# Black Country Pop Up Pool Programme
# Evaluation and Learning Report

## About Us

Active Black Country is the Active Partnership for the Black Country region providing the strategic leadership for sport and physical activity across the areas of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

We believe that being active has the power to improve people's lives, that it is everyone's right to be active and play sport and that everyone in the Black Country has equal access to the benefits of a more active, healthy life.

For more information about Active Black Country, and to read our strategy *Creating an Active Black Country*, please visit http://www.activeblackcountry.co.uk

## Contents

# The Context

The Black Country is the most inactive part of England. Located at the heart of the country, this is an area with entrenched pockets of health inequalities and severe deprivation that result in low levels of disposable income, a high proportion of residents with one or more long-term limiting illness or condition, high levels of social isolation and levels of life-expectancy and healthy life-expectancy that are considerably lower than the national average for both men and women.

Critically, health inequalities and activity patterns amongst adults are also reflected in our children and young people as displayed in Figure 1.

*Figure 1: Levels of Activity amongst Children and Young People*



Levels of Activity amongst Children and Young People
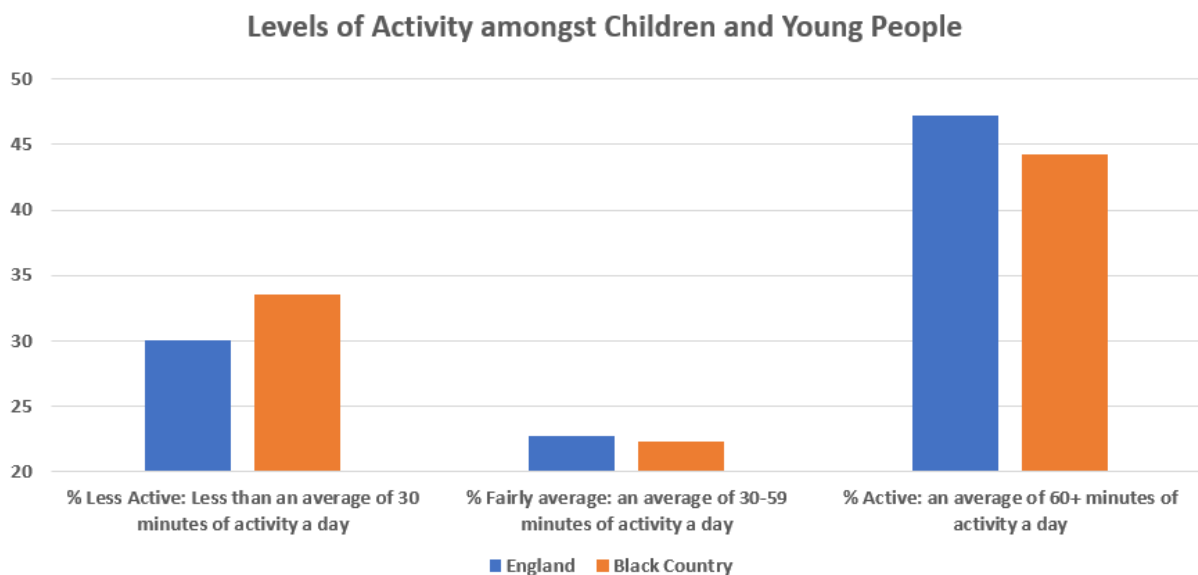
*Source: Active Lives CYP Survey, Sport England, Academic Year 21-22*

Active Black Country has a strong focus on ensuring the next generation grow up with positive attitudes towards being active. In contrast to its industrial past and some long-held perceptions, the Black Country is an area with large amounts of green space and is famous for its network of canal infrastructure. This, combined with the large number of lakes and reservoirs across the region, means that almost every primary school across Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton is located within walking distance of an open-water site and there have been all-too-regular stories of children getting into trouble when falling into water and, sadly, high profile incidences of accidental drowning. This is a situation that partners in the Black Country are committed to working to address.

Schools are tasked with providing 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 proficient across three key areas;

- *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*
- *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*
- *Every Year 6 pupil should be able to demonstrate safe self-rescue and evidence this in different water-based situations.*

COVID 19 had a considerably negative impact on the ability of Year 6 pupils to swim 25m in the years that have followed. Whereas an average of 6 in 10 pupils across previous years' cohorts were able to attain the required proficiency, in 2022 this dropped substantially to less than 5 in 10, as demonstrated in figure 2.

*Figure 2: 25m Proficiency in the Black Country*



**25m Proficiency in the Black Country 2018-2022**
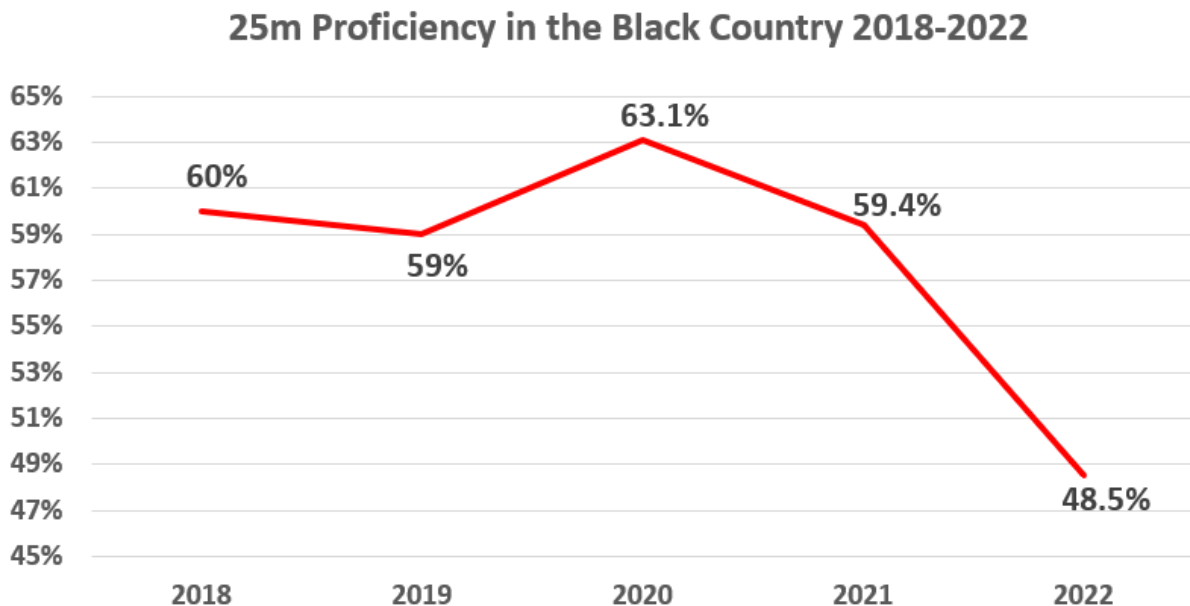
With more than half of young people leaving primary school without hitting the requisite target in relation to swimming ability, this equates to 10,169 children ending the first phase of their education unable to swim 25m. More alarming, is the data relating to safe self-rescue, displayed in Figure 3.

*Figure 3: Ability to Demonstrate Safe Self-Rescue*

## Ability to Demonstrate Safe Self-Rescue 2018-2022
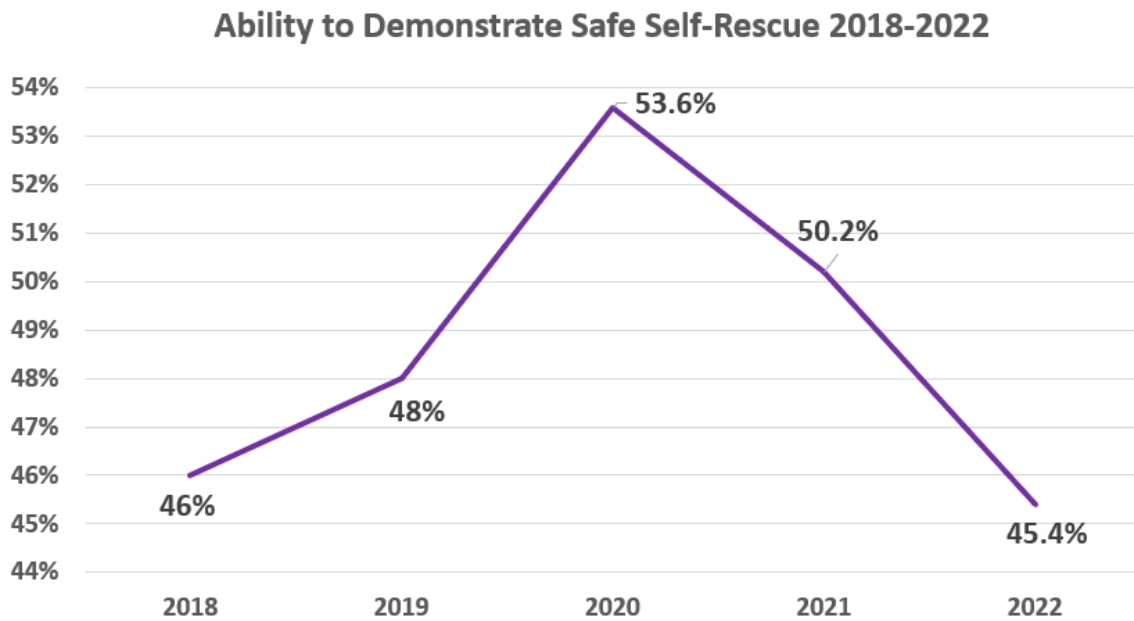


54.6% of children left primary school in 2022 unable to sufficiently demonstrate safe self-rescue, equating to 10,537 young people finishing Key Stage 2 without the requisite skills. We have a responsibility to find potential solutions to ensure children are adequately and appropriately prepared to be safe in and around water-based environments. The high levels of deprivation in the Black Country, and the increasing cost of living, mean that, for many children, the only opportunity they have to swim comes through activity timetabled into the school day. The programme evaluated in this report was developed to test and learn from the potential to provide intensive tuition to children through an above-ground pop-up pool structure, located within school grounds and accessible on a daily basis.

## What we did

Following the identification of this significant issue, whereby more than half of children are leaving Primary School unable to swim adequately or demonstrate safe self-rescue, a sequence of events have taken place that have led to the development of this piece of work.

**May-July 2022**

### School Consultation

Active Black Country worked with Local Authority partners to undertake primary research with primary schools across the area, to better understand existing swimming provision, barriers to reaching national curriculum targets and to explore thoughts around potential solutions that could address low levels of attainment against the 3 key performance indicators against which schools are benchmarked.

### Pop Up Pools

Through wider engagment with schools and their pupils, it became apparent that the existing school swimming offer alone wasn't providing young people with the requisite time in the water to develop the necessary skills and abilities. With access to private lessons prohibitive due to cost and limited capacity, ABC explored the potential of supplementary solutions, engaging with providers of pop up pools with a view to undertaking test and learn pilots at a sample of schools.

**September 2022**

### Partnership With Speedo – Swim United

Active Black Country developed a partnership with Speedo as part of their Swim United programme with a view to launching a Pop Up Pool Programme across selected schools in the Black Country.

**October 2022**

### Consultation with Partners

To ensure the project was undertaken efficiently and in accordance with all necessary guidelines, a series of discussions were had with Swim England and the Royal Life Saving Society, Local Authorities and Health and Safety teams across the region.

**January 2023**

## Delivery Partner Contracted

Following an invitation to tender process, the delivery partner were contracted for the project

**February-March 2023**

## Identification and Recruitment of Schools

Active Black Country has accumulated a plethora of data relating to primary school swimming over the last 4 years, with self-reported KPI data supplemented with an annual swimming survey that explores some of the context behind the data, along with a description of the existing aquatics offer provided by the school.

8 schools were initially identified and recruited to be part of the programme, 7 of whom went forward as partners on this programme

## Pre-Delivery

To engage the pupils prior to delivery, Michael Gunning undertook art classes with the children and pre-competency surveys were completed to enable swimming teachers to group people appropriately.

**April 2023**

## Media Launch Event

The programme was launched at Shireland Hall Primary Academy in Sandwell on 26th April 2023, as an intervention to help address what has become a crisis and risk to life for children in the UK.

## Delivery of Swimming Sessions – Phase One

Swimming lessons were delivered across two phases. Phase One commenced in May 2023 at Goldsmith Primary Academy in Walsall, St Mary's Catholic Primary Academy in Wolverhampton, Netherton CofE Primary School in Dudley and Shireland Hall Primary Academy in Sandwell. The programme was launched by Speedo Swim United Ambassadors Adam Peaty, Ellie Simmonds and Michael Gunning.

**June 2023**

**Delivery of Swimming Sessions – Phase Two**

The second phase of delivery commenced in June. St Marys retained their pool and continued sessions at the site whilst new cohorts started their programmes at St Lukes CE Primary in Wolverhampton, Tameside Primary Academy in Sandwell and Woodlands Academy of Learning in Walsall.

**July 2023**

**Post-programme Opportunities**

Through existing partnerships, incentives were provided by Local Authority run or managed leisure sites, to encourage children who had taken part in this programme to start using community facilities during the summer.

**August 2023**

**Evaluation Framwork**

All partners contributed to the development of an evaluation framework to ensure that all of the learnings and knowledge collated across the programme could be combined with the more quantitative data to develop a well-informed reflective piece post-project, with a set of recommendations and conclusions that could inform future actions and initiatives.

# The Delivery Model

Pop up pools were sited in 7 Black Country primary schools during the summer term of 2023 as detailed in figure 4.

*Figure 4: Participating Schools*

| School | Year Group | Term | Area |
|---|---|---|---|
| Goldsmith Primary Academy | 5 & 6 | Summer 1 | Walsall |
| Netherton CofE Primary School | 5 & 6 | Summer 1 | Dudley |
| Shireland Hall Primary Academy | 5 | Summer 1 | Sandwell |
| St Luke's CE Primary | 5 & 6 | Summer 2 | Wolverhampton |
| St Mary's Catholic Primary School | 5 & 6 | Summer 1 & 2 | Wolverhampton |
| Tameside Primary Academy | 6 | Summer 2 | Sandwell |
| Woodlands Academy of Learning | 5 & 6 | Summer 2 | Walsall |

**Water Time**

Pupils from across Years 5 and 6 were given an intensive programme of Learn to Swim, whereby they received 45 minutes of water time every day to develop their knowledge and skills. There were some exceptions to this; At Shirelands Hall Primary Academy, only pupils from Year 5 took part, whilst at Tameside Primary Academy the programme was limited to pupils from Year 6.

Most pupils had 3 weeks of lessons. Pupils at St Mary's Catholic Primary School had use of the pool across both summer terms, resulting in the Year 5 and 6 classes having double the amount of water time in comparison to the other schools.

**Lesson Structure**

Initial assessments were carried out on all pupils to understand their baseline aptitude across the following areas;

- How far they were able to swim unaided
- Ability to demonstrate a range of strokes (front crawl, backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly)
- Ability to demonstrate safe self-rescue

Lessons were then undertaken with pupils split into three groups dependent on their assessed aptitude.

**Lesson Plans**

Lesson plans were developed for each of the three groups, an example of which is provided in figure 5.

They incorporated clear learning objectives, a main activity, a contrasting activity and used a variety of resources to aid learning.

*Figure 5 : Example Lesson Plan*



# SWIMMING

| 01 | 06 | LEARNING OBJECTIVE<br>Can I perform front paddle over a distance? | RESOURCES<br>Floats, Sinkers, Noodles | AQUATIC SKILLS<br>Entry & Exit<br>Travel & Coordination  Floatation & Balance | ABILITY<br>Improvers |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| TIME | INTRODUCTION | TEACHING POINTS | PROGRESSION | KEY QUESTIONS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 min<br>5 min | **Entry**<br>1a) One at a time, children enter the pool.<br>**Warm Up — Submerge**<br>1b) Teacher places sinkers in the middle of the pool, children to collect a sinker by submerging and collecting the toy with their hand.<br>1c) Lesson breakdown | **Swivel Entry**<br>1. Hands at the side of your body<br>2. Turn your body facing the wall<br>3. Control your body down<br>4. Both hands on the rails<br><br>**Submerge**<br>1. Stand above the sinker<br>2. Jump up and sit down | Challenge — Submerge dive to collect the sinker | How do you successfully collect a sinker with your hand?<br><br>Can you give me some pool rules? |

| TIME | MAIN ACTIVITY | TEACHING POINTS | PROGRESSION | KEY QUESTIONS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 min<br><br><br><br><br><br>15 min | **Front Paddle — Water Confidence, Floating**<br>2a) Children travelling in waves, push off the wall with a float out in front focusing on body position and kicking action (glide for 3 seconds)<br>2b) Focusing on leg action, fast continuous kicking with little splashes<br>2c) **Challenge** — Face in the water followed by chin on surface with a streamline body and fast leg action<br>**Relay Races — Different Movements, Teamwork**<br>3a) Standing Position — Teacher to demonstrate correct arm action<br>3b) Children to perform a push and glide, after the glide perform arm and leg action to the other side of the pool<br>3c) Working in small groups, relay race. The quickest team WINS! | **Front Paddle**<br>B — Chin on surface/face in Body straight and long<br>L — legs straight, toes pointed and floppy ankles<br>A — Scooping hands, stretch out in front and pull back to chest (keep hands under the water)<br>B — Blowing bubbles/face in the water for 3 out for 3<br>T — Legs fast Arms slow | Front Paddle — Push and glide into strong arms and leg action<br><br><br>Relay Races — Perform a submerging push and glide into front paddle | How do you correctly perform front paddle?<br><br>What does streamline mean?<br><br>What is the correct timing when performing front paddle?<br><br>What is at the start of every stroke?<br><br>Why do you get into a pencil float? |

| TIME | CONTRASTING ACTIVITY | TEACHING POINTS | PROGRESSION | KEY QUESTIONS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 min<br><br>3 min | **Floating Sequence — Breathing and Movements**<br>4a) Children to practice a star, pencil and tuck floats on their front and back<br>4b) Children to perform a sequence of floats without touching the floor<br>4c) Review the lesson and exit the water | **Floating Sequence**<br>1. Perform 3 floats in a row (5 seconds on each float)<br>2. Feet off the floor for the entire time | Floating Sequence — Bring in rotation | Can you tell me how to perform each float with detail?<br><br>What have you learnt today? |

| SUBMERGE | FRONT PADDLE | RELAY RACES | FLOATING SEQUENCE |
|---|---|---|---|

**Final Assessment**

At the end of the *Learn to Swim* period, the swimming teachers carried out a final assessment on all pupils, using the same criteria and indicators that were used for the initial assessment, providing comprehensive pupil-specific data to demonstrate the impact of the programme.

# What We Learnt

The learnings from this project have been substantial and have been broken down across a number of interlinking categories.



This section of the report will explore each of these categories in more detail.

---

| Water Based Learnings | Impact on Ability to Swim 25m |

Figure 6 provides a summary of each schools' data in relation to the initial and final assessment of how far pupils could swim, along with an aggregated total for the programme.

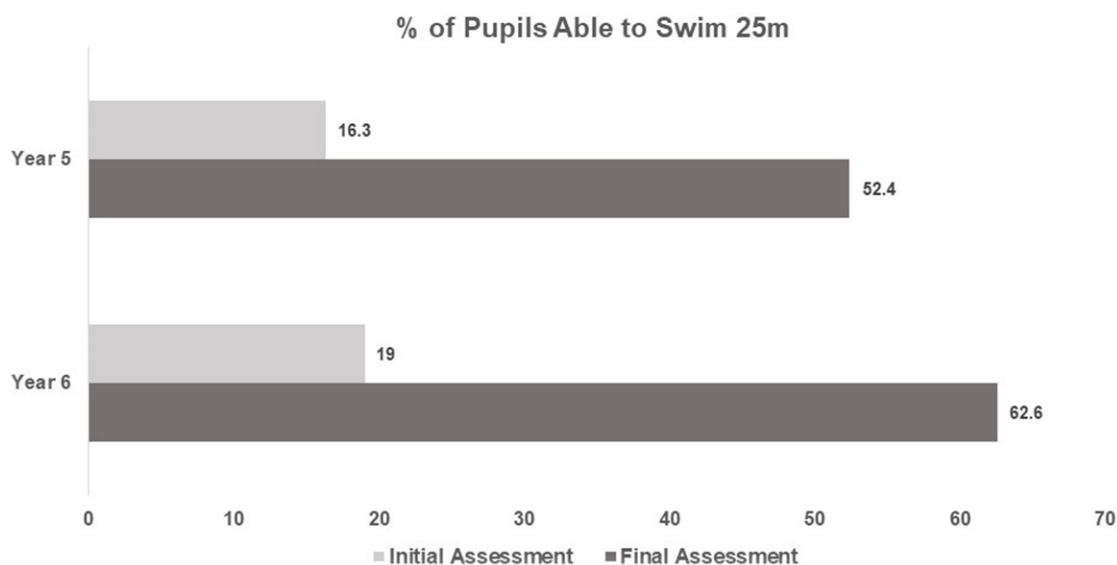*Figure 6: Assessment of Pupils Able to Swim 25m – All Pupils*

| School | Assessment % of Pupils Able to Swim 25m | | Percentage Point Increase |
|--------|---------|-------|---------------------------|
| | **Initial** | **Final** | |
| Goldsmith Primary Academy | 2.8% | 48.1% | 45.3 pp |
| Netherton CofE Primary School | 39.8% | 74.3% | 34.5 pp |
| Shireland Hall Primary Academy | 3.4% | 23% | 19.6 pp |
| St Luke's CE Primary | 7.5% | 21.1% | 13.6 pp |
| St Mary's Catholic Primary School | 32.8% | 79.8% | 47.0 pp |
| Tameside Primary Academy | 0% | 64.5% | 64.5 pp |
| Woodlands Academy of Learning | 26.4% | 84.3% | 57.9 pp |
| **Programme TOTAL** | **17.7%** | **57.5%** | 39.8 pp |

The delivery of the pop-up pool programme led to a considerable increase in the proportion of pupils able to swim 25m, following the intensive course. All schools experienced an increase of varying amounts. In total, across all sites, 296 additional pupils in the Black Country were able to swim the National Curriculum target length as a result of taking part in this initiative.

The following chart shows the difference in the data between Year 5 and Year 6 pupils.

*Figure 7: 25m Performance by Year Group*



% of Pupils Able to Swim 25m

- Year 5: Initial Assessment 16.3, Final Assessment 52.4
- Year 6: Initial Assessment 19, Final Assessment 62.6

■ Initial Assessment   ■ Final Assessment

There was clear progress across both cohorts, with slightly elevated figures amongst Year 6 pupils.

Whilst the ability to swim at least 25m was the set target, as decreed by National Curriculum guidelines, considerable learnings can be derived from analysis into pupil-specific information and through gathering an understanding of the total difference in metres that was achieved.

*Figure 8: Improvement in Ability to Swim*



**15.6m** The average improvement of pupils swimming ability on the programme was 15.6 metres

**41m** St Mary's Catholic Primary School, whose programme lasted twice as long as other schools, had a considerably higher improvement rate

The evidence suggests that those pupils who took part in the programme longer were more likely to improve their ability levels, however key caveats should be included. Pupils at St Mary's improved, on average, by 41m in terms of how much further they could swim at the end of the programme, compared to at the start. However, this reduces to 29.9m when removing the data of those who could

already swim 25m pre-programme. The table in Figure 9 provides further analysis, exploring the levels of improvement amongst swimmers across various initial ability points at all sites.

*Figure 9: Average Improvement in Swimming Ability across All Sites*

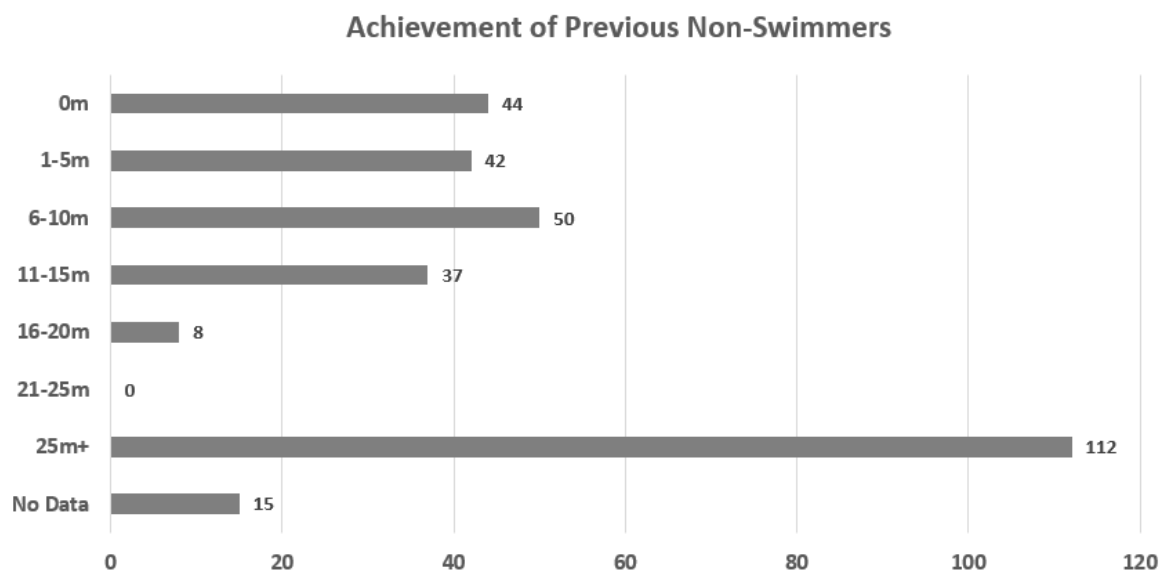| Initial Assessment | Average Improvement |
|---|---|
| 0m | 15.1m |
| 1-5m | 14.5m |
| 6-10 | 13.3m |
| 11-20m | 16.6m |
| 25m or more | 18.7m |

Those who had no swimming ability at the start of the programme improved, on average, to the point where they could swim 15.1m by the time delivery ended. More impressively, 112 young people went from 0m to 25m during the course of the programme, 93 of whom weren't St Mary's pupils (therefore had the pool for a shorter period of time).

*Figure 10: Improvement of Non-Swimmers*

# Of **308** swimmers who couldn't swim at all ➡ **112** could swim 25m after the programme

Further analysis breaks down the achievements of the 308 previous non-swimmers further in figure 11.

*Figure 11: End of Delivery Achievements of Children Who Could Not Swim, Pre-programme*



Achievement of Previous Non-Swimmers

| | |
|---|---|
| 0m | 44 |
| 1-5m | 42 |
| 6-10m | 50 |
| 11-15m | 37 |
| 16-20m | 8 |
| 21-25m | 0 |
| 25m+ | 112 |
| No Data | 15 |

The fact that the vast majority of children who previously couldn't swim at all were able to improve in this setting, with many improving to the National Curriculum standard for their age group, strongly suggests the need for future initiatives such as this to focus strongly or solely on non-swimmers.

## Summary of Ability to Swim 25m Learnings

| | |
|---|---|
| **Considerable Improvement in Swimming Ability** | The data collated from this programme demonstrates substantial improvements to the swimming ability of pupils that took part in the intensive learn to swim sessions, with 79.1% of participants demonstrating an increase in their ability to swim. |
| **Benefits to Non-Swimmers** | There is evidence to suggest that more focus should be given to non-swimmers. Of the 308 children who couldn't swim at all prior to the programme, 36.4% were able to swim 25m after the intensive course, with an average improvement of 15.1m amongst this cohort. Whilst pupils who were already good swimmers would still benefit from the water time, there is an argument that they shouldn't participate on a programme such as this. It should be noted that a key challenge of focusing on non-swimming is the recognition that schools have to balance opportunities for all pupils, making a targeted intervention difficult to implement. |

|

Swim England and the STA have a set of safe self-rescue outcomes, some of which are not deliverable in a pop-up pool. As part of this programme, the following water safety criteria were covered;

- o Performing the Heat Escape Lessening Position (HELP)
- o Performing the Huddle position
- o Treading water
- o Floating and resting in the water
- o Attracting attention

Two specific outcomes were not covered, due to the physical limitations of the facilities, these being;

- o Fall-in entry and recover to the surface
- o Swim 15m to exit the water unaided

Figure 12 provides a summary of each schools' data in relation to the initial and final assessment of the proportion of pupils who were able to demonstrate safe self-rescue. An assumption was made by the deliverer that all pupils were not able to demonstrate safe self-rescue at the start of the programme.

*Figure 12: Assessment of Pupils Able to demonstrate practical safe self-rescue – All Pupils*

| School | Assessment % of Pupils Able Demonstrate SSR | | Percentage Point Increase |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Initial | Final | |
| Goldsmith Primary Academy | 0% | 83% | 83 pp |
| Netherton CofE Primary School | 0% | 85.8% | 85.8 pp |
| Shireland Hall Primary Academy | 0% | 80.5% | 80.5 pp |
| St Luke's CE Primary | 0% | 79.2% | 79.2 pp |
| St Mary's Catholic Primary School | 0% | 87.4% | 87.4 pp |
| Tameside Primary Academy | 0% | 94.7% | 94.7 pp |
| Woodlands Academy of Learning | 0% | 89.3% | 89.3 pp |
| **Programme TOTAL** | **0%** | **85.4%** | 85.4 pp |

*Figure 13: Safe Self-Rescue Improvement*



**9 out of 10 Pupils successfully demonstrated safe self-rescue improvement on this programme**
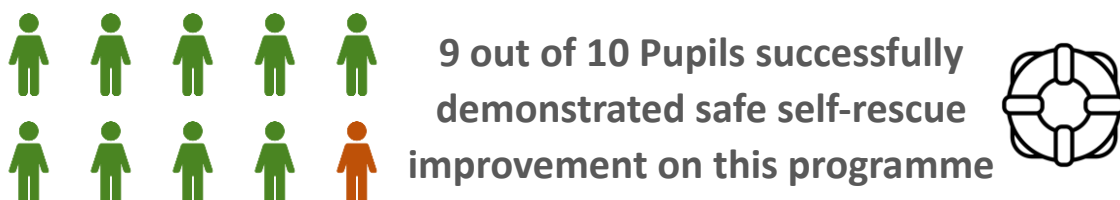
The vast majority of pupils who started the programme were able to demonstrate practical safe self-rescue by the end of the intensive course.

Consistent with the measures for swimming ability and demonstration of a range of strokes, a slightly higher proportion of Year 6 pupils achieved this mark, when compared to those in Year 5, as demonstrated in Figure 14.

*Figure 14: Safe Self-Rescue – analysis of year groups*

| Cohort | Number of Pupils | Assessment % Demonstrating Safe Self-Rescue | | Number of Pupils Improving |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Initial | Final | |
| Year 5 | 368 | 0% | 82.9% | 305 |
| Year 6 | 374 | 0% | 88% | 329 |

In total, 634 pupils were more equipped to be safe in the water as a result of taking part in the pop-up pool programme.

Pupils were also assessed on their theoretical knowledge of water safety via dry side learning that was integrated into the programme and utilised further during periods when the pool wasn't operational. Figure 15 provides a summary of the assessment results.

*Figure 15: Assessment of theoretical safe self-rescue*



% of Pupils who Demonstrated Safe Self-Rescue Theory

- Yes
- No

10.4

89.6
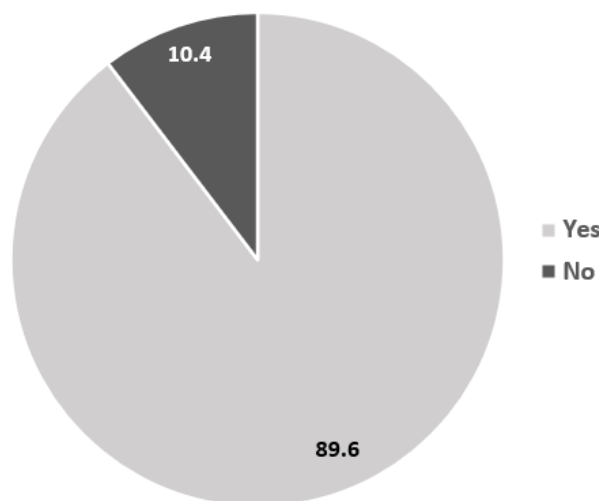
## Summary of Safe Self-Rescue Learnings

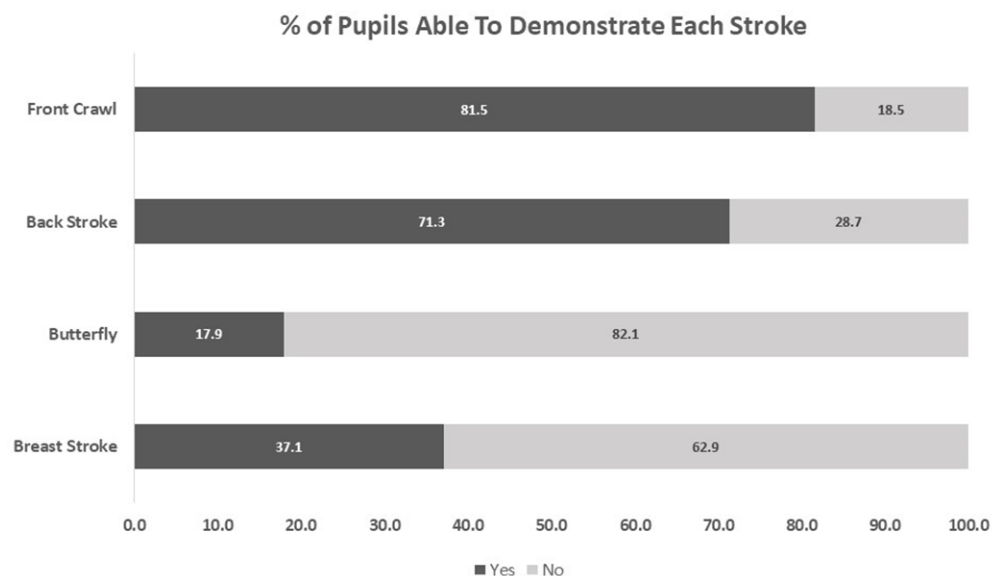| An effective way to teach practical and theoretical SSR | The data from the programme suggests that a 3-week intensive course is an effective way of delivering both practical and theoretical safe self-rescue. 9 out of 10 pupils on the programme effectively passed the assessments and are now more equipped to be safe in and around water. However, it must be noted that not all of the Swim England and STA safe self-rescue outcomes are deliverable using pop-up swimming facilities. |
|---|---|

Figure 16 provides a summary of each schools' data in relation to the initial and final assessment of pupils' ability to demonstrate a range of strokes, along with an aggregated total for the programme.

*Figure 16:  Assessment of Pupils Able to Demonstrate a Range of Strokes – All Pupils*

| School | Assessment % Demonstrating Range of Strokes | | Percentage Point Increase |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Initial | Final | |
| Goldsmith Primary Academy | 5.7% | 80.2% | 74.5 pp |
| Netherton CofE Primary School | 38.9% | 73.5% | 34.6 pp |
| Shireland Hall Primary Academy | 8% | 40.2% | 32.2 pp |
| St Luke's CE Primary | 1.7% | 35.8% | 34.1 pp |
| St Mary's Catholic Primary School | 28.6% | 86.6% | 58 pp |
| Tameside Primary Academy | 0% | 44.7% | 44.7 pp |
| Woodlands Academy of Learning | 3.3% | 78.5% | 75.2 pp |
| **Programme TOTAL** | **13.1%** | **64.4%** | 51.3 pp |

The programme supported the majority of pupils to develop their ability to demonstrate a range of strokes in the water. At initial assessment, only 13.1% were assessed as able to do this effectively, compared to 64.4% at the end of the programme, equating to 381 pupils improving. Analysis of the strokes that pupils were assessed against provides more information as demonstrated in Figure 17.

*Figure 17: Ability to Demonstrate the Four Strokes*



% of Pupils Able To Demonstrate Each Stroke

| Stroke | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Front Crawl | 81.5 | 18.5 |
| Back Stroke | 71.3 | 28.7 |
| Butterfly | 17.9 | 82.1 |
| Breast Stroke | 37.1 | 62.9 |

Swimming teachers focused more on front crawl and backstroke and this is reflected in the analysis, with considerably more pupils being able to effectively demonstrate these techniques in comparison to butterfly and breaststroke.

St Mary's had access to the pool for double the amount of time as other participating schools, therefore pupils had more time to develop their skills across the different strokes. Figure 18 shows the difference in assessment levels across this indicator for St Mary's and all other schools.

*Figure 18: Butterfly and Breaststroke*
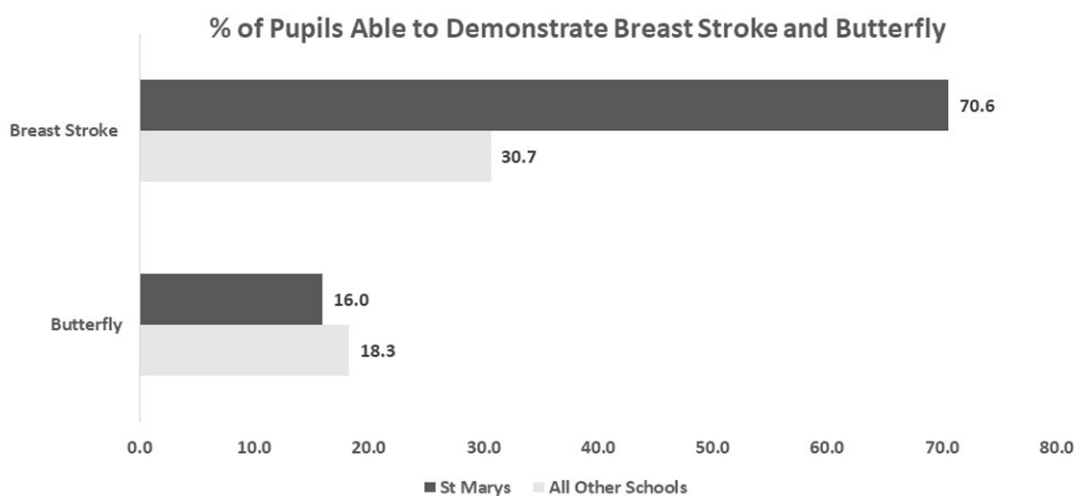


There is a clear difference in the proportion of pupils who had more water time demonstrating breaststroke compared to those who did not. This pattern is not mirrored with regard to butterfly, however this is the stroke that was given the least priority across the programme.

As with the previous indicator, the improvement was slightly more pronounced amongst Year 6 pupils than it was for year 5, however there wasn't a notable difference as demonstrated in Figure 19.

*Figure 19: Range of Strokes – Analysis of Year Groups*

| Cohort | Number of Pupils | Assessment % Demonstrating Range of Strokes | | Number of Pupils Improving |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | Initial | Final | |
| Year 5 | 368 | 13% | 62.2% | 181 |
| Year 6 | 374 | 13.1% | 66.6% | 200 |

Analysis of the data demonstrates that those unable to demonstrate a range of strokes improved their general swimming ability at a lesser rate than their peers as demonstrated in Figure 20.

*Figure 20: Swimming Ability of Pupils Unable to Demonstrate Range of Strokes*

**Of the 241 swimmers who couldn't demonstrate range of strokes**

**Their average improvement in swimming ability was 8.2m**

**Summary of Ability to Demonstrate Range of Strokes Learnings**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Programme improves range of strokes** | Analysis of initial and final assessment data indicates the model of delivery is an effective way of supporting young people to develop their ability to demonstrate a range of strokes. 381 pupils recorded improvements across the programme. |
| **More time required** | The nature and focus of the programme meant many pupils were unable to develop their skills across two of the four strokes. Participants were less efficient in using butterfly and breaststroke, however those who had longer time in the water showed marked improvements in the latter. |

A series of interviews were conducted with senior school staff following the programme. This was done to better understand positive and negative impacts on the school, both intended and unintended. Interviews were conducted with;

- Goldsmith Primary Academy
- Netherton CofE Primary School
- Woodlands Academy of Learning

Across the board, whilst positive and negative aspects of the pop-up pool offer were established, all schools interviewed for the evaluation described the programme as an overwhelmingly positive experience. The information provided below summarises the information that was collated.

# Savings to the School

There was consensus that the cost of a pop-up pool is broadly equivalent to that of taking children to a pool off-site, however the pop-up model allows for considerably more pool time. The real saving is in terms of time, regarding wider learning. One school said that pupils who currently go swimming off-site must have an early lunch, thereby affecting morning lessons, then they're out all afternoon despite only being on the pool for 30 minutes. The pop-up facility allows pupils to be in the pool for 45 minutes every day without eating into additional school time. With more consideration to programming, this potentially raises the prospect of more pupils from other year groups accessing the water across a half-term.

# Impact on Pupil Behaviour

There were notable examples of the programme having a positive effect on behaviour. One school had a Year 5 pupil who was at risk of exclusion and had been reduced to 1 timetabled hour per day at school. Due to his reduced hours, he wasn't originally scheduled to go into the pool but he'd expressed real enthusiasm and this was used by the school as an incentive, whereby if he exhibited the right behaviour and respect in school lessons he'd be allowed to take part. It was a massive hook for him and it impacted incredibly positively on his behaviour until the programme finished.

There were also reports of the pool improving pupils' punctuality. A school that was dealing with a perpetually late pupil (sometimes arriving as late as 11.00) decided to timetable their pool time for 9.00 and he always made it in to school on time as a result.

# Impact on Swimming

All schools were selected based on their low levels of attainment around the proportion of year 6 pupils being able to swim 25m and demonstrate safe self-rescue. For the 3 schools interviewed post-programme, the change has been considerable as demonstrated in the table below

| | 25m Attainment | | Safe Self-Rescue | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Pre** | **Post** | **Pre** | **Post** |
| **Goldsmiths** | 2.8% | 48.1% | 0% | 87.4% |
| **Netherton** | 39.8% | 74.3% | 0% | 85.8% |
| **Woodlands** | 26.4% | 84.3% | 0% | 89.3% |

Perhaps more significant than the improvement in KPI data is the less quantifiable change in levels of fear of swimming. Schools in deprived areas find that pupils are less likely to swim outside of curriculum time, and have real anxieties when it comes to getting into the water. The schools that took part in these interviews reported that many children were incredibly fearful before and during the first lesson, but because of the dedicated approach of the swimming teachers and the regularity of lessons, this went away quickly, with many children crying at the final session due to the lessons finishing.

# Building it Into the School Day
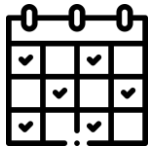
Schools are used to building a swimming offer into their timetable, however the regularity of pool-time afforded by this programme presented a unique challenge and this was addressed in different ways. In Netherton, teachers created a timetable whereby, all morning, 10 children would do their swimming at any one time, whilst the others focused on other areas of the curriculum. Core subjects were moved to the afternoon, thereby minimising educational disruption. An unintended impact of this was the improved targeted support that non-swimming children would have received in curriculum areas such as English and Mathematics, with less pupils being in the room at a given time. Whilst too early to analyse any related data, several schools cited the positive impact they anticipated on progress across these areas as a result.

# Increased Utility Costs

The increase electricity usage and the associated rise in utility bills will be a key consideration for schools with an interest in using pop-up pools. The information provided below relates to objective data provided by three of the primary schools that took part.

*Figure 21: Utility Costs of Programme*

| | Period measured | Electricity Units Used (kWh) | | % Increase in Usage | Extra Cost based on 34p per kWh |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **2022** | **2023** | | |
| **School 1** | 6 weeks | 5,735 | 17,886 | 211.9% | £4,131.34 – approx. £689 per week |
| **School 2** | 1 month | 6091.7 | 11,461.8 | 88.2% | £1,825.83 – approx. £412 per week |
| **School 3** | 2 months | 16,689.1 | 30,104.9 | 80.4% | £4,561.37 – approx. £550 per week |

The estimated extra costs calculated do not take into account additional electricity usage that the school may have incurred outside of the pool programme in the 2023 comparison period.

# Ways to Improve the Programme

The potential of expanding the use of the pool to the community on evenings and weekends was regarded as the next logical step. Many of the children who can't swim simply don't have enough time in the water outside of school hours, and whilst the cost of going swimming is certainly one factor, some parents' inability to swim is also an underlying reason. Making the pool available for affordable adult learn to swim sessions would be a way of addressing one of the key issues behind poor levels of swimming amongst primary school leavers in the Black Country.

**Summary of School Learnings**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Unintended Impacts** | Whilst the programme has undoubtedly improved the swimming ability of most participants, all schools were able to report notable impacts on pupil behaviour. Critically, the positive impact on the wider curriculum, through pupils not needing to spend half-days off site, was particularly well-received. All schools said they would be interested in repeating this programme in future. |
| **The Opportunity to Increase the Use of the Pool** | As noted previously in this report, many children are prevented from having more time in the water due to their parent's own lack of swimming experience, and feedback from the participating schools indicated both a willingness and future intention to make temporary pools available to the community for adult learn to swim on evenings and weekends, thereby reducing one of the barriers faced by young people who are striving to improve in the water. An additional benefit of increasing the time the pool is used outside of school hours is a potential reduction in concerns around areas such as security. Having staff and community utilising the pool in these hours significantly reduces the risk of the pool being accessed unsupervised during an evening or weekend. |

| Operational Learnings | Impact on the Pupils |
|---|---|

As part of the evaluation, pupils from some of the participating schools were invited to provide us with their thoughts on the programme. The stories below are summaries extracted from interviews conducted by the pupils' teachers.

- **Pupil Stories**

**Pupil – St Mary's**

Prior to the programme I'd never been swimming before. I was terrified of drowning in the water. It was great that the pool would be coming to our school because we'd get the chance to learn how to swim. It was exciting and I enjoyed learning to swim with my friends.

I didn't enjoy swallowing the water but the teachers helped me by telling me to blow bubbles.

I'm more confident now. When I started swimming I had to use a noodle but now I can swim 25m on my own. After the summer holidays I'll go to some public swimming sessions with my mum and I'm going to teach my brother.

Learning to swim with my friends was great, it was really nice to learn together.

**Pupil – St Mary's**

I've never been swimming with my family outside of school. I've lacked confidence – when I swam in Year 4, I had to use armbands for all the lessons. Before the pool came to our school, I was worried about how deep the pool would be, but it was actually really fun. The end of the lesson, with the sinkers, was the best bit.

I didn't enjoy the 'learning the breathing' technique for front crawl as it sometimes hurt my ears – I've improved but I still need to practice.

I don't need a noodle or armbands anymore. I can swim 10m by myself – I really liked swimming with my friends because they started to support me.

I think lessons would be too expensive for my family. My mum can't swim so it wouldn't be safe going to a public pool.

**Pupil – St Mary's**

I used to go swimming every week and enjoyed it but I had to stop because I had tummy problems. When I heard the pool was coming to our school I was really excited because I would get to swim with my friends.

It was fun; I improved my swimming and I can now swim 37m on my own. When I started swimming at school I had to use a noodle because I was a bit scared but I don't need it anymore. I'm definitely more confident in and around the water now.

I definitely want to keep swimming and go with my family although we might find it a bit difficult to get to the swimming pool.

**Pupil - Tameside**

I didn't swim much outside school before the programme and, whilst I was excited to get in the water, I was also a bit nervous. I was worried about having to swim in such a large pool but also excited about being about to have a go with my friends.

The programme was brilliant. I really liked the swimming teacher, he encouraged me and motivated me to keep on going, even when I was tired. I loved winning my towel and getting *Swimmer of the Day*.

It was great fun. I'd like to go swimming more often but my mum doesn't like it.

A common theme of the testimonials was the assumption amongst pupils that, despite now being an improved swimmer, they were unlikely to transfer these skills into local authority (or other) pools. As part of the programme, Active Black Country facilitated a variety of arrangements with local leisure providers to incentivise the participants to use their facilities over the summer. Figure 22 provides details of each incentive and the associated impact.

*Figure 22: Impact of Post-Programme Incentives*

| Provider | Details of Incentive | Impact |
|---|---|---|
| DB Leisure (Dudley) | DB Leisure provided 240 vouchers for children to use their leisure facilities free of charge | 23 vouchers were redeemed |
| Walsall MBC | Provided opportunity of free leisure cards for participants | 21 children from Woodlands and 26 from Goldsmith took up the offer |

A free swimming offer was also available to pupils taking part however this wasn't tracked as part of the evaluation.

## Summary of Pupil Learnings

| | |
|---|---|
| **Enjoyment is the Key Word** | Pupil testimonials from the programme demonstrate, above everything else, the importance of fun. Engagement in any activity requires a person to *want* to take part, and the value the pupils placed on having an opportunity to learn a skill, whilst having fun with their friends cannot be understated. |
| **Considering what comes next** | Whilst the pupils who took part in the evaluation all clearly progressed from a relatively low starting point, the need to join this up with sustainable exit routes into community water-space is key. Many pupils expressed concern or hesitance about taking these new skills into a different pool on account of their parents' lack of swimming ability or low income. |

## Impact on the Parents

To capture the thoughts of as many parents as possible, parents of pupils at Netherton CofE Primary School were interviewed in a mini-focus groups whilst parents from other participating schools were asked to complete a targeted survey. Whilst this section will focus on the results from the survey, the quotes below from the Netherton parents provide some additional context

**How has your child benefitted from being part of the pop-up-pool programme?**

*He's grown in confidence – he'll go underwater, go in the deepest end, he wouldn't do that before. It's different when they can swim with their friends because they want to achieve more. It's a 2-year waiting list to learn to swim at the leisure centre. It makes it impossible.*

*My daughter just wouldn't get in the pool when the school took her to leisure centres. I had to ask the school to stop taking her, it made her too stressed and anxious. But she's absolutely loved this, has really enjoyed it.*

**Are there any barriers that prevent your child from swimming?**

*The biggest issue is that there's a 2.5 year waiting list for swimming lessons at the local swimming pools. There's a complete lack of staff providing lessons and my child, who's in year 6, hasn't been able to learn properly.*

*Going private is simply too expensive, it's probably the best way but we just can't afford it.*

*Transport is the main barrier – I don't drive and we don't have access to a car, so we have to get taxis, that makes the trip so much more expensive.*

*I've got a disabled child so going to a pool which is accessible is a real problem. It's only really Crystal (leisure centre) that gives you that around here, because there are no steps into the pool.*

25

- **Survey Analysis**

There were 78 responses to the survey, a strong sample representing parents from 5 of the participating schools. The survey attempted to gauge the parents' own swimming ability along with their thoughts on how far their child *should* be able to swim by the end of their time in primary school, as demonstrated in Figure 23.

*Figure 23: Parent Survey Findings*



How would you rate your own swimming ability?
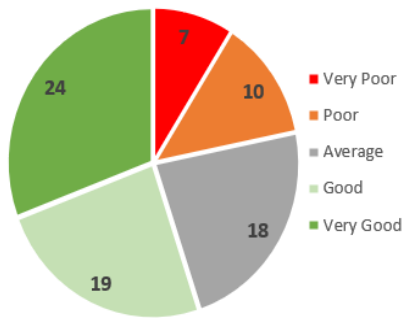
How far do you think your child should be able to swim when leaving Primary School?
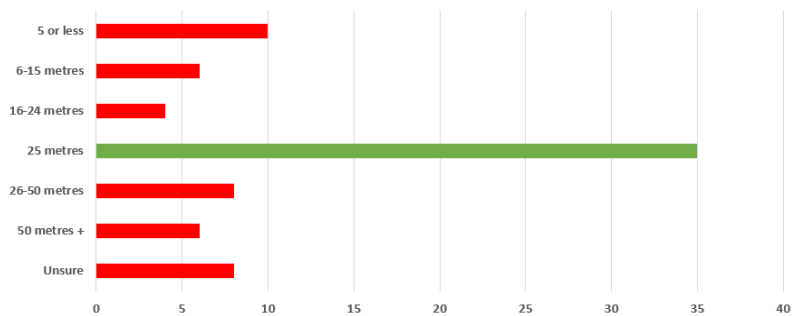
*n. 78*

Interestingly, only 2 parents out of 60 in the focus groups said they were poor swimmers, whilst 17 out of 78 rated themselves as either poor or very poor in the survey, suggesting there are more parents with low levels of swimming ability in the Black Country than is immediately apparent.

Whilst 25m was the most popular answer from parents when asked how far a child should be able to swim upon leaving primary school, most respondents provided an incorrect answer, suggesting more work needs to be done across the sector in raising awareness about the national curriculum recommendations.

Only 2 of the 78 respondents couldn't identify their nearest public swimming pool and they were subsequently asked whether the programme had made them more likely to both take their child there and swim themselves. As displayed in Figure 24, a majority of parents answered positively, however it wasn't an overwhelming response.

*Figure 24: Impact of the Programme on Future Swimming Habits*



**Parents said they were more likely to take their children to their local pool.**  **54%**

**44%**  **Parents said they were more likely to go the local pool and swim themselves.**

Parents were also asked what would incentivise them to take their children swimming more regularly. The word cloud in Figure 25 provides a summary of the responses.

*Figure 25: What would incentivise parents to take children swimming?*



Whilst the majority of parents said that no incentive would be necessary, those who gave a specific answer were most likely to cite the need for cheaper swimming, with 20 respondents saying this.

Other common answers included the need for a *Fun* local offer and the need for their children to have *Better Ability* before they'd be comfortable taking them swimming more often.

## Summary of Parent Learnings

| | |
|---|---|
| **Positivity towards the programme** | There was overwhelming positivity from parents, with almost universal gratitude towards the initiative and the opportunity that it has given to their children, many of whom cited the importance of being able to swim with their friends in a place they felt safe. |
| **Lack of Provision for Learn to Swim** | Whilst the cost of swimming was referenced as a barrier, the focus groups consistently brought up the lack of local *Learn to Swim* availability. This is consistent with research undertaken by Active Black Country and Swim England which shows a latent demand of over 40,000 for children's swimming lessons, exacerbated by a dearth of suitably qualified swimming teachers and lifeguards. Work is being undertaken to test a number of solutions to this, including a SWAP project with Department for Work and Pensions whereby those currently on universal credit are given the chance to obtain a Level 1 qualification. |

The thoughts of the programme workforce, including the swimming teachers and lifeguards, were captured through;

- A workforce survey
- A focus group with 3 members of the workforce, exploring further context behind their survey responses.

**Workforce Survey**

The survey was completed by 10 members of the programme delivery workforce, 8 of whom were swimming teachers and 2 were lifeguards.

**Training**

There were a range of responses in terms of the amount of training the workforce had received prior to starting their roles on this programme. 4 of the 10 respondents received pool plant training whilst 4 said they were only able to access online videos about how to carry out pool tests and undertake health and safety assessments. Two respondents said they'd had either little or no training.

Whilst 7 of the 10 respondents said they were suitably skilled to carry out the role, 3 of the swimming teachers said they would have benefitted from a better training programme with two areas cited

- A more thorough pool plant course to enable them to troubleshoot more effectively. Several respondents had past experience they could draw on and there was assistance available by telephone, however one swim teacher said they had to figure out issues regarding pool temperature by themselves or by accessing a group chat.
- In-person training on how to use the delivery organisation's in-house portal, rather than relying on videos

**Programme Knowledge**

There was unanimous agreement amongst the workforce that the context of the programme had been fully explained to them, prior to starting the role. Two respondents said this was done at the point of their initial interview and described the information given as very informative.

**Delivery Model**

Respondents were asked whether they thought the model of intensive delivery maximised the impact of the programme and they were in agreement that it did. However, it was suggested that more emphasis should be placed on the least able and more anxious swimmers, with those clearly able to swim 25m receiving less water time.

**Water Safety**

The survey sought to understand both how the water safety element was delivered and how it could be improved, moving forward. All swimming teachers said that this was delivered both in and out of the water with theory explained in classroom settings and wet-side delivery undertaken by incorporating floating and fun activities. The lifeguards would also be involved, giving talks about what rules would need to be followed at pool side. Whilst the majority of the workforce felt suitably prepared for this, some suggested that more dry-side preparation and associated resources would've been helpful, particularly during periods when the pool was out of action.

**What Worked Well?**

The workforce was clearly incredibly positive about the programme. Being able to work with the same children every day for 3-weeks was really beneficial in terms of developing relationships and ensuring information was retained.

The size of the pool was seen as a positive. A lot of the children on the programme were 'terrified' of the water but being able to touch the bottom of the pool with their feet helped to eliminate that fear.

The method of assessment worked very well. The initial assessment followed by a final assessment, with technique-related lessons interspersed with water safety, was cited as good practice by the swimming teachers.

**What Should Change?**

There were a variety of suggestions offered by respondents. The most-referenced point was the need for improved lines of communication between the schoolteachers and the swimming workforce, a point picked up further in the focus group that followed.

It was also suggested that additional water safety sessions, prior to the in-pool activity, would benefit the pupils and support the delivery of lessons.

Other suggestions included;

- Don't run the sessions with Year 6 pupils during the end of summer term. There are too many distractions for them with school transition and prom events that they couldn't fully commit to the swimming.
- Rather than 45-minute lessons with 10 children, have 30-minute lessons with fewer people in the pool to improve the quality of the sessions
- Having a physical walkway alongside the pool would improve the ability of teachers to conduct the lessons.

**Workforce Focus Group**

The focus group was conducted with three of the swimming teachers employed on the programme (based at Shireland Hall and St Mary's). The conversation aimed to illicit additional understanding around some of the points covered by the initial survey.

There was a clear need for additional training on what to do if something goes wrong with the pool. It was raised that there'd be mornings where staff would get to the site to discover that the water temperature was too low and they didn't have enough knowledge to rectify the issue. Training on this amounted to a 30-minute guidance video and whilst there is always some element of learning on the job (supported by the fact that there were less temperature-related issues in Term 2 once backwashing was being done on a daily basis), a more in-depth training programme would've helped. The teachers suggested that this was indicative of the initial timescales for the programme being incredibly tight, with only a short window between recruitment of teachers and the commencement of swimming.

The issue of *lines of communication* with the schools was explored further in this session. Schools would summarily remove children from swimming sessions and replace them with someone else, causing issues with the delivery of lessons. There were undoubtedly good reasons as to why the schools had to do this, but it was suggested that the programme would've benefited from a liaison officer being in place, who could operate remotely and act as a conduit between the swimming teachers and the school staff.

In terms of inductions for children, the group thought that it would be ideal if they could have a session outside the pool initially, whereby they can be introduced to the swimming teachers and get an overview of the programme they're about to undertake. It was felt that, even if this meant less time in the water overall, it would be more beneficial to the participants.

As noted in the survey findings, the focus group found that Year 5s were considerably easier to teach than Year 6s, most likely reflecting the time of year (end of summer term) and the distractions that this brings.

One important reflection was from a teacher who has been working on a pop-up site elsewhere. She noted that, in Staffordshire, they've had significant issues with children not having the correct equipment, notably goggles. The equipment funded through Speedo in the Black Country was a real leveller and, in her view, improved the attainment of the pupils.

**Summary of Workforce Learnings**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Swimming Teachers require additional support** | Swimming teachers who are new to operating pop-up pools will require in-depth support to troubleshoot against the myriad of issues that can arise, thereby reducing the likelihood and length of time that the pool is non-operational. |
| **Year 5 were more responsive than Year 6** | Both the workforce and teachers from participating schools have indicated that the in-pool programme was easier to manage for pupils in Year 5 compared to older pupils. Whilst it should be noted that the data analysis indicates a more pronounced impact on Year 6 pupils, feedback from those involved suggests that distractions linked with leaving school negatively affected their behaviour and concentration. |

# Conclusions

A series of conclusions from the programme have been collated and are presented below as areas for consideration for stakeholders who are considering implementation of a similar initiative.

**Evidence and Insight**

The importance of understanding local need and underlying demographics when selecting sites for provision is essential. The evidence provided in this report demonstrates that pop-up pools are most effective when supporting those who *can't* swim or have low levels of ability, rather than enabling good young swimmers to be even more proficient. Therefore, it's critical to take these facilities into communities who will benefit the most. Whilst school swimming data isn't currently readily available from one central source, schools are expected to post data on 25m, range of strokes and safe self-rescue on their websites in accordance with sport premium requirements. Where this data isn't available, we know from studying school swimming statistics over recent years that there is a correlation between deprivation and low swimming performance, therefore an understanding of local socio-demographic patterns should be collated prior to making decisions on the siting of these facilities.

**Compliance**

Pop up pools can expand the aquatic opportunities for people in a range of geographies however the safety and wellbeing of pool users must remain of primary importance. Temporary pools need to be meticulously designed and adequately equipped to handle the specific challenges presented by varying bather loads and environmental conditions. Operators of temporary pools must adhere to other health and safety guidance applicable to aquatic facilities and strict adherence to industry standards and best practices is imperative to foster a safe and enjoyable environment for individuals of all ages engaging in swimming activities.

**Engagement**

Good communication amongst all partners is required to ensure the smooth delivery of a pop-up pool programme. This includes;

- *Relevant Local Authorities*
    - Health and safety leads
    - Public health
    - Sport and leisure teams
- *Local leisure operators*
    - Centre manager
    - Aquatic manager
- *Schools*
    - Head teacher
    - PE lead
    - Site manager
- *Parents and carers* – to emphasise the importance of learning to swim and when lessons will take place (to ensure correct kit is brought)

In addition, an individual's experience in a pop-up pool should not end abruptly but should act as a pathway to community water space. Working in partnership with Local Authorities and pool operators to explore incentives that can enable people to continue their swimming journey should be a vital part of any such initiative.

**Back Up Plans**

Ongoing fluctuations as part of any Pop Up Pool programme, such as temperature and chemical levels, are likely to lead to some lost swimming time. This occurred across all 7 pool sites during the programme. As such, it is important for the deliverers and school to have a set of dry side/classroom lesson plans that can be delivered if the pool is out of action to ensure pupils continue to make progress towards national curriculum outcomes and disruption to timetabled school days and lessons is minimised.

**Workforce Development**

Swimming teachers/Lifeguards who are new to operating pop-up pools will require:

- In-depth support to troubleshoot against the myriad of issues that can arise. (PWTAG approved training).
- Additional training on delivering swimming lessons in a pop-up pool environment.

The workforce on our programme also benefitted from being part of WhatsApp groups with fast access to other teachers on other sites. That informal peer support was a helpful means of troubleshooting for low level issues.

**Programme Delivery**

Operational learnings were gathered across the course of programme delivery. The following points were considered essential for any organisation or partnership looking to carry out an intervention with a pop-up facility.

- A clear scheme of work and lesson plans are required prior to programme delivery to be clear on what is being delivered and assessed.
- It's important to do an initial assessment of swimming ability to be able to measure progress/improvement.
- The longer the programme, the greater the increase in swimming ability levels. Additionally, maximum impact was seen on pupils who had little or no swimming ability at the start of the programme, which suggests there should be a focus on weak and non-swimmers.
- Evidence suggests that a 3-week intensive course is an effective way of delivering both practical and theoretical safe self-rescue.
- The model of delivery is an effective way of supporting pupils to develop their ability to demonstrate a range of strokes.
- To maintain swimming ability beyond the programme there needs to be sustainable exit routes into community water-space. Schools should reach out to local providers and actively encourage and promote further local aquatics opportunities through newsletters, briefings and assemblies.

- Although further research is required, the programme highlighted a number of elements of performing safe self-rescue in different water based situations that are difficult to assess in a Pop Up Pool programme (Namely, *Fall-in entry* and *recover to surface*).We would encourage schools to make adequate arrangements and plans to ensure pupils are able to complete all elements of the <u>minimum standards</u> for water safety. This could include additional provision at a local pool/leisure Centre to address those skills shortages.

### Timetabling

Thought and planning should be given to when individual pupils are timetabled to attend their swimming slots. There are clear examples where effective placement of pupils in relevant timetabled swimming slots had a positive impact on pupil attendance and punctuality within schools and efficient timetabling of groups can ensure wider school progress, such as English and Maths interventions with smaller groups whilst other pupils are swimming.

Finally, careful consideration needs to be given to the time of year in which an intervention such as this is delivered. As well as seasonable considerations, (such as weather) other factors in a school calendar can have considerable impact on the programme (such as Year 6 pupil exams and secondary transition).

### Health and Safety

Given the multitude of health and safety considerations required for the effective and safe delivery of a pop up pool programme ABC would encourage deliverers and schools to meet prior to the agreement of any programme to discuss any Prospective Pool Safety Operating Procedures (PSOP) for the site. The representative from the school should have an extensive Health and Safety background to ensure all elements of the programme from installation to completion of the programme of delivery can be safely implemented.

ABC is working with a range of local, regional and national partners to develop further information for the sector on Pop Up Pools to support both Schools and

### Other School Considerations

When determining viability of a pop-up pool programme, schools should consider some of the additional costs associated. These include costs of electric installation (Approx £1.5k to £3k) and increases in utility costs (average electricity at £550 per week). These should be factored into the decision-making process when considering this intervention against other school swimming options such as leisure centre provision.

Based on key learnings and current market costings, a typical school that puts two year groups (each with 2 classes) through a 6-week programme should look to budget a minimum of £16,140 (includes use of pool, insurance, utilities). This would cover 100 pupils receiving 11.25 hours of water time (45 minutes per day for 3 weeks per year) and, based on progress shown in the Black Country, 88% of pupils could be expected to demonstrate meeting nearly all of the necessary water safety outcomes.