Learning the Lessons: The Future of School Swimming

The 2013 School Swimming Census

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swim for life
Learning the Lessons: The Future of School Swimming

This report is about a belief – a vision – that every child has the right and opportunity to learn to swim to help achieve a fitter, healthier and perhaps above all a safer generation of young people. It is about mapping – on an unprecedented scale - the reality of school swimming in 2013 and using that insight to learn lessons and help to safeguard its future.

As much as anything though, this report is all about pressure.

The understandable pressure family budgets are under in difficult economic times. The multiple pressures schools are under to perform and compete against one another. The pressure teachers can feel when trying to deliver a fully rounded education for their pupils. The ASA understands that these pressures can create difficult conditions for school swimming and those issues are vividly portrayed within these pages.

But this report is also about signposting solutions to try and relieve some of those pressures and highlighting where innovation, collaboration, determination and support can overcome them.

Yes, some of the findings make for sobering reading – too many children are leaving primary school unable to swim, school swimming is sometimes being squeezed out of the curriculum altogether, monitoring of potentially life-saving attainment levels is often overlooked and teachers themselves sometimes feel ill-equipped to deliver school swimming.

Equally, there is inspiration to be found in this report that proves how school swimming can have a bright and vital future in our children’s lives.

From cities like Manchester where special focus and attention was given to children from areas where swimming ability and accessibility was known to be an issue, to Merton, South West London where the local authority and schools worked together to devise a strategic plan which is transforming KS2 swimming results and lifting them off the bottom of the national table.

Indeed, the many initiatives detailed within this report are designed to alleviate the all too real pressures parents and schools can face when trying to keep school swimming a priority and provide guidance and support wherever possible.

But there is one aspect of the report where the ASA does want to increase pressure – and that is on government.

For sustained and measurable change to take place and to safeguard the future of school swimming the ASA urges government to show its commitment to this life-saving skill by instructing Ofsted to monitor the inclusion and delivery of swimming lessons as part of its on-going primary school inspections.

Yes, some of the findings make for sobering reading – too many children are leaving primary school unable to swim, school swimming is sometimes being squeezed out of the curriculum altogether, monitoring of potentially life-saving attainment levels is often overlooked and teachers themselves sometimes feel ill-equipped to deliver school swimming.

The ASA is also looking for careful thought from Head Teachers this September when a minimum £9,000 PE investment reaches schools across England. The results of this largest ever school swimming census show that as many as 1.1m school children cannot swim. The ASA urges schools where children are leaving unable to swim, to make the right choice in September.

Foreword

David Sparkes OBE, Chief Executive, The ASA
Swimming is unique – it is the only sport that can save lives.

But the results of the largest ever schools swimming census conducted in Britain reveal worrying gaps in our children’s swimming proficiency with more than half of all children aged 7-11 ending their last academic year unable to swim. Meanwhile, the statutory KS2 requirement for a child to swim 25m unaided is met by only 49% of state school pupils. Put starkly, 1.1 million school children cannot swim.

Tellingly there also seems to be a large degree of confusion about school swimming amongst parents and even teachers – indeed one of the most frequently asked questions on Education.gov.uk asks “is swimming a compulsory part of the National Curriculum?”

The answer of course is resolutely YES – swimming is firmly on the curriculum and for a very good reason.

Swimming is the only sport that can save lives and prevent unnecessary deaths. It has a lasting legacy throughout later life. Not to mention the plethora of health, fitness and emotional benefits and the vital developmental skills it brings.

Swimming is one of the easiest, safest forms of exercise for children of all abilities and school swimming is the single most effective way of teaching children how to be safe in and around water. What’s more, school swimming is the first line of defence to reverse the rise in deaths amongst under 16s due to drowning (National Water Safety Forum 2012) and address head-on the fact that drowning is the third most common cause of death of children in England.

Yet swimming is one of the few areas of a child’s statutory education that is all too often left unmeasured, unchecked or, for 1.1m children, unfulfilled.

One in five schools did not know what their KS2 swimming attainment rates were or did not offer school swimming. Even amongst schools who do offer school swimming the average tuition a child receives in the pool is 63% short of the Government’s recommended hours of study – just eight hours compared to the recommended 22. The ASA believes – and this census confirms – that too many children are leaving primary school unable to swim, endangering lives unnecessarily. The ASA also believes that these statistics need to be radically improved.

Schools are inevitably under a raft of other pressures (to fulfil other areas of the curriculum, to attain academic targets, to gain positive Ofsted ratings or simply to allocate finances and time elsewhere) all of which can mean swimming is not seen as a priority. In fact 44% of schools said that budget – or lack of it – negatively impacted on their delivery of school swimming.

In light of this the ASA believes that schools have a rare opportunity to seize the moment in September 2013 and take action on school swimming by investing in an activity that has a lifelong legacy and the ability to keep future generations safe.

This September £150m of ring-fenced budget for PE and School Sport will be released by Government – a minimum of £9000 per school – which could provide a lifeline for school swimming. Where schools are not currently meeting the statutory requirement the ASA believes that curriculum swimming and water safety should be the first priority for this budget. Parents agree – more than half of them believe this money should be invested in swimming as a first priority.

This is an opportunity to not only save precious lives but enrich the lives of a whole generation.
SWIMMING AGAINST THE TIDE

49% of children aged 7-11 years (KS2) cannot swim 25 metres unaided.

This equates to **1.1 MILLION** children aged 7-11 years that cannot swim.

1 in 5 children are not receiving any sort of swimming lessons.

40% of children leaving primary school unable to swim.

4 in 10 parents say their child is currently receiving lessons at school.

WHAT PARENTS SAY...

52% of parents do not believe their child would be able to swim to safety if they were to get into danger in the water.

75% of parents don’t know the National Curriculum school swimming targets that their child should have achieved by age 11.

7 in 10 parents would like to see their child receive swimming lessons.

75% of parents don’t believe their child would be able to swim to safety if they were to get into danger in the water.

DEATH FROM DROWNING IN THE UK

In 2011, **47** children and young people drowned in the UK, with **407** deaths from drowning reported across all age groups.

In 2011, drowning is the third most common cause of accidental death of children in England and the number of deaths are increasing year on year.*

52% of parents do not believe their child would be able to swim to safety if they were to get into danger in the water.

75% of parents don’t know the National Curriculum school swimming targets that their child should have achieved by age 11.

If they were to have their say over half of parents would prefer their school’s allocation of the £150 million injection into PE & School Sport to go to swimming.

CHANGING ROOMS

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4 in 10 parents say their child is currently receiving lessons at school.

*The National Water Safety Forum

Learning the Lessons: The Future of School Swimming
The ASA firmly believes that swimming needs to be an integral part of the overall physical education programme on the National Curriculum. But it also believes that many schools are struggling to provide this and that school swimming can fall victim to other education priorities, tightened budgets or a lack of accountability and measurement.

To better understand and address some of the underlying issues that could be impacting on school swimming and building on 2012’s Save School Swimming, Save Lives Report, the ASA have conducted the largest ever ‘School Swimming Census’ – collecting data from over 3500 Primary schools across England – more than a fifth of all schools - to establish the following:

- What are learn to swim rates in England’s Primary schools?
- How – or, more pertinently, are – swim rates actually measured?
- What proportion of children achieve KS2 swimming attainment rates – how many can swim 25 metres unaided – and how does this vary across the nation?
- What are the barriers to school swimming delivery?
- How do state schools, private schools and academies differ?
- What proportion of schools simply do not offer school swimming or do not know if KS2 swimming targets are achieved?
- What do swimming lessons actually look like in 2013? How long is spent in the pool, how far do pupils have to travel?
- What kind of training have teachers had – do they feel fully equipped to teach swimming?

The School Swimming Census data is supported by a comprehensive literature review, informal interviews with Local Authority swimming providers and independent research amongst 1000 parents of primary school age children to deliver a fully rounded portrait of school swimming in 2013.

All of this data is then compared with the ASA’s 6-point School Swimming Manifesto to assess what gaps exist and what the opportunities are to help make school swimming intrinsic to a child’s education and a school’s core requirements. Indeed, many of the ASA’s initiatives and those of its partners are explicitly designed to help bridge the gap between its vision – for all children to participate in high quality school swimming – and the reality for millions of school children across England.
Learning the Lessons: The Future of School Swimming

The results of the Census explore this and make for compelling – often concerning – reading. Above all they illustrate a clear and urgent need for action, support and collaborative working to improve the health of school swimming and ensure it has a stronger place at the heart of primary school teaching.

The sample itself

Of the 3501 primary schools sampled, 91% were state schools while 4% were privately run and 5% were academies.

This sample includes the views and statistical data provided by 53% of all academies, 6% of all independent schools and 21% of primary schools as a collective.

The majority of respondents were Key Stage 2 school teachers and head teachers with admin support also responsible for a proportion of the responses. The sample is statistically relevant across every region of England and therefore enables the ASA to identify the key barriers and pressures pushing school swimming out of the education equation.

Crucially the unique strength of the sample also enables the ASA to focus its work and that of its partners and key stakeholders on actionable solutions and practical initiatives to help make school swimming integral to the education and lives of millions of children.

The key outcomes – ten reasons why urgent action is needed

• More than half of children (51%) aged 7-11 years cannot swim 25 metres unaided. This equals to 1.1 million children who are unable to be safe in and around water despite the fact drowning is the third most common cause of accidental death of children in England

• Only 2% of schools deliver the Government’s recommended delivery time for school swimming

• The average state school pupil spends just 8 hours and 15 minutes a year in swimming lessons - well under the 22 hours the Department of Education recommends in the current National Curriculum. These results show that on average, schools are reaching just 27.5% of the government’s national curriculum targets.

• Schools on average dedicate just 0.25% of Key Stage 2 teaching time to swimming, compared to 50% directed to maths and English, 9% to science and 5% to PE in general

• 44% of primary schools cited budget and high costs of lesson provision as a negative factor impacting on school swimming. Other key barriers include lack of time in the school day (30%) and travel time and cost (23%)

• More than a fifth of schools do not know their KS2 school swimming attainment rates or do not offer school swimming at KS2 – rising to more than a quarter of academies

• 16% of teachers said swimming provision was negatively impacted because they needed more training to improve confidence and knowledge

• State schools are struggling most in delivering the required KS2 attainment rates (swimming unaided for 25m) - just 49% of state school pupils can be compared to 63% of privately funded schools

• There are significant regional variances in school swimming. Schools in London have the lowest KS2 attainment rates (4%) regionally but other areas where attainment rates are below the national average include Humberside, Lancashire, Tyne & Wear, Nottinghamshire and Greater Manchester. KS2 attainment rates in Humbereside are less than half that of top performing counties such as Devon and Cornwall.

Swimming rates revealed

In 2011, 47 children and young people drowned in the UK, with 407 deaths from drowning reported across all age groups1 and experts worry these numbers could increase in future if the current issues with school swimming programmes are not addressed. With this in mind, the results of the School Swimming Census provide a stark insight into the realities faced by schools across England, many of which are struggling to achieve the quality or quantity of swimming lessons necessary to keep children safe in and around water.

More than half of children (51%) across England aged 7-11 cannot swim unaided for a sustained period of time over a distance of at least 25m, thereby falling short of National Curriculum requirements.

Compounding this is the absence of effective and mandatory monitoring of school swimming – indeed for more than a fifth of schools, monitoring is simply not done or schools were unable to state what their KS2 attainments were.

These issues were highlighted in reports such as Bass & Hardy 1997: “That Sinking Feeling: Swimming in Primary Schools Post the 1998 Education Reform Act” and Ofsted 2002: “Reaching the Key Stage 2 standard in swimming”, but were not reacted upon by Ofsted to any impactful level.

This is part of why the ASA is calling on government to instruct Ofsted to monitor the inclusion and delivery of swimming lessons as part of primary school inspections of PE.

A swimming nation divided

The rates of attainment vary region by region and country by country to a striking degree. The South West achieves the highest rate of attainment (5% of children able to swim 25m unaided) with almost two-thirds able to do this (63%) while in London just 4/10 children (41%) are able to achieve this.

When reviewing figures on a county level the disparities become even greater – in the predominantly rural, ‘island’ counties of Devon and Cornwall KS2 attainment rates were 67% and 72% respectively while across the country on the East Coast, in Humberside, the level is just 29%.

Regional tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>% Attainment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>63%</td>
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<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>57%</td>
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<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>57%</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
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<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>54%</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>52%</td>
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<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>49%</td>
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<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>41%</td>
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Number of children able to swim 25m

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>% Attainment</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cornwall</td>
<td>72%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Devon</td>
<td>67%</td>
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<td>Northamptonshire</td>
<td>66%</td>
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<td>Somerset</td>
<td>66%</td>
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<td>Lancashire</td>
<td>64%</td>
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<td>Cleveland</td>
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<td>Norfolk</td>
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<td>Sussex</td>
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<td>Dorset</td>
<td>63%</td>
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*The National Water Safety Forum
Budget concerns
Chief amongst them is budget – 44% of schools state that a lack of budget and high cost of lesson provision presents barriers to school swimming and this cannot be overlooked. The Education Reform Act of 1988 saw a shift towards a market-led environment where governing bodies make investment decisions and with pressure to deliver good exam results and achieve high Ofsted ratings (which do not currently take swimming into account) it is perhaps unsurprising – though no less concerning - that school swimming falls prey to other budgetary considerations.

Other key barriers to delivering swimming cited included a lack of time in the school day (30%) and travel time and cost of travel (23%). Almost three-quarters of schools (71%) have to organise transport to a swimming facility – and budget has to cover transport, swimming teachers and pool hire, with the average distance to a pool being 2.4 miles.

Swimming lessons lacking depth
It must be stressed that some schools are delivering high quality swimming lessons and using innovative approaches to counter some of the barriers school-swimming can encounter. Just some of the ways schools are doing this – and improving KS2 attainment levels as a result - are detailed within this report and central to this is the actual time spent in the pool teaching swimming.

The Census reveals that on average, KS2 pupils spend 31 minutes in the water during each school swimming lesson and that pupils attend 16 lessons per school year, while 39% of the surveyed schools offer their children just 7-12 lessons per academic year.

The average real-time swimming tuition that a child receives in a school year is 8 hours and 15 minutes. Yet the Department of Education recommends in the current National Curriculum that each pupil should have 22 hours of study time. These results reveal that on average, schools are reaching only 37.5% of the government’s national curriculum recommendations.

Lowest attainment rates:

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<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>% Attainment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humberside</td>
<td>29%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leicestershire</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shropshire</td>
<td>44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>County Durham</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bedfordshire</td>
<td>47%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tyne and Wear</td>
<td>47%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nottinghamshire</td>
<td>47%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greater Manchester</td>
<td>48%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buckinghamshire</td>
<td>49%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central London</td>
<td>49%</td>
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There is a direct link in the Census between schools that are able to deliver better student to teacher ratios, longer lesson times and higher number of lessons offered and higher attainment levels but there are many barriers in place.

A range of ASA resources has been produced for schools and teachers delivering school swimming at Key Stage 1 and 2. Available at swimming.org/go/get-started
Put simply, in order for KS2 attainment targets to be achieved, the number of pool-hours needs to be increased to match that of government recommendations.

Equally there could be a role to play for teaching at a younger age - some 28% of schools offer school swimming at KS1, which is likely to engage children when they are most open to trying new things, less likely to have developed a fear of water and before body-awareness issues tend to arise.

According to TES (Think, Educate, Share) KS2 teachers should direct at least 1.25 hours of lesson time a week to PE (not just swimming) equating to 45 hours over the academic year. To achieve the 22 hour swimming study recommendations 0.7% of total teaching time would need to be directed to swimming over the four academic years in KS2 (or nearer to 2% when factoring in travel and changing time) but according to the Census, schools on average dedicate 0.25% of KS2 teaching time to swimming.

Framed within the broader context of other teaching requirements, just a quarter of one percent of teaching time is dedicated to swimming while 50% of KS2 teaching time is directed to maths and English, 9% to science and 5% to PE in general.

These findings suggest that for many schools swimming lessons are unlikely to offer the depth of quality and quantity necessary to achieve the recommended hours to deliver confident, able and safe swimmers.

How do state schools, private schools and academies measure up?

Perhaps unsurprisingly KS2 attainment rates for state and private schools differ markedly: 49% for state schools and 63% for private schools where lessons tend to be longer and more numerous and teacher:pupil ratios tend to be lower.

Of the 116 academies that completed the survey, 32 either did not offer school swimming, or did not know how many of their pupils had achieved the KS2 target, representing a higher proportion than other schools. The average attainment rate of the remaining academies was 44% - lower than comparable state schools. Academies can of course ‘opt out’ of the National Curriculum but is the life-saving legacy of swimming lessons something that should be optional?

Teacher training & provision

As part of our manifesto, the ASA recommends that all primary school teachers should be provided with at least six hours of aquatic and water safety training.

However 16% of teachers said swimming provision was negatively impacted because they needed more training to improve confidence and knowledge and 17% said a lack of available support - both from unpaid volunteers, and paid swimming teachers also negatively impacted on school swimming.

Some primary school university courses offer as little as 4-6 hours of PE instruction, which may/may not include pool time while some teachers will avoid swimming training days as they don’t feel confident in the pool themselves. It is very easy then for a primary school teacher to miss the opportunity to learn how to teach school swimming yet still be asked to lead lessons in the water.
The vast majority of parents (98%) believe in the ASA vision that every child should learn to swim before they leave primary school and three quarters believe that swimming should remain on the National Curriculum. What’s more, over half of all parents would like to see this September’s minimum £9000 PE investment put into school swimming over and above other sports.

This is understandable given 4 out of 10 parents say their child is not currently receiving swimming lessons (either through the school or extra lessons outside of school). In fact despite its place on the national curriculum only 40% of parents say that their child is currently receiving school swimming lessons. More than half of parents (53%) who say their child is not currently receiving formal lessons from school or privately are not teaching them themselves and a quarter of these parents say they are only able to take their child swimming once every two to three months or less frequently.

One in five parents say the nearest pool where their child could learn to swim is more than four miles away from the family home and 7% of parents of children who cannot swim say that the absence of a nearby pool is a key factor.

Key barriers for parents who are struggling to take their child swimming are:
- Cost of swimming lessons and pool admission (22%)
- Lacking confidence in the water and fear that they may put their child at risk (15%)
- Body confidence issues (12%)
- Inability to swim themselves (11%)

One in five parents say that swimming trips and lessons have had to be scaled back due to pressures on the family budget and 13% say that swimming trips and lessons may have to be cut entirely as a result. A further 3% of parents say that pool closures have ended swimming trips.

One in ten parents say their child only swims on holiday – presenting clear risks in terms of ability, water confidence and safety – especially when 52% of parents do not think or are not sure if their child could swim to safety if they found themselves in danger in open water.

One in ten parents assume that their child has been taught how to be safe playing in and around water at school and though two-thirds of parents have taught their child about this, the research suggests that one third haven’t.

Jon Glenn additions

1716

The 2013 School Swimming Census

The ASA has produced a guide for parents with advice on school swimming.
Available at swimming.org/go/get-started
The ASA School Swimming Manifesto

The ASA six-point manifesto aims to improve central and local government support for swimming and make school swimming lessons a priority.

1. Every child learning to swim in primary school
   The ASA believes that every child in the UK 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.

2. 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.

3. Robust monitoring of school swimming by Ofsted
   The ASA is calling on government to instruct Ofsted to monitor the inclusion of and delivery of swimming lessons as part of primary school inspections in Physical Education.

4. Swimming as a school budget priority
   The ASA calls on Head Teachers to place priority on school swimming, which is a compulsory element of the National Curriculum, as one of the school budget priorities. This will help ensure that every child has the opportunity to learn this life saving skill.

5. Support at secondary schools
   The ASA calls for support for the thousands of children at secondary school who are unable to swim. Being unable to swim closes off countless life opportunities for young people but also increases the risk of death from drowning.

6. Help keep school pools open
   The ASA is committed to working with government to help keep school pools open. School pools are vital not only for school swimming but for wider community use. The ASA asks all schools who are considering closing to consult with them to look at all viable options.

The ASA swim for life
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…"
ASA Initiatives & Partner Activities – Learn to Swim Solutions Brought To Life

Kellogg’s Swim Active
The Kellogg’s Swim Active Fund is a grant fund provided by Kellogg’s as part of their commitment to increase opportunities for participation in swimming in partnership with the ASA. Since 2006 Swim Active has helped over 200,000 people get into swimming by investing £180,000 into over 40 projects across the UK from introducing special lessons for disabled children to providing transport to pools in rural locations.

In 2012 Kellogg’s and the ASA identified a high demand for funding to increase provision specifically in school swimming. As a result investment from Kellogg’s became solely available to fund school swimming projects to increase the number of children learning to swim in the areas that need it most as identified in the Kellogg’s ASA 2012 School Swimming Manifesto. Some of the projects supported are highlighted on this page.

£24,100 Academies Enterprise Trust (30 schools in various locations) Training for school teachers at eight schools and longer lessons for 15 schools.

£24,944 London Borough’s of Greenwich, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest and Merton Reduced ratio of teachers to pupils to 10:1 and prioritise swimming provision in schools with low attainment.

£1,910 Thornbury Primary School, Plymouth A ten day block of intensive swimming lessons for 72 children in Years 4 and 5.

£6,480 Southampton Training for 20 school teachers and eight intensive swimming courses run during school holidays.

£9,840 Wyre After school lessons for non-swimmers and an additional qualified swimming teacher to every school.

£1,020 Liverpool Reintroduce swimming back on to the Curriculum for pupils with autism and aspergers.

£3,666 Blackburn and Darwen Top up lessons for Year 5 and 6 pupils who are unable to swim at three primary schools.

£4,470 Hartlepool Intensive after school lessons for Year 5 and 6 pupils who are unable to swim.

£13,433 Sheffield Top up lessons for non-swimmers and younger pupils, 12 swimming lessons for all Year 4 pupils across 29 schools.

£5,000 Redbridge Lessons for Year 5 pupils, targeting non-swimmers, especially in areas of high BME.

£7,188 Norfolk Additional lessons to Year 5 pupils who are unable to swim across ten schools.

£3,507 Chelsea Lessons for all Year 7 students, a 180% increase in participation.

£7,000 Milton Keynes A full review of school swimming resulting in more pupils in longer lessons.

£2,160 Isle of Wight Intensive lessons for Year 5 and 6 non-swimmers.
Get Safe
Get Safe is the ASA’s national educational and water safety campaign to make children aware of the dangers posed by water. The ASA wants to ensure that young people are able to stay safe not just in the pool, but when around coastal and inland waters. Taking part in Get Safe gives children the opportunity to participate in action-packed events in pool and beach locations. These events are aimed at primary school pupils who attend school swimming as part of the curriculum, to promote the importance of learning to swim and water confidence. The events teach children everything they need to know to be safe in and around water, as well as highlighting that swimming is the only sport that can save your life.

There is a host of fun and educational activities to teach children how to stay safe, spot the warning signs and what to do in an emergency. Children get the opportunity to learn and take part in boat rescues, swimming against a current, rescue techniques, water safety quizzes, resuscitation using manikins and fire and rescue safety talks, as well as demonstrations from a trained lifeguard team.

British Gas Pools 4 Schools
British Gas Pools 4 Schools is an innovative learn to swim programme that takes mobile swimming pools to schools across England. Delivered by the ASA and Total Swimming, the Pools 4 School pool is a portable teaching facility designed to accommodate a full class of children in a specially designed teaching tank. Since 2008 the Pools 4 Schools programme has taught 31,000 young people to swim in 25 locations across England while Make a Splash has delivered 18 pool projects in some of London’s most deprived and disadvantaged areas since 2009, teaching over 18,000 people to swim. The aim of the programme is to teach as many primary school children as possible in each area to swim, as well as reaching out to the wider community by making the pool available for other sessions out of school hours. The programme continues, with projects being delivered in each location for 12 weeks.

British Gas Pools 4 Schools specifically targets communities with a lack of local facilities, high levels of socio-economic deprivation, high BME populations and barriers to swimming such as travel costs. Pools are located at schools or community venues and also open outside of school hours for the wider community so that as many people as possible can benefit from having a temporary pool.

School Swimathon
School Swimathon is a swimming programme for school children to improve technique and water confidence, building to a final challenge to swim further than ever before. In 2013 4,500 school children across England stepped up to the challenge of using their national curriculum weekly swim sessions to improve their swimming ability and ‘Swim their Best.’

School Swimathon was created by the ASA and Swimathon Foundation, the charity behind the world’s biggest swim to boost swimmer participation in children of school age. On completion of the School Swimathon challenge, each pupil received a certificate to celebrate their achievement and a free team entry for themselves and their family into Swimathon 2013.
The National Curriculum Training Programme (NCTP) has been developed to equip swimming teachers and schools with the right skills and knowledge to deliver quality swimming lessons. High-quality swimming lessons are key to a child’s learning experience and essential to promote confidence and safety in the water. The NCTP delivers the right training to ensure school children receive the best quality aquatics education.

The NCTP is open to anyone working in a primary school swimming environment such as school teachers, classroom assistants, learning support staff, nursery nurses, qualified swimming teachers, parents, PGCE students or other helpers. On completion of the NCTP candidates receive the Certificate for Teaching School Swimming which is recognised by the Department of Education and the Professional Development Board of Physical Education. The NCTP is comprised of two modules and takes 15 hours to complete using a combination of theory and practical sessions on how best to deliver school swimming. Courses can be organised by local authorities, PE Departments, schools, universities/colleges and other teacher training providers.

Point 1 of the Manifesto

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 already the most successful sports programme of its kind and has taught millions of children to swim.

We encourage everyone to check that their swimming lessons are using the British Gas ASA Learn to Swim Pathway to ensure children receive the best possible instruction based on the swimming expertise of the ASA. Supported by the Kellogg’s ASA Awards, the Pathway continues to be by far the most successful grass-roots programme in British sport.

The Pathway takes children on a journey from their first splash to developing confidence and competence in the water. Consisting of four frameworks, a child’s journey through aquatics starts with the Foundation Framework to develop basic skills and water confidence through fun and games, before progressing onto the Learn to Swim Framework to develop their skills.

The final part of the journey is the Aquatic Skills Framework which gives your child the opportunity to learn the basics of water polo, diving and synchronised swimming. There is also a brand new Adult Swimming Framework for adults looking to learn or improve their skills in the pool. For swimmers that need smaller stepping stones we have created Alpha Step as part of the Foundation Framework.

Pool Watch

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 can give 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 provide the essential tools and information to help them build their case.

The ASA is passionate about keeping pools open and Pool Watch aims to provide guidance and information to keep pools at the heart of local communities. The ability to save yourself or prevent another person from drowning is a life skill, and swimming has a big part to play in driving the health of the nation. At a local level, most swimming pools provide a meeting point for people and therefore play a part in establishing cohesive communities.

Kellogg’s ASA Awards Scheme

The Kellogg’s ASA Awards Scheme is designed to reward children when they are learning to swim. To complement the ASA Learn to Swim Framework, the Kellogg’s 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 are awarded each year.
In the academic year leading up to the project, some 54% of children entering Manchester’s Educational Swimming Programme with their primary schools were non-swimmers who had never entered a swimming pool before. Through innovative time-tabling, a clear swimming strategy and Kellogg’s investment, a step-change in swimming participation and ability was achieved across a city with high areas of social deprivation and poverty.

Using the logic that school holidays provide an ideal time at which to develop the aquatic skills and abilities of young children in order to prepare them for future swimming courses the Trust secured funding from the Kellogg’s Swim Active fund in the Summer of 2012.

With this they were able to operate free intensive swimming lessons – ‘summer intensives’ throughout the school summer holiday period at nine local facilities across the City of Manchester. The enthusiasm generated – and the results delivered – speak for themselves.

- More than 1100 swimming places were made available, with take up rates exceeding 84%
- A quarter of all attendees followed up the free lesson by enrolling on a subsequent swimming lesson course in a Trust facility demonstrating the power of the initiative
- Almost 40% of the take up came from a BME background

- Over 50% of attendees came from wards within Manchester where the primary schools are in the lowest 20% ‘ability start points’ including Harpurhey, Moss Side, Cheetham and Ardwick
- More than half of those who enrolled onto a further course came from wards with the lowest ‘swimming ability start points’

Put simply, the scheme helped to make swimming more readily accessible for families who may struggle to pay for swimming lessons themselves or for children who may otherwise enter the city’s Educational Swimming Programme at a disadvantage compared to others. What’s more it engendered high levels of enthusiasm and an appetite for swimming amongst communities who may previously have felt participation barriers were in place.

This is no standalone ‘one summer only’ scheme however and is part of the cities emerging swimming strategy to help drive down the age at which children tend to first enter a swimming pool and undertake lessons.

The idea then is to firstly boost the ‘ability start points’ for children learning to swim at school and in doing so, most crucially, reduce the numbers who leave primary school unable to swim.
Case study: Merton – from swimming backwater to gala champion

How a struggling Local Authority took action

Just 31% of children attained the KS2 target in Merton in 2010/2011 compared to 91% in leading local authority South Northamptonshire.

In response to this and to redress the balance, in May 2012 the Merton School Sport Partnership swiftly set up a School Swimming Strategy Group comprised of Head Teachers, GLL (Greenwich Leisure Limited) representatives, Director of Merton School Sports Partnership and the Leisure Development team at the London Borough of Merton.

The result has rendered an almost instant success, with independent survey results concluding that 47% of children attained the KS2 target in the past 12 months, beating the target set for 2014.

The committee detailed a Merton Schools Swimming Strategy and Guidance plan that is annually updated and available to download online to keep people updated on their school swimming progress. This swimming attainment record includes a questionnaire that has to be completed by all schools every year in July to more accurately measure attainment levels – as an inconsistent approach to measurement was identified as a key issue holding back progress. The plan also includes actionable advice on swimming lesson frequency, recommended class sizes and lesson times to help schools work towards improved KS2 results.

As part of this a Merton Primary Schools Gala Coordinator was appointed to organise a schools competition to be held throughout the Summer Term 2013 while the Swim Guarantee Initiative offers a series of free lessons to children who have yet to achieve NC Key Stage 2 requirements after having completed an agreed amount of lessons on the School Swimming Programme.

Merton are part of GLL’s “A Better Start” Project supported by a Kelloggs Swim Active Grant which will target 1,110 Year 3 pupils in the borough from Sept 2013-July 2014.

Merton are ambitious in their aims and anticipate that the number of pupils in year 6 who can swim 25m will increase as follows:

- July 2013 – 40%
- July 2014 – 45%
- July 2015 – 50%
- July 2016 – 55%
- July 2017 – 60%

By proactively raising the profile of swimming, involving Head Teachers at the core of decisions and strategy, better tracking of pupil progress and improving teacher training Merton looks to be on course to turn swimming rates around and improve the lives and safety of its children.

Ruth Whymark
Merton Head Teacher (Cranmer Primary)

As the largest operator of swimming pools in the UK, ensuring that everyone is able to swim and be safe in the water is of paramount importance to GLL. School swimming lessons as part of the National Curriculum offer a great opportunity to teach every child to swim and learn this crucial life skill. In Merton we have been working closely with the local authority, the ASA and head teachers to look at some of the issues surrounding low attainment in the borough. A number of measures have been put in place this year to improve attainment levels, these include results tracking, training for school teachers to assist with swimming lessons, and increasing the number of lessons offered to pupils and targeted intervention courses. This approach has resulted in exceeding the targets set for 2013 and 2014 already.

Suzanne Philpot,
GLL Aquatics Manager

By reducing barriers to participation, the Merton Swim Strategy Group want to strive to ensure that it remains a priority for all children to be able to swim 25m by the end of KS2 as one day it may indeed save their life.
Case study: University puts spotlight on swimming for new teachers

All students on the BA (Hons) Primary Education degree at Canterbury Christ Church University undertake a swimming module as a core part of their physical education experience. The students, in the second year of their primary teacher training, get taught the fundamentals of movement and motor development through a range of aquatic activities. The water based experience includes a variety of practical activities such as, floating, propulsion through the water, an introduction to teaching stroke technique and playing games to help them understand the benefits of swimming. They are challenged to consider the health and safety issues of a school primary PE lessons and how to organise space, people, resources and the time.

At Christ Church we have also decided to include the ASA National Curriculum Training Programme as an option in addition to the existing water based experience as part of the curriculum studies for PE. We believe that this opportunity to extend their personal and professional development through gaining additional qualifications will be invaluable to the students as prospective employees and to develop the quality of swimming teaching for the primary aged phase pupils.

For many of the students swimming is not a regular part of their leisure activities and indeed for some, their last experience of swimming was when they were much younger. Therefore, it is important that we break down any barriers students may have to participation in swimming and for them to recognise that swimming has a positive effect on a child’s own levels of health and fitness. These students can then choose to extend their swimming experience by studying for Module 1 of the ASA’s National Curriculum Training Programme. For this Module all students have a theoretical lecture where further aspects of health and safety are discussed and video material is used to analyse movement and to improve their subject knowledge and understanding of teaching the main strokes. The students also have additional time in the pool where they have to teach a small group a nominated aspect of the ASA programme. They have to present their lesson plan to us at the start of the session which will show all aspects related to the teaching and learning environment for that aspect of the stroke.

We feel that our approach, presenting swimming as an intrinsic and valuable part of the physical education curriculum (as well as providing the opportunity to study Module 1 as part of their degree programme) will serve to improve the teaching of swimming in primary schools as more students realise the potential that swimming has for the physical development and physical literacy of an individual child.

Alison Carney
(Senior Lecturer in the Department of Childhood Studies, Physical Education, Canterbury Christ Church University)

I thoroughly enjoyed the module one course and felt that it provided me with detailed subject knowledge to be confident to teach swimming in school. The course was short and precise and offered a great balance of academic and practical experiences.

Sioned Fox
Primary Education Year 2
Conclusion:
A Lifeline for School Swimming

Despite swimming being on the National Curriculum in many schools it is simply not being delivered and where it is taught all too often KS2 attainment targets are not being met or monitored. There are many reasons for this;

Schools are allowed to avoid swimming if they cannot afford the travel or if they are weak in other more high profile curriculum areas. Budget constraints in schools and a lack of auditing by Ofsted to ensure schools are delivering swimming programmes as set out by the Department of Education are at the heart of the problem. In addition many parents are cutting back on swimming trips as they seek to balance tighter budgets making school swimming more important than ever.

To address the key issues of budget and other curricular priorities displacing swimming the ASA believes there are two significant actions that need to - and can - happen.

This September each primary school will receive a minimum of £9,000 additional funding towards PE & School Sport as part of the Government’s £150 million injection into PE & Schools sports.

The ASA is calling for Head Teachers and governing bodies in schools struggling to deliver statutory swimming requirements to place this investment into the only sport that can and does save lives - swimming. This funding provides a rare opportunity to achieve a step-change for school swimming and the ASA asks that schools think carefully about where this money can make a difference to children’s lives and safety.

The ASA is also calling for Government to ask Ofsted to include the delivery and monitoring of compulsory swimming lessons as part of primary school inspections in PE, to help improve standards and reverse the ‘opting out’ culture that can sometimes see school swimming sidelined.

The 2013 School Swimming Census Learning the Lessons: The Future of School Swimming