Print Date