

9.0 Swimming on Educational Visits

The opportunity may arise for children/young people to swim during an educational Visit, either using swimming pools or in open water. Group Leaders must ensure that relevant regulations are adhered to. If the requirements outlined below cannot be met, swimming must not be permitted. Prior permission must be obtained from the parents or guardians of any pupil, prior to including them in swimming activities.

9.1 Swimming in Public Pools

Free swimming in a public pool presents greater risks to the swimmer than organised swimming lessons. A basic rule is that the group must be observed at all times. Check if there is constant supervision by a sufficient number of qualified lifeguards. Group Leaders must follow the recommended supervision levels at the pool for their group as a minimum standard. A minimum ratio should be: -

School years 4 to 6

1 adult per 12 children/young people

School year 7 onwards

1 adult per 20 children/young people

Teachers should monitor the risks of regular swimming activities and adjust supervision levels as necessary. For all swimming pool educational visits the Group Leader must check: -



- The water is clear and its temperature is appropriate.
- The depth of the water is suitable for the activity, e.g. deep enough for safe swimming or shallow enough to allow children to stand up during swimming lessons. There should be signs clearly indicating the water's depth.
- If supervisors or children with disabilities are to use the swimming pool ensure there are suitable facilities for their needs; especially in the event of an emergency evacuation.
- There is poolside communication e.g. telephone, intercom or emergency alarm button.
- There is suitable poolside rescue equipment and if there is someone trained to use it.
- There is a suitable changing room for each gender.
- That the changing facilities are safe and hygienic.
- That clothes and belongings can be stored securely.
- That group members have been instructed in how to behave in and around the water.

Supervision

The Group Leader has overall responsibility of children/young people during the educational visit.

The Group Leader must ascertain that lifeguard cover is provided by the swimming pool operator. If there are no qualified lifeguards available children/young people may not use the pool. Staff/appointed adult may only act as a lifeguard if they hold a Royal Lifesaving Society National Pool Lifeguard Qualification stating their competence to affect a rescue from a depth greater than or equal to the depth of the pool being used.

A national rescue test for swimming teachers and coaches is classed as an acceptable qualification only whilst the children are following a structured session, under instruction from a teacher. This award does not cover you to act as a life guard during any "fun/play" sessions. You must also have another adult present during the activities who is able to get help if required.

The Group Leader or an appointed assistant must observe the group from the poolside and be prepared to alert the lifeguard if a child/young person is in difficulty. This observer must be conversant with pool operating regulations and emergency procedures.

The Group Leader must ensure that:

- Group members know how to summon help in an emergency.
- Group members are aware of the signal for leaving the water.
- Group members are counted in and out of the water.
- Good discipline and pool rules are observed at all times.
- Rough play; such as 'bombing', running and unnecessary noise are forbidden.

Medical considerations

Swimming should not take place within one hour after eating. The Group Leader must be aware of children/young people with



any medical conditions that may affect their safety or that of others during the activity. In the case of epilepsy, the instructor must be made aware of whom the child/young person is and should be provided with brief information as to the form the seizures take. Medical clearance must be obtained from both the parents and medical practitioner. Epileptics may be required to have a spotter to provide one-to-one supervision whilst in the pool.

Diving

Diving may only take place where the water has a vertical depth of at least 1.5 meters and a forward clearance at this depth of a minimum of 7.6 meters and must be supervised by a competent supervisor who has no other responsibilities during the lesson.

9.2 Swimming in Open Inland Waters

Many educational visits will have open water as a feature of the area visited. Open inland water such as rivers, lakes, reservoirs or canals present unacceptable risks to swimmers. These include vegetation and other underwater obstructions, sudden changes in depth, and temperature as well as pollution. Authority Regulations prohibit swimming in open inland water. The only exception is where swimming takes place as part of a water-sports activity such as canoeing, which must only be permitted if it forms part of the organised programme and it must be in accordance with relevant Local Authority Regulations.

9.3 Swimming in the Sea

The risks to those swimming in the sea are considerably greater than those presented by a heated swimming pool. Swimming ability is further reduced by heavy waves, low temperatures, and undercurrents. The age and ability of the swimmers, the conditions of the sea, beach and weather, the presence of beach lifeguards, the life-saving ability of the adult in charge, and

the safety equipment available should be taken into account when deciding to swim. Swimming in the sea must only be permitted if the following conditions are met as a minimum standard: -

- Swimming is a formal and supervised activity in a recognised bathing area that has official surveillance e.g. qualified lifeguard cover.
- A minimum supervision ratio of one to eight with a minimum of two adults present.
- At least one member of staff/supervising-adult must remain on watch at the water's edge and must not swim.
- If no life guard service is available at least one adult holding a current Royal Lifesaving Society National Beach Lifeguard Qualification must be present.
- The permitted swimming area must be defined and clear to all participants.
- Swimming must not take place within one hour of eating.
- Swimmers should swim in water of no more than waist depth and should swim parallel to the shore.
- Before entering the water all participants must be briefed as to emergency procedures including the signal to leave the water.
- Children/young people must be counted on entering and leaving the sea.
- The following life-saving and safety equipment should be available during the session: -
 - > A whistle.
 - > Floats or throw-line.
 - > First aid equipment.
 - > Warm clothing.
 - > A reflective blanket.
 - > Survival bag.
 - > A beach assembly marker e.g. poles or flags.

10.0 Farm Visits

Farms can be dangerous places with specific hazards that may arise from slurry or grain pits, potentially dangerous machinery, electric fences, uneven and/or slippery ground, chemical and other stores, as well as potentially dangerous live stock. Therefore educational visits to farms require particularly careful planning.

10.1 Prior to the Educational Visit

Regard should be given to the following issues prior to the educational visit taking place: -

- Prepare the children/young people thoroughly so they know what to expect, and what is expected of them (see code of conduct) during the educational visit.
- Ensure all those attending the educational visit wear suitable clothing and footwear.
- Ensure all those attending the educational visit have been informed of any specific hazards.
- Children/young people should not be allowed in animal pens.
- Preferably undertake an exploratory visit to check the farm suitable for the intended educational visit. It should be well managed, have a good reputation for safety standards, animal welfare and maintain suitable washing and other welfare facilities that can be used by the visiting party.
- Ensure that the farmer or the farm manager is fully aware of the limit of the visiting group's knowledge and awareness of the countryside and of agriculture.
- Discuss and agree the visit requirements, organisation (especially emergency arrangements) and programme of activities with the farmer or site manager.

10.2 Code of Conduct

All those involved in a farm visit should be informed of the required code of conduct prior to the visit and knowledge of that code checked, it should then be constantly enforced during the visit.

The farm-visit code of conduct should include the following: -

- Listen carefully and follow the instructions and information given by the Group Leader and supervisors.
- Do not use or pick up tools (e.g. spades, forks etc.) unless permitted to do so by farm staff and the Group Leader/supervisors.
- Do not ride on tractors or other machinery.
- Do not climb on walls or into animal pens.
- Approach animals quietly and gently.
- Do not frighten or torment animals.
- Do not play in the farm area.

10.3 Hygiene on the Farm

All farms have a degree of bacterial contamination. All animals naturally carry a range of micro-organisms that can be transmitted to humans. Some infections such as E-Coli 0157 present a serious hazard as they can potentially cause a severe illness. The risk from such an illness is particularly great to children under the age of six. The risk of infection can be readily controlled by good hygiene practices, these should include: -

- Ensure there are adequate levels of supervision to ensure suitable control.
- No eating or drinking allowed outside of designated eating areas.
- Do not eat food that has fallen on the ground.