



Insight produced by
Active
Black Country



Primary School Swimming in the Black Country 2020

Section 1: Introduction

Foreword

Thank you for reading the second edition of our annual Primary School Swimming report, providing an analysis of the data that schools are required to submit in relation to sport premium funding.

Whilst this report continues to focus on the 3 swimming indicators, we recognise that this has been an extraordinary year and have attempted to develop the document through the lens of covid-19, providing additional insight into how leisure operators see the year ahead and potential implications for school swimming.

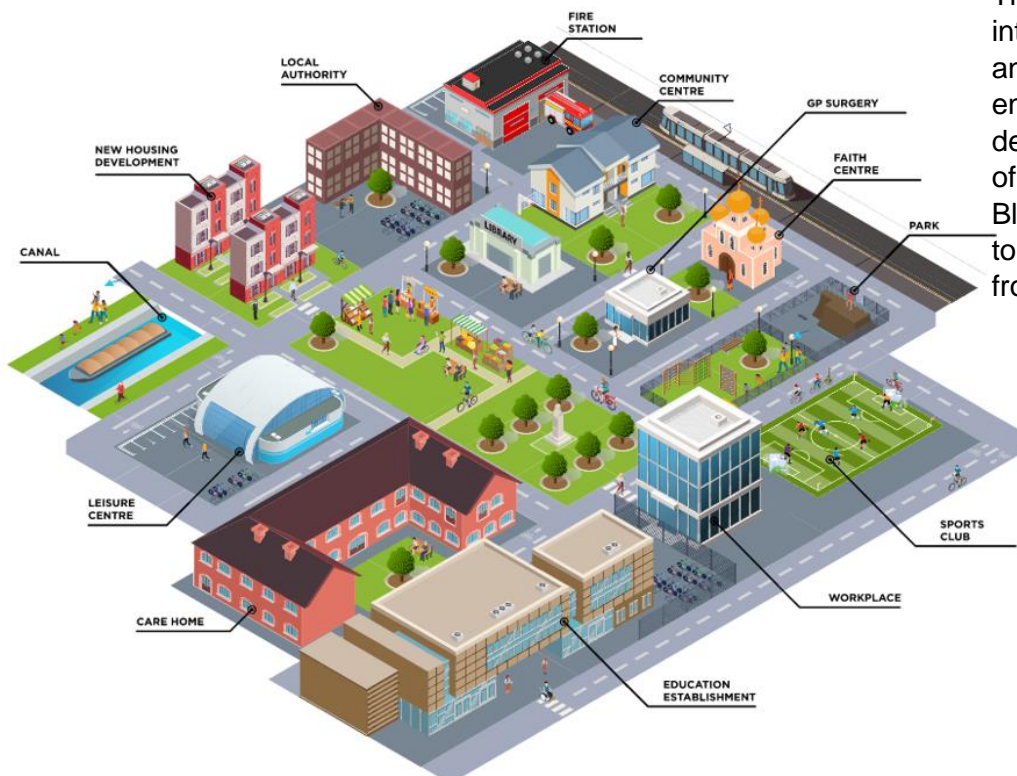
We do hope you enjoy this report. We're always eager to hear what people think so, if you want to discuss any of the details within, please feel free to contact me at

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Michael Salmon; Head of Insight, Health and Wellbeing

Our Approach

Active Lives data released in 2020 confirms that the Black Country is the most inactive part of England and it would require an additional 90,000 adults being active for 30 weekly minutes for the area to just be on a par with the national average. We recognise that inactivity cannot be tackled in isolation; it's a systemic issue that results, in part, from deeply rooted health inequalities and severe pockets of deprivation that impact on a large proportion of our population. A systemic problem requires a systems-based approach and Active Black Country are committed to working with partners across **Communities, Health and Wellbeing, Education and Workforce, Skills and Employment** to connect and collaborate, influence and understand how we can make it easier for Black Country residents to be physically active and to be safe, secure and passionate about sport.



This diagram depicts the interconnectivity of people and place in an urban environment and demonstrates the breadth of stakeholders that Active Black Country are looking to engage with and learn from.

Contents

The following report has been produced as a result of Primary School swimming insight developed across a number of works areas and with partners in 2019 and 2020. The report has the following sections:

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Section 2: What is the Sport Premium?

Section 3: The Current Climate – Leisure Operators

Section 4: Headline Findings:

Section 5: Local Analysis

Section 6: Comparative Analysis

Section 7: Conclusions and Further Reading

Primary School Requirements

Standards

All Primary Schools are required to provide swimming and water safety instruction to their pupils in either Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2. Schools should provide sufficient swimming opportunities to ensure all pupils make progress and achieve their very best in swimming and water safety.

By *all pupils* this includes those with special educational needs, those with a disability or impairment and those whose first language is not English. The requirement is for all Year 6 pupils to meet the statutory minimum standard of capability and confidence in swimming and safe self-rescue, as set out in the national curriculum. The minimum requirement is that, by the time they are ready to leave Key Stage 2, every child is able to:

- swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25 metres
- use a range of strokes effectively
- perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations

Reporting

Since 2017, schools are required to publish their swimming and water safety attainment levels as part of their reporting requirements for the PE and Sport Premium (PESSP). This should be on their website, completed by July 31st each year, and state the percentage of their Year 6 cohort that can achieve each of the three minimum requirements.

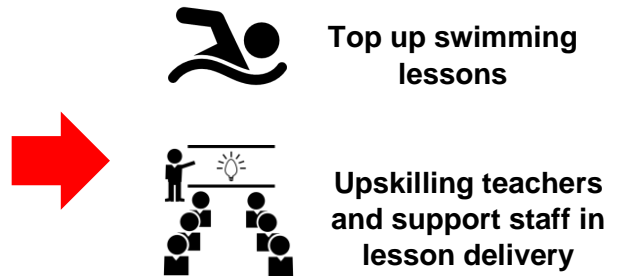
As some swimming and water safety programmes are delivered in years 3, 4 or 5, it is accepted that the data for some schools may need to be held until they reach Year 6. In addition, it is accepted that some of the information may be out of date, however, the emphasis is on what schools know about their pupils' attainment in relation to the national curriculum, and the impact of the swimming and water safety programmes.

It is recommended schools report both their PESSP funding and swimming attainment using the DFE commissioned afPE and YST reporting template. This is available to download at: <https://www.activeblackcountry.co.uk/what-we-do/education/primary-pe-and-sport-premium/>

Please Note: All data referenced in this report is self-reported by Primary schools in the Black Country with no formal validation process. The information provided should be regarded as indicative rather than definitive.

Section 2: What is the Sport Premium?

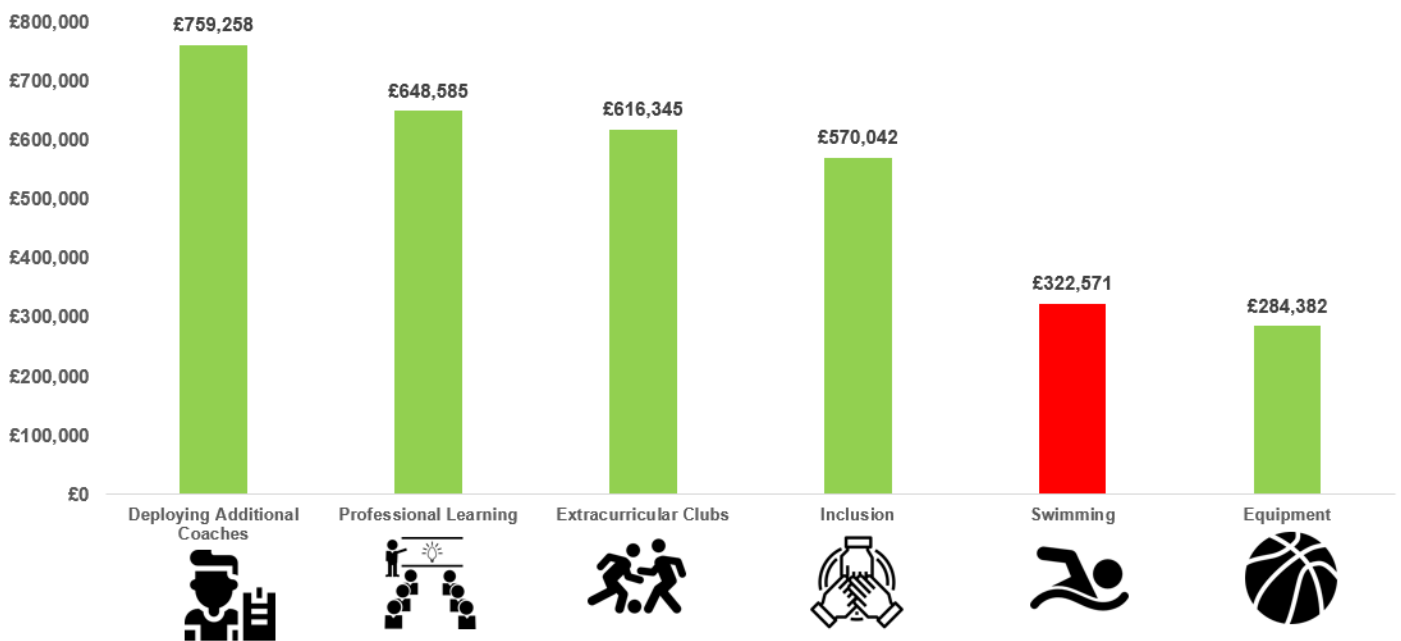
The PE and Sport Premium is provided to schools to make additional and sustainable improvements to the quality of PE and Sport and Physical Activity that is offered. Whilst the delivery of swimming and water safety lessons is funded separately, schools are able to utilise the premium to provide additionality. This can include (but isn't limited to):



How is it Spent in the Black Country?

ABC reviews all primary and special school (353) websites across the Black Country each year, with the latest review taking place between 20th September and 30th October 2020. As a result of the review, ABC found 73% of schools had their most recent offer (academic year 18/19) published on their website.

The information below highlights some of the headline findings. Approximately £322,571 was spent by Primary and Special Schools on additionality for swimming in the 2019/2020 academic year. This is likely to rise to around £450,000 when considering the figures account for £4.1m of the £5.6 million allocated to schools in the Black Country, in addition to the funding already received for curriculum Physical Education. Across the region, 47% of all primary and special schools are utilising some of the Primary PE and Sport Premium funding to support their Swimming provision, an increase of nearly 10 percentage points when compared to the previous year (38%) however given this figure is lower than 2019 (£423,435) this implies overall schools who do spend money in this area are spending slightly less.



Section 3: The Current Climate – Leisure Operators



70%

of Primary schools accessed public facilities for swimming prior to COVID-19

Covid-19 has had a devastating impact on the leisure industry, with forced closures of facilities for much of 2020. When considering the Covid 19 pandemic and the subsequent social distancing restrictions, additional school specific guidance, and reduced public confidence in attending swimming pools; school swimming provision in the Black Country from a leisure operator perspective has suffered greatly this year. This is clearly a significant issue for the attainment of KS2 targets and the long-term progression of the pupil regarding swimming and water safety.

The initial lockdown found:

- Some schools cancelling in the weeks leading up to facility closures.
- For those that did continue for as long permitted, increasing numbers of pupils were spectating due to parental concern about the implications of taking part in lessons.

Challenges Facing Leisure Providers

Balancing Requirements



vs



Providers are grappling with balancing the requirements of the general public and schools, while maximising the income potential of their facility whilst, at all times,

adhering to contractual obligations.

In some facilities across at least two Black Country authorities, this means delivering school swimming lessons alongside publicly accessible swimming sessions.

Communication Challenges



Communication with schools can occasionally prove difficult; and pupil attendance and frequency of swimming lessons for year

groups can prove a challenge for leisure facilities when managing the expectations of schools in terms of pupil progression towards national curriculum attainment targets.

For those operators who managed to offer a short period of school swimming lessons in between facility closures, and similarly for those who were working hard to reintroduce lessons after October Half Term, in addition to challenges already mentioned, there were, and still are a number more to overcome;



Changing room availability and capacity issues caused by social distancing requirements



Not all schools have been comfortable with pupils arriving at the facility “swim ready”, putting additional pressure on the capacity of changing areas.



Confidence from school staff that lessons can be delivered safely




Those that welcomed back schools before the October half term, saw a much-reduced uptake, with authorities reporting that 25% of their normal school clientele had either not committed to or returned post lockdown.

Section 4: Headline Findings

The requirement is for all Year 6 pupils to meet the statutory minimum standard of capability and confidence in swimming and safe self-rescue, as set out in the national curriculum. This section summarises the collective findings published by schools across the 3 key indicators.

25m Proficiency



63% can swim 25m =  4 percentage points


The proportion of Black Country pupils able to swim 25m in Year 6 has **increased over the last 12 months from 59% to 63%**.

This is calculated from an average of results published by 153 primary schools across the 4 local authority areas. The sample has slightly decreased over the last 12 months from 163 in 2019.

This marks the highest level of 25m competency since Active Black Country started collecting this data in 2018.

Using a Range of Strokes



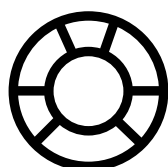
57% can use a range of strokes =  2 percentage points


There has been a **small rise in the proportion of year 6 pupils who demonstrate the ability to use a range of strokes, from 55% in 2019 to 57% this year.**

Pupils are expected to be able to;

- make choices about the strokes they use to achieve different outcomes
- experience both alternating and simultaneous strokes
- adapt strokes for a range of purposes and outcomes

Water Safety



54% can perform safe self-rescue =  6 percentage points

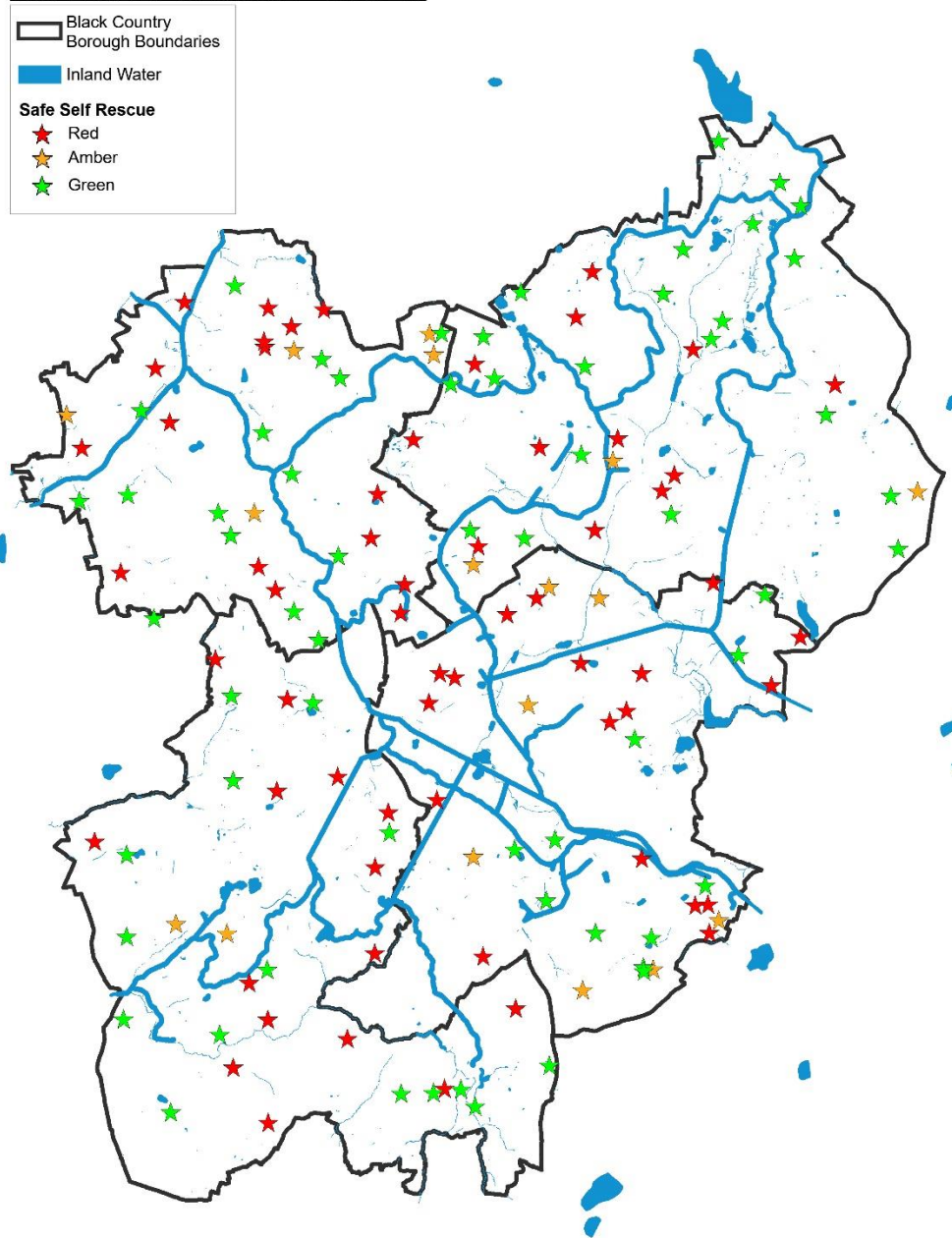
Whilst there is a clear need to increase the percentage of pupils who are able to perform safe self-rescue, the increase over the last 12 months from 48% to 56% is a real positive development.

For this measure, pupils are required to demonstrate;

- Knowledge and understanding of water safety key messages
- Knowledge of how and when to use appropriate survival and rescue skills
- Understanding of local and national water hazards
- Knowledge of what to do if others get in trouble

The map below demonstrates the importance of safe self-rescue. The Black Country has a considerable amount of open water sites with an extensive canal network along with lakes and reservoirs.

SAFE SELF RESCUE - WATER



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The stars plotted onto the map denote the Primary Schools that published their results on safe self-rescue. Schools rated as **Green** or **Orange** performed at or above the Black Country average for water safety (54%), whilst those in **Red** performed below this mark. The map clearly shows a considerable number of under-performing schools located within walking distance of open water sites.

Section 5: Local Analysis

Dudley

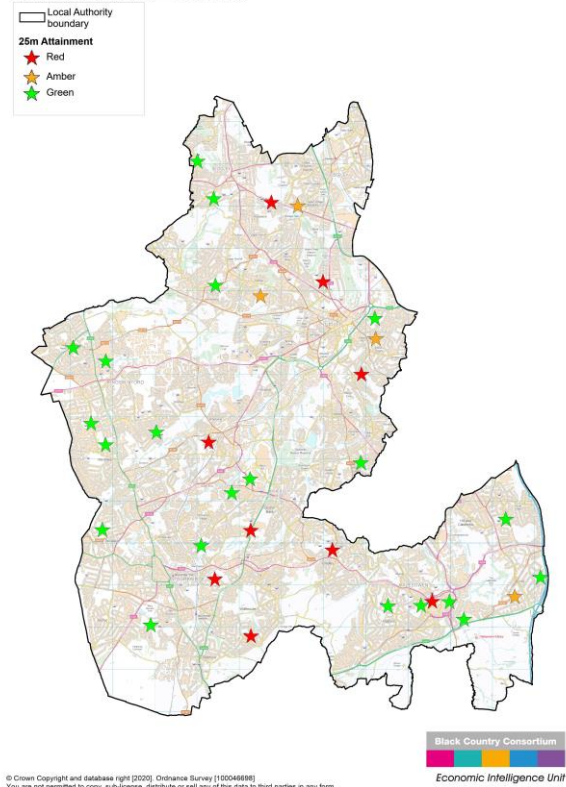
Dudley has seen a slight increase in the number of children able to swim **25 metres** in Year 6 moving to 68% (from 67% in 2019).

The map to the right highlights the geographical spread of Primary Schools, of which currently 65% have a Year 6 25m attainment rate that is above the Black Country average. This figure is a fall in comparison to the previous year (77%), given overall attainment remains consistent with previous years there appears to be a growing disparity across schools in the borough. As was the case in 2019, above average schools fall largely around the border of the authority and in the more affluent areas.

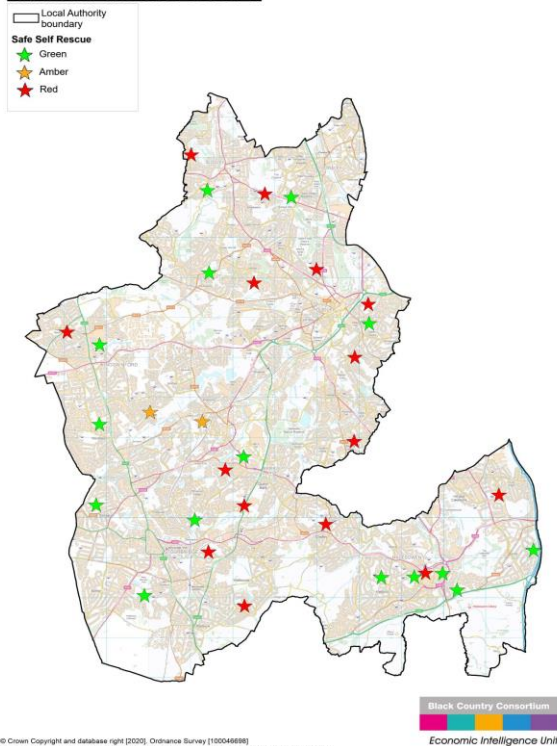
Nearly one in four Dudley schools have a figure above 90% with several examples (such as The Glynne and Church of Ascension) where all pupils are able to meet the 25-metre requirement.

Schools in Dudley currently spend £45,970 of their Primary PE and Sport premium on additionality for swimming with 41% of schools investing some of their funding on swimming in the borough, an increase of 9 percentage points compared to the previous year (32%).

25M ATTAINMENT - DUDLEY



SAFE SELF RESCUE - DUDLEY



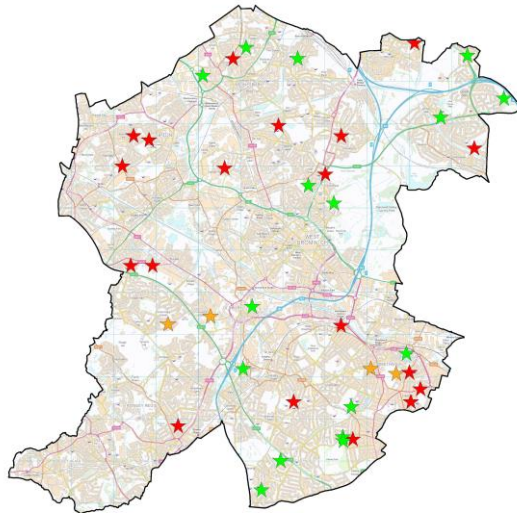
The borough has seen a slight decrease in the number of children able to perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations, with a fall to 51% (2020) from 53% (2019).

The map highlights the geographical spread of Primary Schools, of which 52% have an above Black Country average figure, again these schools fall largely around the border of the authority and in the more affluent areas.

There are a small number of Dudley Primary Schools (9%) who, despite providing data for swimming attainment, did not report their safe self-rescue figures.

Sandwell

25M ATTAINMENT - SANDWELL



For the second consecutive year Sandwell has seen an increase in the number of children able to swim 25 metres in Year 6, increasing from 53% (2019) to 57% (2020). This figure remains lower than the Black Country average for 2020.

The map to the left highlights the geographical spread of Sandwell Primary Schools, with 53% of schools having an above Black Country average number of Year 6 pupils who can swim a minimum of 25 metres.

Schools in Sandwell currently spend £97,221 of their Primary PE and Sport premium on additionality for swimming with 54% of schools investing some of their funding on swimming in the borough, this figure remains broadly consistent with data from the previous years (52% in 2019).



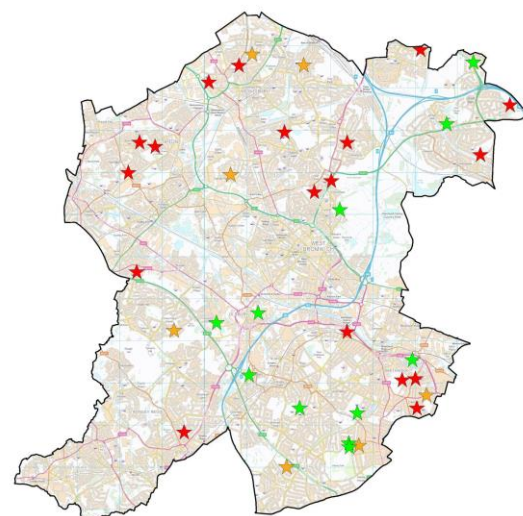
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Sandwell has seen an increase in the number of children able to perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations to 52% (from 48% in 2019)

The map to the right demonstrates that 40% of Sandwell schools have an above Black Country average figure in relation to water safety. There are clear pockets, notably around the north west of the borough, where these figures fall below the Black Country average.

In line with the rest of the Black Country authorities, water safety remains the area with indicator with the lowest competency level out of the 3 criteria.

SAFE SELF RESCUE - SANDWELL



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Walsall

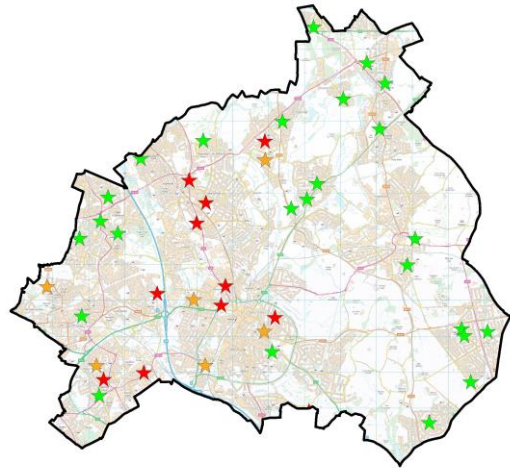
Walsall has seen a considerable rise in the number of children able to swim 25 metres in Year 6, increasing from 59% (2019) to 67% (2020).

The map to the left highlights the geographical spread of Walsall Primary Schools, with 65% having an above Black Country average proportion of Year 6 pupils who can swim a minimum of 25 metres. As with previous years, these schools fall largely around the border of the borough and in the more affluent areas.

Nearly a quarter of Primary Schools (23%) have a figure above 90% (Including Pheasey Park Primary with 100%) where all pupils are able to meet the requirement.

Schools in Walsall currently spend £73,132 of their Primary PE and Sport premium on additionality for swimming with 46% of schools investing some of their funding on swimming in the borough, an increase of 7 percentage points compared to the previous year (39%).

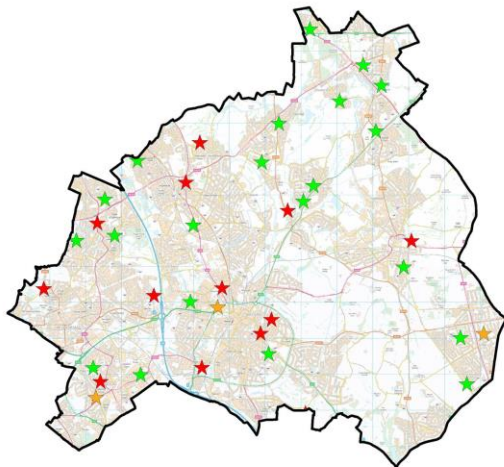
25M ATTAINMENT - WALSALL



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SAFE SELF RESCUE - WALSALL



Walsall has seen an increase in the number of children able to perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations rising to 56.8% (from 48% in 2019). This figure is now higher than the Black Country average (54%).

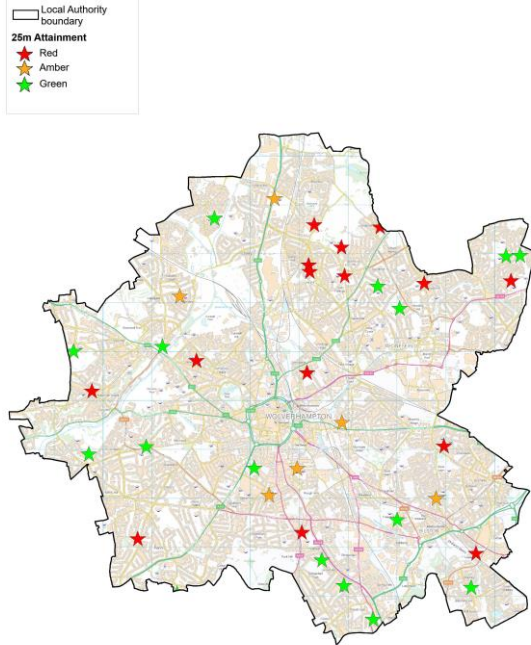
The map to the right demonstrates that 55% of Walsall schools have above Black Country average competency in relation to water safety. These schools fall largely around the border of the borough, a point further supported in *Section 6* of this report.

There are a small number of Primary Schools (8%) who despite providing data for swimming attainment did not report their safe self-rescue figures.

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25M ATTAINMENT - WOLVERHAMPTON



Wolverhampton has seen an increase in the number of children able to swim 25 metres rising from 56% (2019) to 61% (2020).

The map to the left highlights the geographical spread of Primary Schools, with 49% of schools having an above Black Country average number of Year 6 pupils who can swim a minimum of 25 metres.

Approximately one in six Primary Schools (13%) have a figure above 90%.

Schools in Wolverhampton currently spend £104,017 of their Primary PE and Sport premium on additionality for swimming with 57% of schools investing some of their funding on swimming in the borough, an increase of 32% compared to the previous year (25%).



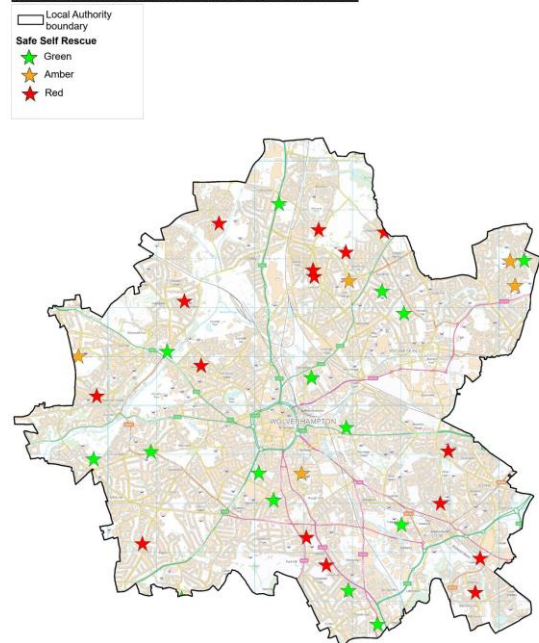
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Wolverhampton has seen a considerable increase in the number of children able to perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations rising to 55% (from 37% in 2019). This figure is now in line with the Black Country average (54%).

The map to the right demonstrates that 46% of Wolverhampton schools have an above Black Country average competency rate for water safety with a reasonably even geographical spread throughout the city.

Only one Primary School, despite providing data for swimming attainment, failed to report their safe self-rescue figures.

SAFE SELF RESCUE - WOLVERHAMPTON



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Section 6: Comparative Analysis

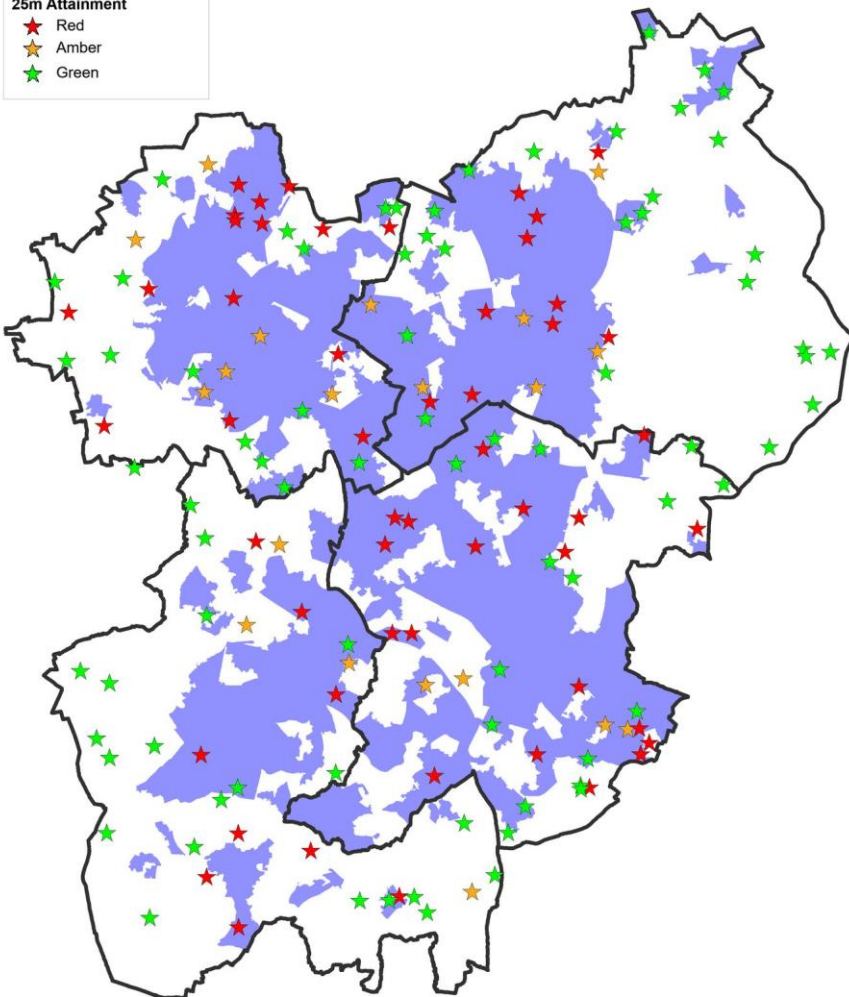
This section will examine the relationship between swimming proficiency, water safety and deprivation, focusing on Active Black Country's eight priority wards, selected in part due to being amongst the most deprived parts of the region along with their high levels of inactivity, LSEG population, proportion of children and young people.

The following maps have RAG rated schools in relation to the data they have self-reported for 25m attainment and water safety amongst year 6 pupils. Schools rated as **Green** denote those performing more than 5 percentage points above than the Black Country average, schools in **Orange** performed 5 percentage points either side of the of the Black Country average whilst schools in **Red** performed more than 5 percentage points below the Black Country average for the indicator in question.

Deprivation

25m Attainment

25M ATTAINMENT



**65% of RED
rated schools
fall within
deprived areas**



**25m
proficiency in
schools in
deprived areas
is 55%**

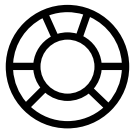
Schools in deprived areas are considerably more likely to have lower 25m attainment levels than those in other parts of the Black Country. Whilst this is consistent with findings from last year, the gap has actually widened over the last 12 months.

Schools in non-deprived parts of the Black Country have an average 25m attainment rate of 70% compared to 55% for schools in deprived areas, a gap of 15 points. Last year, analysis showed that the gap was 13.6 points.

Water Safety



**53% of RED
rated schools
fall within
deprived areas**

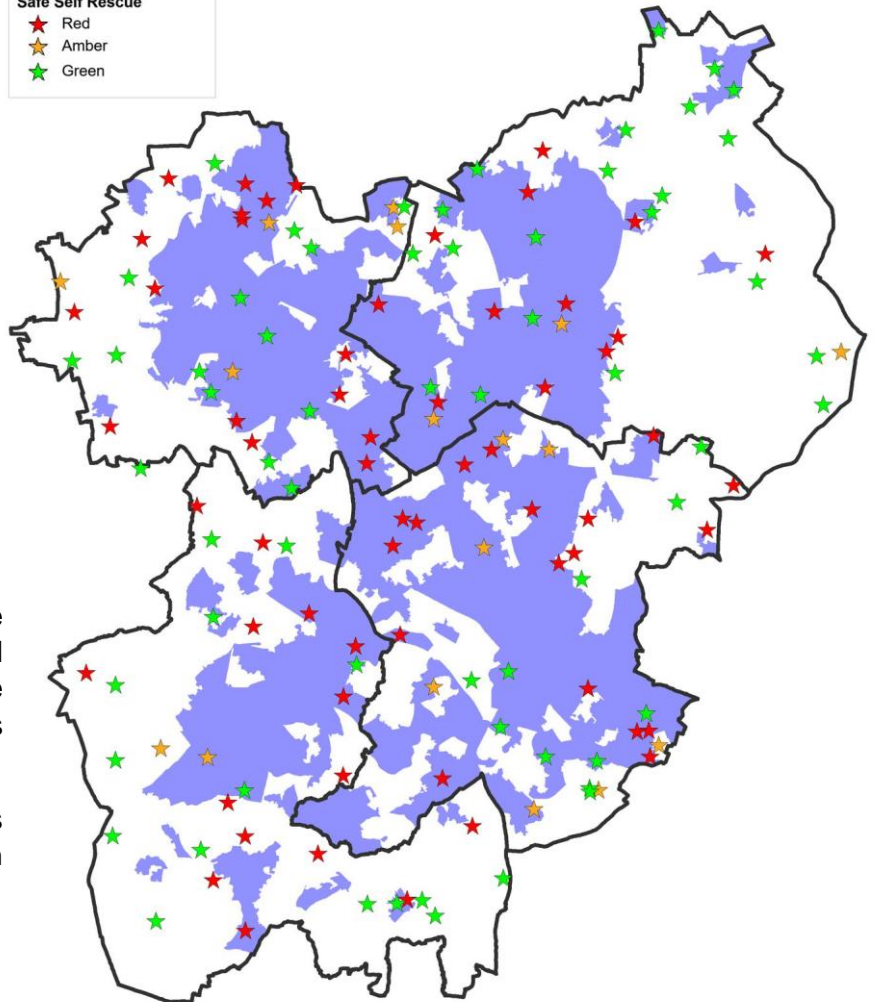


**50.4% of pupils
in deprived
areas can
perform safe-
self rescue**

Whilst there is still a gap between the ability of pupils from deprived and non-deprived areas to perform safe self-rescue, this is not as notable as the gap for 25m proficiency.

There is a gap of 6 percentage points between self-rescue ability rates in schools from these two areas.

SAFE SELF RESCUE



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373

Primary
Schools in
the Black
Country

154

Published
swimming
performance
data in 2020

-6

Compared
to 2019

Priority Wards

13 of the schools that published data in relation to the Sport Premium in 2020 are located in one of the 8 wards that have been identified by Active Black Country as priority wards due to having particularly high levels of inactivity, deprivation and proportion of children and young people and those from lower socio-economic groups. The table below shows the difference in reported rates 25m attainment and water safety for schools within priority wards, compared to those located elsewhere.

	25m Attainment	Water Safety
Schools in Priority Wards	45.2%	48.7%
Schools in Non-Priority Wards	64.7%	54.1%
Performance Gap	19.5 points	5.4 points

Whilst the performance gap for water safety is comparable to the gap noted across schools in deprived and non-deprived areas, there is notably wider gap when looking at 25m attainment, with year 6 pupils at schools in priority wards being considerably less likely to be able to swim 25m than those elsewhere in the Black Country.

Active Black Country are embarking on a pilot project within these 8 wards in 2021 that will look to explore the different elements of the physical activity system that impact positively and negatively on activity rates and will test approaches informed by an extensive consultation exercise. This analysis will contribute to the wider evidence base with a view to creating a framework for system change that encompasses our partnerships across *Communities, Health and Wellbeing, Education and Workforce, Skills and Employment*.

For more information on the ABC Priority Wards, explore the [Active Black Country Insight Hub](#).

Section 7: Conclusions

The full impact of Covid-19 on activity rates is yet to be established. Whilst national and local Active Lives data indicates a drop-off, the period of data collection only covers the very start of the initial national lockdown, and there are realistic fears that the actual impact could be much more damaging and no sport has arguably felt this greater than swimming.

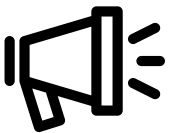
In light of this, some of the data presented in this report can be viewed positively;

- The proportion of year 6 pupils in the Black Country able to swim 25m has increased over the last 12 months from 59% to 63%.
- The proportion of pupils able to demonstrate a range of strokes have improved from 55% to 57% of the course of the last year
- Water safety has improved considerably amongst year 6 pupils over the last year, with 54% of the Black Country cohort now able to demonstrate safe self-rescue, an increase of 6 percentage points compared to 12 months ago.

However, whilst there is a demonstrably positive direction of travel regarding the key stage 2 attainment targets, there is still considerable work to be done. Approximately 4 in 10 Black Country pupils in Year 6 don't meet the required swimming standards as set by the national curriculum. The data that has been published by schools and collated by ABC shows that the performance gap between schools in the most deprived parts of the Black Country and those elsewhere in the region is widening considerably. Our report last year indicated an achievement gap of 13.6 percentage points; this now stands at 15 points and our analysis in priority wards suggests that, as deprivation is more entrenched and severe, so too is the impact on the attainment targets. As referenced in Section 3, there is a clear reticence amongst some schools in terms of returning to the pool and it is unclear at this stage whether that will widen the gap further. We also know that, due to centres being closed for large periods of time, many pupils will not be benefitting from non-school swimming either.

In light of these inequalities in opportunity and the ongoing uncertainties regarding future availability of waterspace due to COVID-19 related restrictions, Active Black Country have consulted with Local Authority partners to develop a series of action points for the year ahead.

Action Points



Swimming Campaign

This report highlights the clear gap in swimming proficiency between deprived and less-deprived areas. Whilst there is some uncertainty around swimming provision over the next year, it is anticipated that as we move into warmer seasons and more of the population have access to vaccinations there will be an easing of current limitations on activity. Active Black Country will work with local partners to support both schools and leisure providers by coordinating a campaign with family-oriented messages that encourages people back to the pools with a view to raising awareness of the recommended levels of swimming ability for young people.



Local Action Groups

An action from last year's report was to develop Local Action Groups. Due to the closure of pools, schools and the COVID-related redeployment of colleagues from Public Health teams, plans for this were postponed. However, in 2021 ABC will work with our Local Authority partners and education networks to develop local networks and associated action plans with a view to reducing barriers to schools in the most deprived part of the Black Country, improving communications between schools and providers and identifying any possibilities around driving efficiencies with regard to transport.



Workforce Support

Active Black Country are embarking on a refresh of our Sector Skills Plan, ensuring we have a substantial evidence base to inform our offer to the workforce that tackles inactivity in the region. The workforce for both schools and leisure providers will be given the opportunity to contribute to this exercise which will inform a wider refresh of our strategy to tackle inactivity in the Black Country.



Commonwealth Games

The forthcoming Commonwealth Games in 2022 provides us with a golden opportunity to inspire a generation to be more active. The Aquatics Centre for the event is being built in Sandwell and significant work is being undertaken to ensure the games provides a legacy that will enable everyone to have the opportunity to enjoy swimming in the borough for years to come. A key objective of this legacy work is *to increase the number of pupils and adults achieving the KS2 requirements for swimming and water safety*. The plan is looking to include;

- Implementing a suitable and effective delivery model for school swimming
- Offering an extended programme of activity for those unable to achieve the KS2 target
- Establishing a programme of training and upskilling opportunities for all those involved in the delivery of school swimming and water safety
- Raise awareness of the importance of school swimming and water safety

These objectives are consistent with the actions identified in this report and provide us with a timely and tangible opportunity to push this agenda.



Ongoing School Support

Education is one of the four key strategic themes through which Active Black Country seek to address the tackling of inactivity in the region. We will continue to;

- Encouraging Schools to publish accurate timely data on the 3 reporting requirements
Encouraging schools to share/promote best practice so this can be cascaded across the region.
Explore how, as a region, we can raise standards around water safety, particularly given the density of canals and open water across the region