

Insight provided by



**Active**  
Black Country

# Primary School Swimming in the Black Country 2021

*In partnership with Association for Physical Education (afPE) and Swim England*

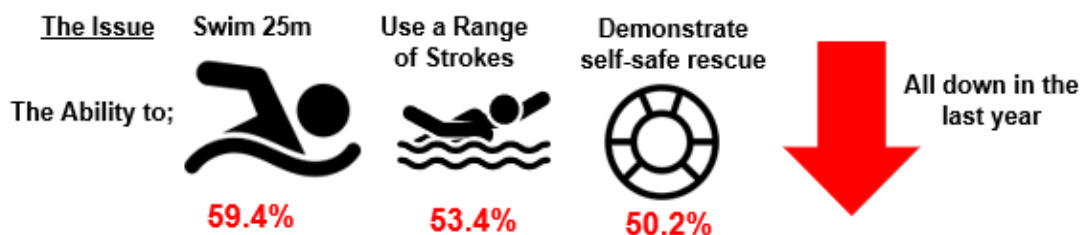
## Introduction

The impact of Covid-19 is not limited to one area. An overburdened healthcare system, a global economic downturn and essential distancing measures that have had an immensely negative social impact are some of the more high-profile consequences, however data is being released on a seemingly daily basis that sheds further light on some of the wider and less discussed effects.

Sport England's Active Lives Survey has demonstrated that inactivity rates in the Black Country, which were already the highest in the country, have got worse. It would now require more than an additional 90,000 adults being active for at least 30 minutes a week for the area to just be on a par with the national average.

## The Black Country Challenge

This is also reflected in the data presented as part of this year's version of *Primary School Swimming in the Black Country*, with all three indicators in relation to the minimum Year 6 swimming requirements demonstrating a downturn. Alongside the shocking statistic that 1 in 3 adults in England cannot swim, there is a clear issue that needs to be addressed.



## What is Required of Primary Schools?

All Primary Schools are required to provide swimming and water safety instruction to their pupils in either Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2.

## Why this is important?

Aside from the established health benefits of being more active and the importance of developing a positive relationship with activity from a young age, the ability to swim is a key life skill. Mapping demonstrates that all Black Country schools are located within walking distance of open water, therefore this is an issue that we must address collectively.

Swimming is still one of the most popular traditional sports in this country and there is also a real opportunity off the back of the 2022 Commonwealth Games, with the new Aquatics Centre (the only new build facility developed for the games) in Sandwell, it's essential we take advantage of heightened interest as a result.

Active Black Country will be working with partners across Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton **to make 2022 a transformational moment, creating a more prosperous, active and healthy future for the people of the Black Country**

**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.

## National Curriculum Swimming Standards

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

The report acknowledges that the past 12 months has been incredibly challenging for schools to deliver swimming provision and as a result, the vast majority of schools have been unable to provide any provision for their pupils.

## 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 31<sup>st</sup> each year, and state the percentage of their Year 6 cohort that can achieve each of the three minimum requirements.

As some swimming 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.

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/>



Data to which reporting is required	
Has a swimming pool or access to a swimming pool?	Y/N
Is the pool open to the public?	Y/N
How many Year 6 pupils can swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25 metres?	Y/N
Total number of Year 6 pupils	Y/N
Percentage of Year 6 pupils who can swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25 metres	Y/N

Reporting Date	
Has your school met the reporting requirements for the reporting date?	Y/N
Has your school met the reporting requirements for the reporting date? If not, please explain why in the comments section.	Y/N
What percentage of your cohort met the reporting requirements for the reporting date? If not, please explain why in the comments section.	Y/N
What percentage of your cohort met the reporting requirements for the reporting date? If not, please explain why in the comments section.	Y/N
What percentage of your cohort met the reporting requirements for the reporting date? If not, please explain why in the comments section.	Y/N

**153** Primary Schools in the Black Country Published swimming performance data in 2021

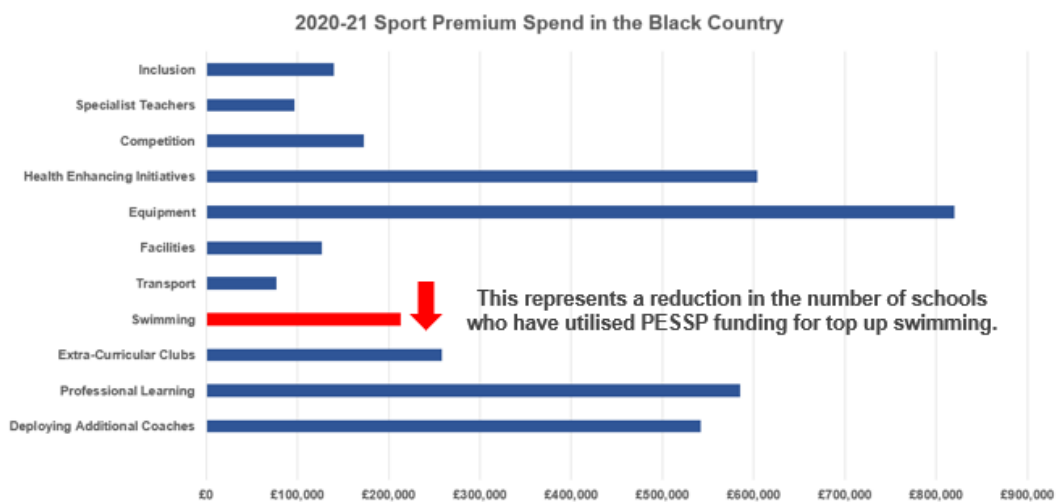
## Sport Premium – Analysis of Black Country Spend

The Primary PE and School Sport Premium (PESSP) 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 funding to provide additionality such as in the form of top up lessons or upskilling teachers in lesson delivery.

It should be noted given the challenges schools have faced with Covid-19 and multiple lockdowns taking place over the past 18 months a large proportion of schools have accumulated significant amounts of PESSP underspend. Given this DFE have allowed school to roll this investment into the 2021/2022 academic year.

ABC reviews all primary and special school (353) websites across the Black Country each year, with the latest review taking place between 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021 and 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021. As a result of the review, ABC found 52% of schools had their most recent offer (academic year 20/21) published on their website.

Approximately £212,791 was spent by Primary and Special Schools on additionality for swimming in the 2020/2021 academic year. The graph below indicates where schools utilised some of their funding during the 2020/21 academic year against a number of themed areas.



It's reasonable to expect that a number of these themed areas have experienced a downturn in spend over the last year due to covid. Schools have been prevented from using the funding on things like *Deploying Additional Coaches* (due to no external staff on school sites) and *Swimming* (due to the majority of pools being closed).

Only 38% of schools using any of their funding in this way compared to 46% in the previous year. The significant amounts of underspend that some schools have collated however does provide an opportunity to address some of the challenges the past 18 months has provided with an opportunity to utilise large amounts of investment to expand their top up or catch up programmes without impacting on their wider plans around their PE, Sport and Physical Activity offer.



## Key Indicators: Headline Findings

This section summarises the collective findings published by schools across the three key indicators.

### 25m Proficiency



Requirement	Black Country Rate	Change in Last 12 Months
Every child, by the time they are ready to leave Key Stage 2 is able to swim confidently, competently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25m	59.4%	-3.7 points

The proportion of Black Country pupils able to swim 25m in Year 6 has **decreased over the last 12 months from 63.1% to 59.4%**, however the rate is still higher than it was in 2019, pre-Covid.

This is calculated from an average of results published by **153** primary schools across the 4 local authority areas.

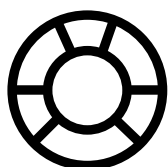
### Range of Strokes



Requirement	Black Country Rate	Change in Last 12 Months
Pupils should be able to make choices about the strokes used to achieve different outcomes, evidence alternating and simultaneous strokes and adapt strokes for a range of outcomes	53.4%	-3.2 points

There has been a reduction in the proportion of Black Country pupils who demonstrate the ability to perform a range of strokes, **falling from 56.6% in 2020 to 53.4% this year.**

### Water Safety



Requirement	Black Country Rate	Change in Last 12 Months
Every Year 6 pupil should be able to demonstrate safe self-rescue and evidence this in different water-based situations.	50.2%	-3.4 points

There is a clear need to increase the percentage of pupils who are able to perform safe self-rescue. Only half of the pupils in Year 6 are able to demonstrate;

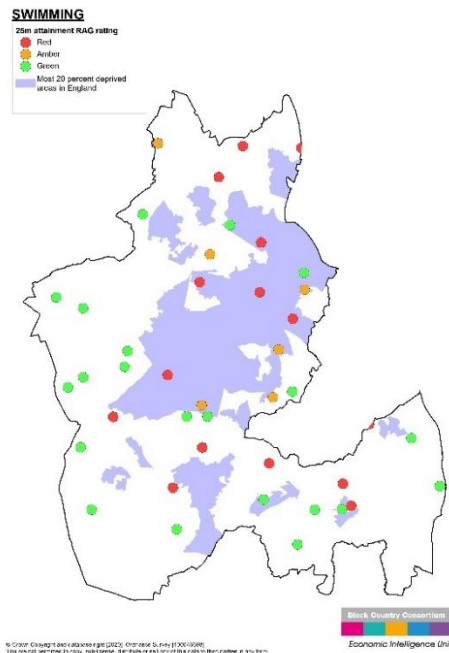
- Knowledge and understanding of water safety key messages
- Knowledge of how and when to use appropriate survival and rescue skills
- Understanding of local and national water hazards
- Knowledge of what to do if others get in trouble

## Local Analysis

### Schools in Dudley

#### - 25m Proficiency

The following map shows the geographical spread of schools that published data in relation to Year 6 25m proficiency.



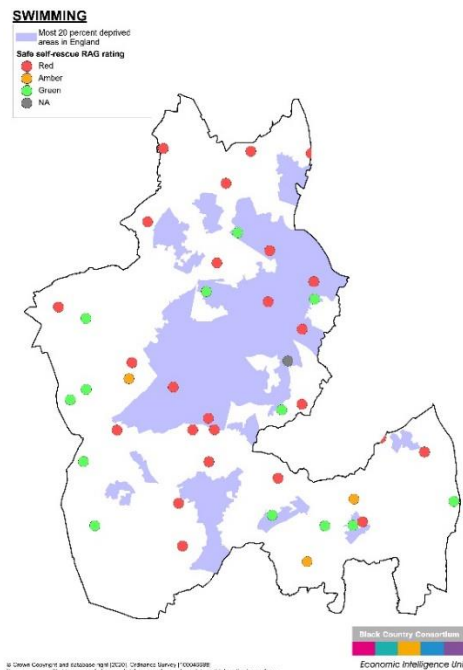
Dudley has seen a fall in the number of children able to swim 25 metres in Year 6 falling to 61.5% (from 67.7%). 65% of Dudley schools have an attainment rate above the Black Country average. As demonstrated in the map, above-average schools are more likely to be located on the border of the authority in the more affluent areas.

10% of Dudley schools have a figure above 90%, a reduction from 25% the previous year indicating that all schools have been impacted during the pandemic.

Schools in Dudley currently spend £73,432 of their Primary PE and Sport premium on additionality for swimming with 30% of schools investing some of their funding on swimming in the borough, a decrease of 11 percentage points compared to the previous year (41%).

#### - Water Safety

The following map shows the geographical spread of schools that published data in relation to Year 6 pupils who are able to demonstrate safe self-rescue.



For the second year running the borough has seen a further decrease in the number of children able to perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations, with a fall to 46% (2021) from 51% (2020).

37.5% of Dudley schools have an above Black Country average figure for this indicator. A reduction from 52% the previous year. These schools fall largely around the border of the authority and in the more affluent areas.

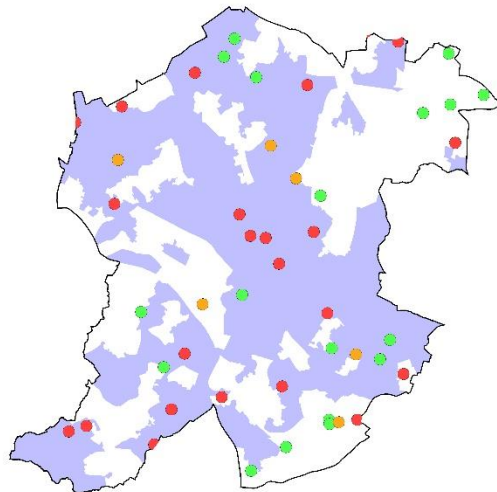
## Schools in Sandwell

### - 25m Proficiency

#### SWIMMING

25m attainment RAG rating

- Red
- Amber
- Green
- Most 20 percent deprived areas in England



© Crown Copyright and database right (2020). Ordnance Survey (100049990). You are not permitted to copy, re-use, distribute or sell any of this data to third parties in any form.

Black Country Consortium  
Economic Intelligence Unit

Sandwell has seen a decrease in the number of children able to swim 25 metres in Year 6, falling to 54% (2020) from 57% (2020). This figure is lower than the Black Country average for 2021.

51% of schools in Sandwell have an above Black Country average number of Year 6 pupils who can swim a minimum of 25 metres.

Schools in Sandwell currently spend £137,299 of their Primary PE and Sport premium on additionality for swimming with 50% of schools investing some of their funding on swimming in the borough.

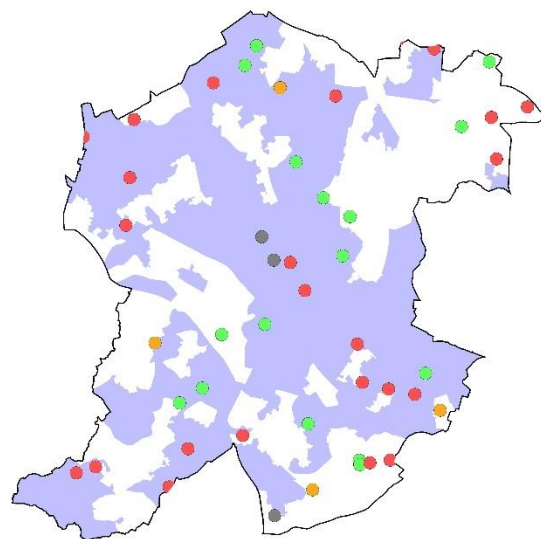
### - Water Safety

#### SWIMMING

Most 20 percent deprived areas in England

Safe self-rescue RAG rating

- Red
- Amber
- Green
- NA



© Crown Copyright and database right (2020). Ordnance Survey (100049990). You are not permitted to copy, re-use, distribute or sell any of this data to third parties in any form.

Black Country Consortium  
Economic Intelligence Unit

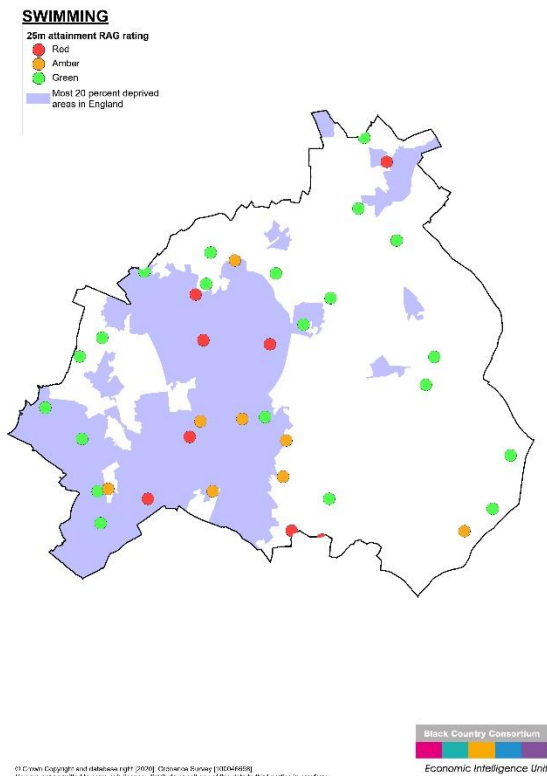
Sandwell has seen a decrease in the number of children able to perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations to 49% (from 52% in 2020)

43% of Sandwell schools have an above Black Country average figure in relation to water safety. This has increased from 40% in 2020. There are clear pockets, notably around the north west and south east of the borough, where these figures are comparatively lower.

In line with the rest of the Black Country authorities (excluding Wolverhampton), water safety in Sandwell has the lowest competency level out of the 3 criteria.

## Schools in Walsall

### - 25m Proficiency



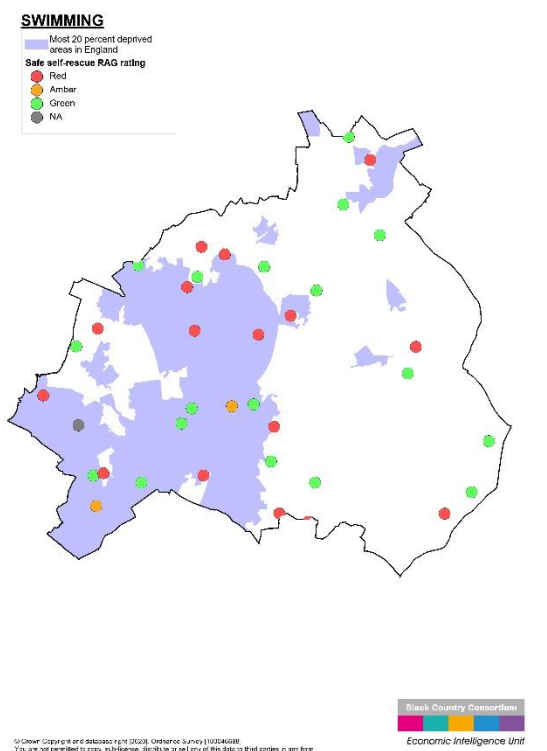
Walsall has seen a fall in the number of children able to swim 25 metres in Year 6, from 67% (2020) to 65%.

72% of Walsall schools have an above Black Country average proportion of Year 6 pupils who can swim a minimum of 25 metres. These schools are situated largely around the border of the borough and in the more affluent areas.

Only 13% of Primary Schools this year have a figure above 90%, falling from 23% in the previous year. A number of these are schools with pools located on site.

Schools in Walsall currently spend £55,000 of their Primary PE and Sport premium on additionality for swimming with 33% of schools investing some of their funding on swimming in the borough, a fall of 13 percentage points compared to the previous year (46%).

### - Water Safety



Walsall has seen a decrease in the number of children able to perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations falling to 48% from 56.8% (2020). This figure is now below the Black Country average (50%).

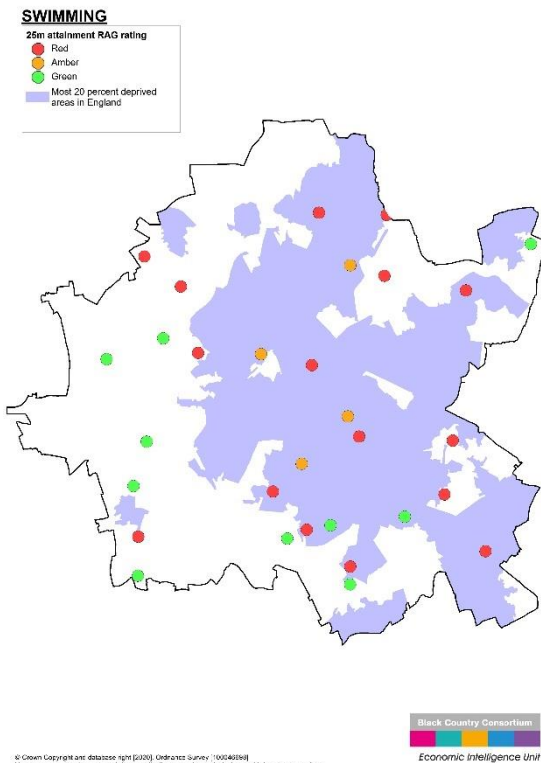
55% of Walsall schools have an above Black Country average competency in relation to water safety. This figure has remained consistent with the previous years data (55% in 2020) however 14% of schools indicated that no pupils were able to perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations in their data.

The majority of schools with below average attainment are located in the west of the borough.



## Schools in Wolverhampton

### - 25m Proficiency

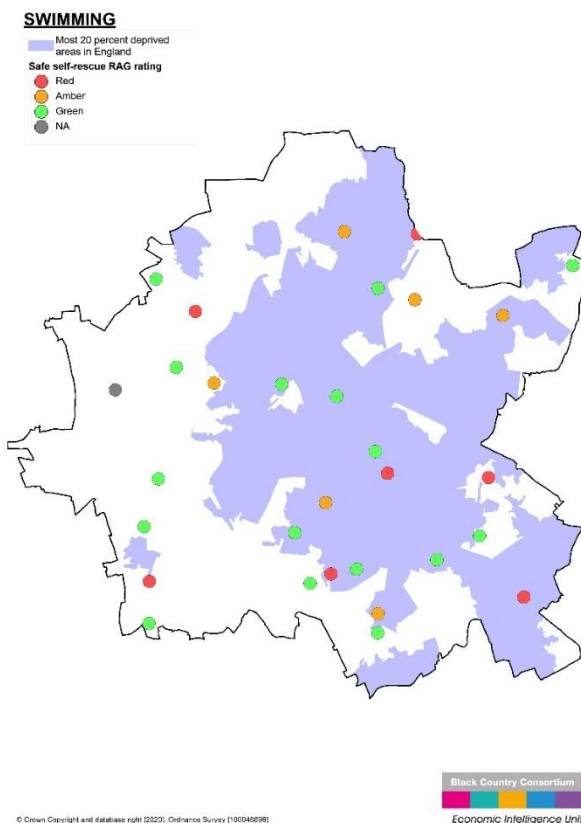


As with all other areas across the region, Wolverhampton has seen a decrease in the number of children able to swim 25 metres falling to 58% (2021) from 61% (2020).

41% of schools in Wolverhampton have an above Black Country average proportion of Year 6 pupils who can swim a minimum of 25 metres, a fall of 8% in comparison to the previous year (49% 2020). The north and south east remain the parts of Wolverhampton where attainment falls considerably below the rest of the city.

Schools in Wolverhampton currently spend £122,892 of their Primary PE and Sport premium on additionality for swimming with 36% of schools investing some of their funding on swimming in the city, a fall of 21% compared to the previous year (25%).

### - Water Safety



In line with the trend of recent years, Wolverhampton has seen a considerable increase in the number of children able to perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations rising to 59% from 55% (2020), continuing a positive direction of travel since 2019 (37%). This figure is now considerably above the Black Country average (50%).

The map to the left demonstrates that 65% of Wolverhampton schools have an above Black Country average competency rate for water safety, with a reasonably even geographical spread throughout the city.

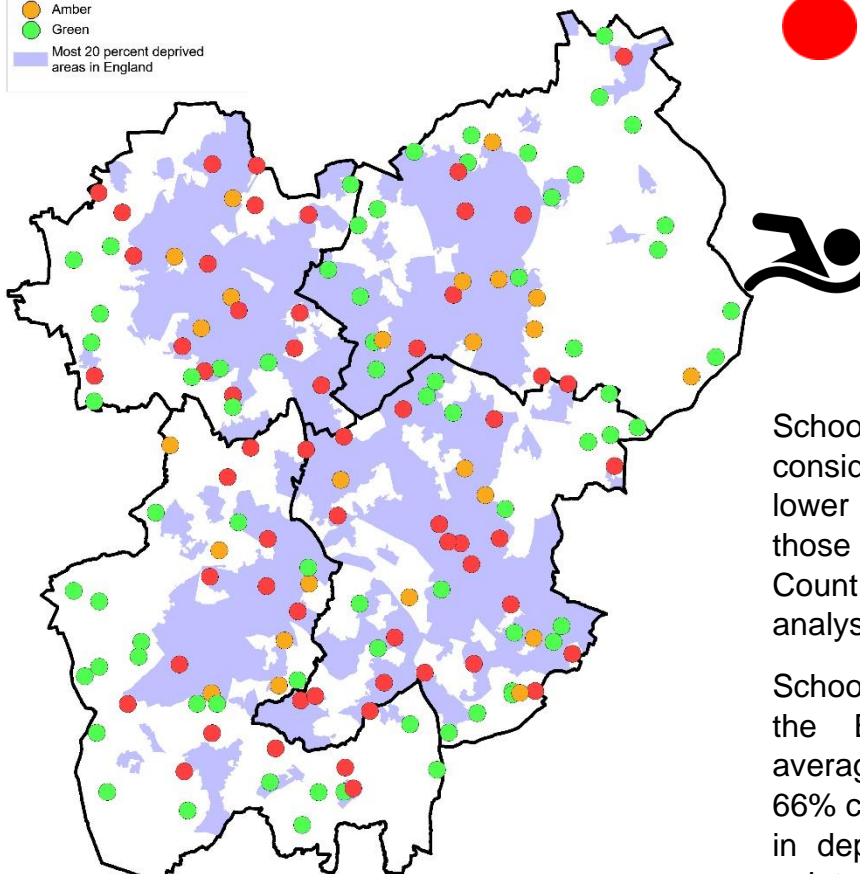
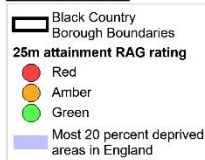
## Comparative Analysis

Previous learnings and analysis demonstrate the relationship between inactivity and wider inequalities and, each year, this report explores the relationship between swimming proficiency, water safety and deprivation. We also focus on the eight priority wards that form part of our Black Country Moving pilot, 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 and 25m Attainment

#### SWIMMING



**64% of RED rated schools fall within deprived areas**



**25m proficiency in schools in deprived areas is 53%**

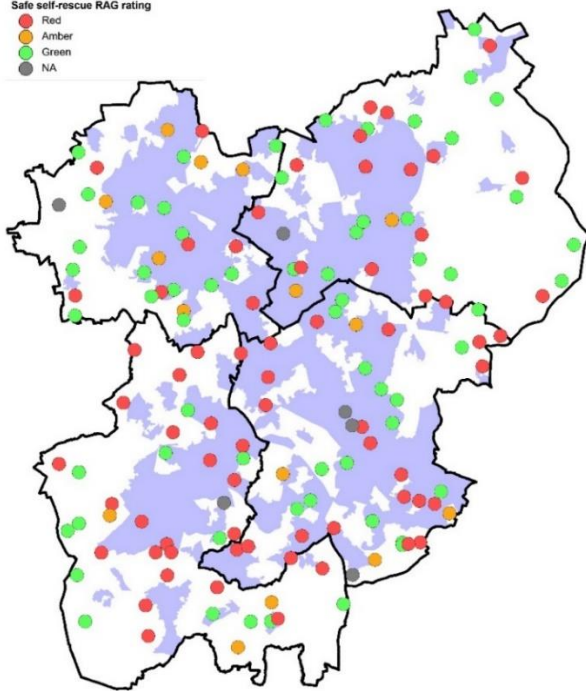
Schools in deprived areas are considerably more likely to have lower 25m attainment levels than those in other parts of the Black Country. This is consistent with analysis from previous years.

Schools in non-deprived parts of the Black Country have an average 25m attainment rate of 66% compared to 53% for schools in deprived areas, a gap of 12 points.

## Deprivation and Water Safety

### SWIMMING

- Black Country
- Borough Boundaries
- Most 20 percent deprived areas in England
- Safe self-rescue RAG rating
  - Red
  - Amber
  - Green
  - NA



© Crown Copyright and database right (2020). Ordnance Survey (100046998)  
You are not permitted to copy, sub-license, distribute or sell any of this data to third parties in any form.

Black Country Consortium  
Economic Intelligence Unit



**50% of RED rated schools fall within deprived areas**



**46.2% of pupils in deprived areas can perform safe-self rescue**

Consistent with last year's report, 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 4 percentage points between self-rescue ability rates in schools from these two areas – down from 6 points last year.

## Active Black Country Priority Wards<sup>1</sup>

14 of the schools that published data in relation to the Sport Premium in 2021 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.

% in Priority Wards who can Swim 25m



**54%**

Gap to Black Country Average

**7 Percentage Points**



Represents a considerable closing of the gap (**19.5 points last year**)

Whilst there has been a closing of the gap between schools in priority wards and the rest of the Black Country over the last 12 months (along with the gap to the most deprived areas), this is representative of a reduction in 25m proficiency at the top end of the spectrum, rather than improvements by those schools in priority areas. Covid has impacted considerably on the ability of many schools to find water time, thus bringing the overall average down.

<sup>1</sup> For more information on the ABC Priority Wards, explore the [Active Black Country Insight Hub](#).

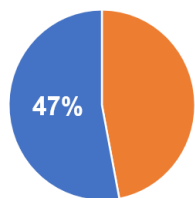
## Additional Insight

Whilst the data that schools have published provide us with key insight into performance across the three indicators, we recognise that additional context is required to better understand issues affecting local schools. The following section details the findings from local intelligence and engagement.

### ABC School Swimming Survey Results – November 2021

In November 2021 Active Black Country developed a survey to establish further local intelligence around primary school swimming. The survey went out to all BC primary schools and 115 provided information. Results are summarised below, Take combining this data with previous intelligence gathered from Black Country leisure providers;

**67%** of responding Primary Schools in the Black Country use Black Country leisure providers for their school swimming programme.



47% of schools intend to use Primary PE and Sport Premium funding for top up and additional swimming in this academic year (2021-2022).

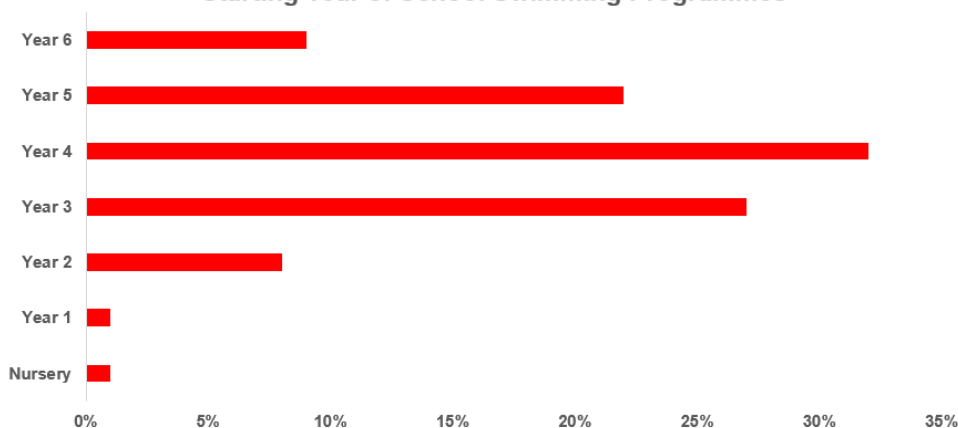


70% of schools stated that they would like to increase the amount of swimming provision that they offer.



71% of schools would be interested in accessing a subsidised pop-up programme for low ability swimmers.

Starting Year of School Swimming Programmes



The majority of school swimming lessons are **30 minutes** long (45%)

Active Black Country intend to repeat this survey on an annual basis to allow for more longitudinal analysis.



## Local Intelligence and Engagement – Swimming Action Groups

In October 2021 the Local Swimming Action Groups were held, consisting of a range of local stakeholders including local authority representatives, schools and Swim England. These were established to unpick the challenges facing primary school swimming locally alongside identifying existing good practice and to provide further context regarding the emerging headline data for 2021. Across the sessions over 55 organisations were represented with some of the headlines summarised below.



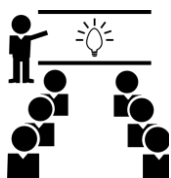
Not all schools access swimming facilities within their local authority area with some travelling across borders to access provision. Various reasons were given for this including a lack of pool availability at the required times and transport.



Concerns were raised around the range of experiences that schools have across the region, with some excellent and high-quality practice taking place but also concerns raised particularly regarding assessment processes. There is an inconsistent view in terms of what a *good* school sport offer from operators should be and it was agreed that there was a need to work together to develop a standardised offer for schools in the region.



There is an opportunity to shine a light and share some of the excellent practice and approaches such as those schools undertaking dry side water safety to enhance Safe Self-Rescue provision and how schools have utilised their PESSP funding with success. Further guidance was also requested for schools and pool providers to establish how best to utilise school staff at settings to maximise swimming progress.



There is a clear opportunity and demand from schools to upskill their school staff to further improve both the experience and resulting attainment levels of Children and Young People. There is scope to both coordinate this across the region, locally across each borough or city and as part of existing embedded networks run by partners or ABC.

Whilst a number of schools indicated no change to their provision and approach to swimming and have simply picked back up their pre pandemic swimming offer, a large number did identify an opportunity to reflect and amend their approach. Examples included schools bringing forward their swimming programme from Year 3, whilst others are focusing on Year 5/6 pupils who have missed out during the last two academic years.

There is a clear demand from schools to increase swimming opportunities either through their core offer or through additional lessons. The challenge facing schools is the available pool space, preventing them from increasing the amount of pool time or number pupils they can take swimming. This is particularly important for those schools where school swimming is likely to be the only opportunity for their pupils to learn to swim. There is a clear willingness from operators to not only help enhance school swimming provision in school time, but also look at ways to connect and offer further swimming opportunities.

## Conclusion

The full impact of Covid -19 is now only beginning to emerge and no sport has arguably felt this greater than swimming given the closure of pools and huge disruption to school swimming provision over a period of 18 months.

In light of this, it is important that whilst the headline data outlines a negative trend across all 3 indicators it is important to highlight there is a clear will from schools and pool providers to address this moving forwards. This report has tried to capture some of the wider context that sits behind the headline data this year through an additional school swimming survey and the local authority action groups which will help to create local action and implementation plans for each of the Black Country Local Authority areas.



For the 2021/2022 academic year, 8,400 of the current year 6 cohort of pupils in the Black Country were unable to meet the necessary national curriculum target of swimming 25 metres and nearly 9,600 were unable to demonstrate the key life saving skill of safe self rescue.



### Ambition

Swimming is every child's right and Active Black Country have the ambition for **ALL pupils leaving primary school to be able to swim competently and demonstrate safe self-rescue**. We therefore need to continue this work and use the forthcoming Commonwealth Games, and the fantastic new Sandwell Aquatic Centre, as the catalyst to provide more of our young people with this crucial life skill.



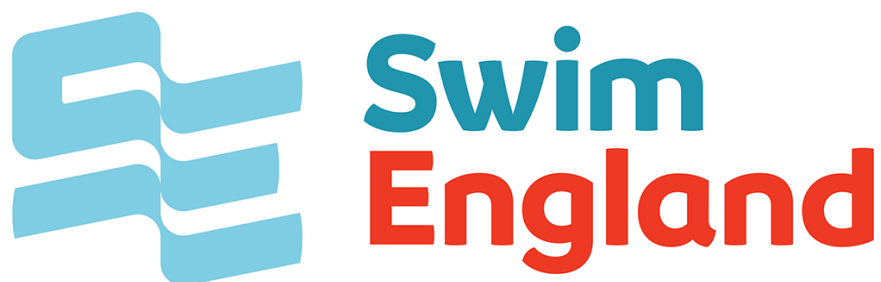
### Local Action Groups

It is imperative we build on the success of the inception meetings in October 2021 to ensure we can utilise the insight and intelligence gathered to address local challenges, identify, share and disseminate best practice to support the drive around improving attainment levels across all 3 indicators. As a result, these groups will continue to meet throughout the academic year.

It is clearly important that a balance is struck that supports year 6 pupils who have missed their school programme for swimming over the past two years to ensure they receive the appropriate catch-up programme. However, a longer term approach needs to be adopted by schools across the region, that enables children to swim for longer and at an earlier age to ensure they have the best possible opportunity to meet the necessary national curriculum levels when leaving primary school. The recent Primary School Swimming audit provides ABC and partners with the opportunity to analyse the data around when and where every school goes swimming. This will be reproduced annually and will aide planning a more coordinated approach across LA areas.

“Swim England support the plans made by Active Black Country in taking school swimming and water safety seriously. The proactive approach to addressing local challenges and the predicted down turn in attainment figures, using targeted interventions, is going to be fundamental in improving attainment throughout the area.

With next year’s Commonwealth Games also taking place in the area, this provides an ideal opportunity for Swim England and Active Black Country to work in collaboration and work towards inspiring the next generation into aquatics.”



Creating a healthy, active region



**For further information please contact;**

**Michael Salmon** – [Michael\\_salmon@blackcountryconsortium.co.uk](mailto:Michael_salmon@blackcountryconsortium.co.uk)  
Head of Insight, Health and Wellbeing

**Tim Aldred** – [Tim\\_aldred@blackcountryconsortium.co.uk](mailto:Tim_aldred@blackcountryconsortium.co.uk)  
Education Partnership Officer