Swim:ED

Bringing the pool to the playground

Impact Report 2023/24

Most of the children at our school have little experience of swimming and are not confident in the water.

The difference that daily lessons made to their swimming progress and water confidence was huge. Swim:ED has had a dramatic increase in the percentage of children achieving swimming at the national curriculum standard.

Laura Burgin

Deputy Headteacher
Beckfoot Heaton Primary School

Swimming is the only lesson that can save a life, yet almost one in three (28%) UK children leave primary school unable to swim 25 metres. In 2022, the figure was one in four.

Sport England's latest Active Lives Children and Young People report reveals a deepening safety crisis across our schools. Covid-related pool closures, rising energy costs, and a growing shortage of qualified instructors have left thousands of children without basic swimming and self-rescue skills.

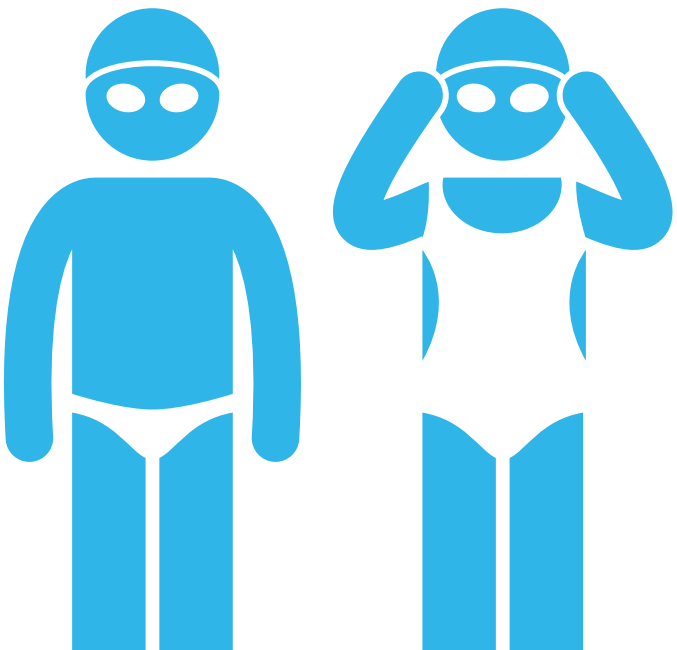
The dangers increase within deprived areas and ethnic minority groups. Over half (58%) of pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds can't swim. What's more, 80% of Black children and 78% of Asian children lack basic swimming skills, and an estimated 500,000 young people from ethnic minorities missed out on swimming during the pandemic.

Without urgent intervention, 1.2 million pupils are expected to enter senior school in 2026, incapable of protecting themselves in the water. Experts predict a 'lost generation' of swimmers, unable to access the sport's life-saving benefits and proven mental and physical health boosts.

Sources: Sport England's Active Lives Children and Young People report and Royal Life Saving Society UK National Drowning Report 2022

In 2022 childhood drowning rates climbed by 46%

Nearly one in three UK children leave primary school unable to swim



Swimming has a stark inequality issue. **86%** of children from wealthy families can swim unaided by the time they leave primary school, compared to just **42%** from the least affluent.

A critical shortfall in swim resources

In 1994, the government spotlighted swimming's fundamental value by making it a mandatory learning requirement. Under the national curriculum, every 11-year-old should be able to swim 25 metres unaided and use a range of strokes effectively by the time they leave primary school. They should have learned about water safety and understand how to perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations.

School swimming goals

What's required by the national curriculum?

Schools must provide swimming instruction either in Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2. To meet basic requirements, pupils should be taught to:

1. **Swim competently, confidently, and proficiently over a distance of at least 25 metres.**
2. **Use a range of strokes effectively (for example, front crawl, backstroke, and breaststroke).**
3. **Perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations.**

Regular swim instruction remains out of reach for many pupils. In addition to persistent cultural and social obstacles, tight budgets and falling facility numbers are keeping thousands of children out of the water.

While cost-of-living worries have caused families to cut back on community swim classes, a decline in the UK's pool stock has restricted availability. According to Leisure DB's State of the UK Swimming Industry Report 2024, the total number of sites with a pool across the public and private sectors fell 2% since 2023.

Pool closures have outpaced openings since 2013. This year, 25 public sector pools shut their doors, while only nine new sites opened. And although private sector openings hit their highest peak since 2020, closures climbed from 16 to 25 year on year.

The UK's declining pool stock

PUBLIC SECTOR 2024

Public Centres	Pools	Openings	Closures
1,613	2,659	9	25

PRIVATE SECTOR 2024

Private Clubs	Pools	Openings	Closures
1,283	1,613	6	25

Source: Leisure DB's State of the UK Swimming Industry Report 2024

The downward trend is taking a heavy toll on school swim and water safety education. Despite increased government funding for school sports facilities, headteachers struggle to access local leisure centres, cover transport costs, and meet staffing requirements for off-site sessions.

Sport England's report shows 36% of state primary schools offered either no swim instruction or fewer than 10 lessons per pupil in the 2022-23 academic year. This is the lowest category possible and the equivalent of weekly sessions for just half a term.

Former Paralympian swimmer Ellie Simmonds warns the UK is losing a critical learning pathway:

One of the biggest barriers to swimming is undoubtedly the associated costs for many families and the easiest way to ensure they have access to the water is through school swimming lessons, which are vitally important for so many youngsters.

It is crucial we do all we can to protect these lessons. But it's also important to understand that there are more considerations that vary by community, that influence their ability to learn.

Ellie Simmonds

Former Paralympian Swimmer

For so many youngsters, school swimming lessons are the only opportunity to learn a vital life skill.

Jane Nickerson

Retired Chief Executive Officer
Swim England

A lifeline for school swimming

The school swimming crisis needed an innovative solution.

In 2023, Swim:ED delivered a trailblazing alternative to traditional off-site lessons, bringing state-of-the-art swim facilities, high-quality instruction, and certified lifeguards straight to schools.

As part of a comprehensive swim programme, a purpose-built pool is installed and managed directly on school premises. Facilities are housed in a lockable, industrial-style modular structure, securely fixed to the school playground.

The result is a safe, stress-free swim space that removes the hefty transport costs and taxing logistics of off-site instruction, revolutionising how primary schools provide swimming and water safety education.

The Swim:ED programme maximises every moment in the water, replacing wasted travel time with transformative teaching opportunities.

The pop-up approach!

Making swimming possible for every pupil

A secure, heated pool – steps from the classroom – is just the starting point. Swim:ED's turnkey solution offers fully qualified instruction, helpful tech tools, and a tailored swim curriculum geared around safety, inclusion, and measurable results.

Swim:ED

No wasted travel time

Bringing the pool to your school means less classroom disruption and more learning time.

Hassle-free lessons

Ready-to-go swim instruction, minus the headache of off-site facilities and transport logistics.

Quality, inclusive education

Vital life skills, accessible to every child – regardless of background or financial circumstances.

Safety-first ethos

Stringent protocols, highly trained supervisors, and a safe, secure swimming environment.

Value for money

A complete swim and water safety solution, frequently more cost-effective than traditional off-site sessions.

All-in-one digital toolkit

Our online portal provides health & safety info, parent engagement templates, and more.

Data-driven progress reports

Swim:ED's data-led platform also tracks pupil milestones in line with the national curriculum.

Teachers you can trust

Children learn from fully qualified swim instructors in an encouraging, enriching environment.

Customised curriculums

Tailor-made swim curriculums align with schools' specific needs, goals, and pupil abilities.

Flexible, seamless scheduling

Choose from a 5-7 week programme, plus top-up lessons and extra-curricular club options.

Offering swim lessons on-site meant that the pupils involved spent more time having quality swim lessons rather than travelling. All children made considerable progress and thoroughly enjoyed it. The lessons were conducted by professional staff in a professional manner, and we can't wait for them to return next September.

Hannah Jack

Business Manager & PE Lead
Brentry Primary School

Ripple Effects

Swim:ED's impact on primary swim education

83.2%

of the 7,589 children who took part in Swim:ED made progress in at least one of the four key Swim:ED outcomes:

Swimming 25 metres unaided

Performing a range of strokes effectively

Understanding water safety theory

Performing safe self-rescue

Trusted delivery

Since our 2023 launch, Swim:ED has delivered 53 pop-up swimming pools to school playgrounds across the UK. We've also joined forces with 16 trusted delivery partners who help us provide swimming opportunities to as many children as possible.

Maximum impact

Swim:ED's programmes are designed for maximum impact and success. Over three intensive weeks, children get fifteen 45-minute sessions of specialised, small-group teaching with no more than ten classmates.

Faster learning

Teachers tell us this focused approach reduces disruption and rapidly consolidates learning, so new skills quickly become second nature. Compared to traditional set-ups – involving weekly 25-minute lessons over ten weeks – schools report greater impact in significantly shorter timescales.

The Swim:ED story in numbers

7,589
children taught in the 2023/24 academic year

8,438
hours of programme delivery

160%
increase in pupils achieving 25 metre proficiency

53
schools taking part

16
delivery partners across England

15
lessons per programme

45
minutes per lesson

3
weeks of intensive, long-lasting learning

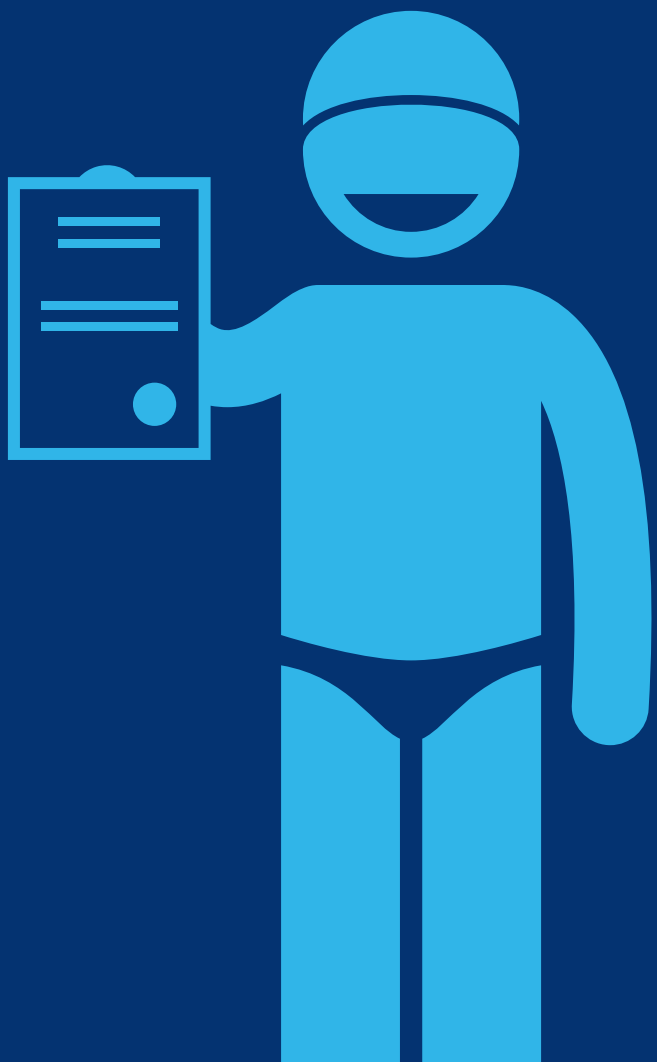
10
children maximum per group

The Swim:ED curriculum caters for children in Key Stage 1 and 2, boosting swim confidence throughout primary school.

We follow national curriculum guidelines and measure success according to the government's key criteria for water skills and safety.

In line with the government's and Swim England's assessment standards, this report tracks the progress of Swim:ED's Year 6 leavers.

The following pages show what we achieved in the 2023/24 academic year.



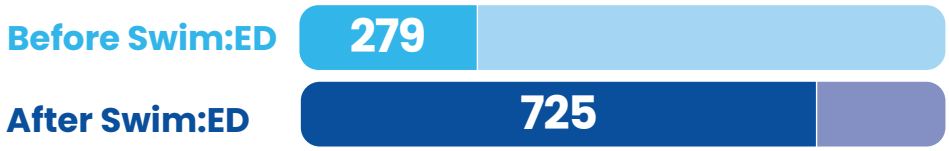
Goal 1.

Swimming 25 metres unaided

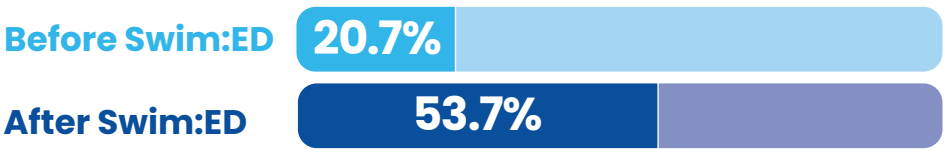
+ 160%

- ✔ After Swim:ED, 53.7% of Year 6 children could swim 25 metres unaided.
- ✔ Figures rose from 20.7% – a 160% increase.
- ✔ 63% of children showed a marked improvement.
- ✔ Swim:ED's results exceeded the Black Country average of 51%[1] and brought participating schools closer to the nationwide average of 59%[2].

Number of children able to swim 25m unaided



Percentage of children able to swim 25m unaided



1 Source: Active Black Country, Primary School Swimming in the Black Country, 2023 dataset

2 Source: Sport England Active Lives Children and Young People Survey, Academic Year 2022/23

Goal 2.

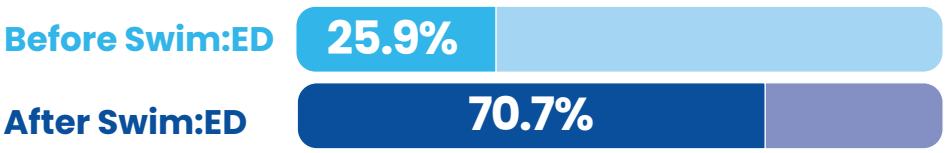
Mastering multiple strokes

+ 172.6%

- ✔ Thanks to Swim:ED, 70.69% of children could perform a range of strokes.
- ✔ Pupils showed a 172.6% improvement following the programme.

Number of children who mastered multiple strokes

Percentage of children who mastered multiple strokes



Goal 3.

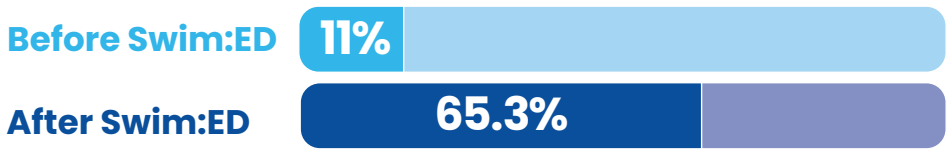
Performing safe self-rescue

+ 492.7%

- ✔ After Swim:ED, 65.28% of pupils demonstrated self-rescue skills – up from 11.03%.
- ✔ That's a 492.7% improvement rate.
- ✔ Swim:ED's results exceeded the Black Country average of 52%.

Number of children able to demonstrate self-rescue skills

Percentage of children able to demonstrate self-rescue skills



Goal 4.

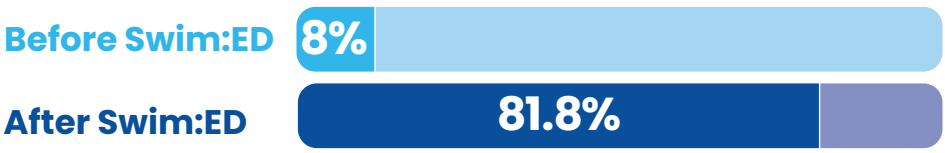
Staying safe in and around water

+ 912%

- ✔ Following Swim:ED, 81.79% of pupils could explain water safety fundamentals.
- ✔ Numbers rose from 8.07% prior to the programme – a surge of 912%.

Number of children able to explain water safety

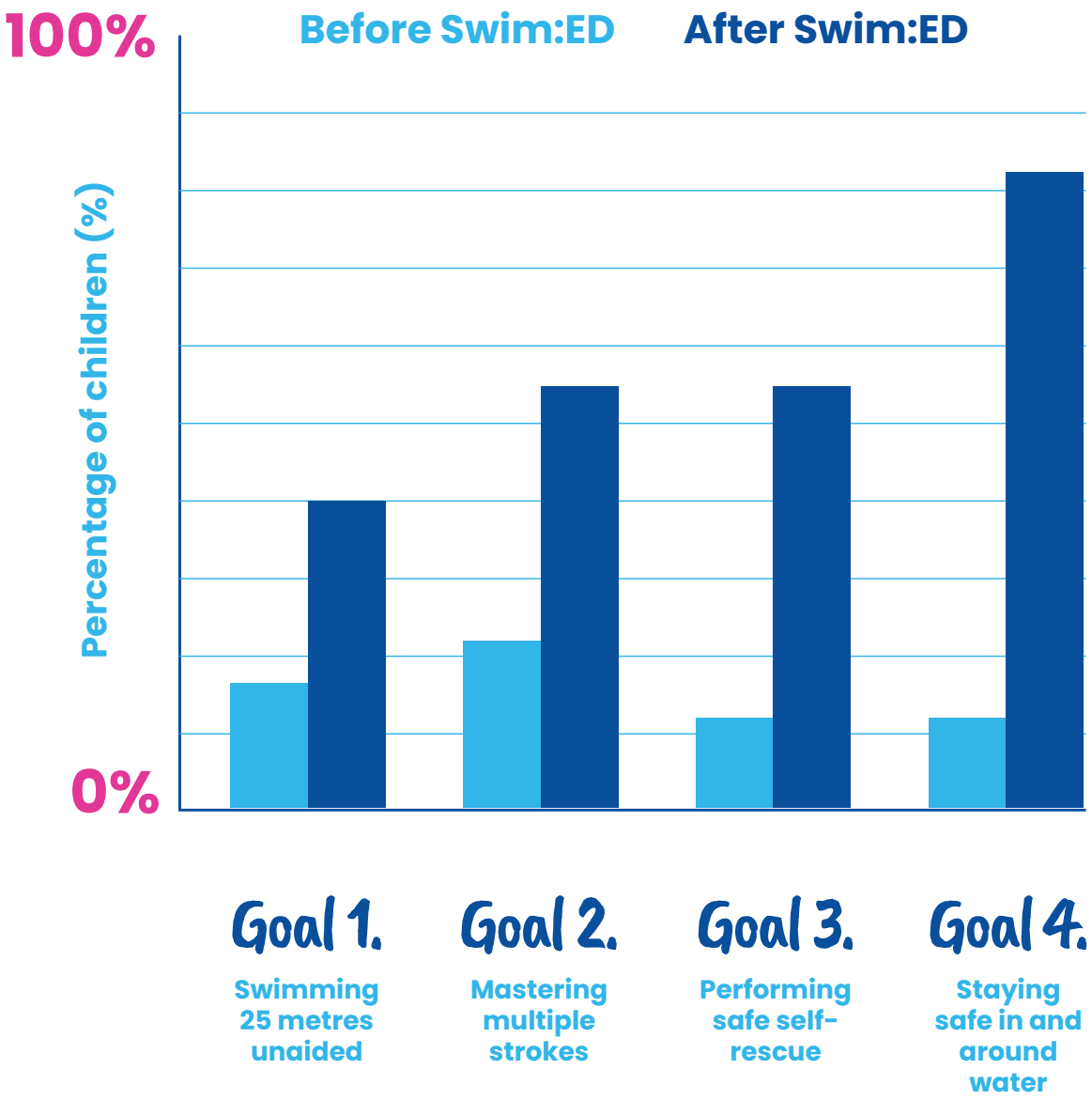
Percentage of children able to explain water safety



Summary

The chart below highlights the significant improvement across all categories after the programme.

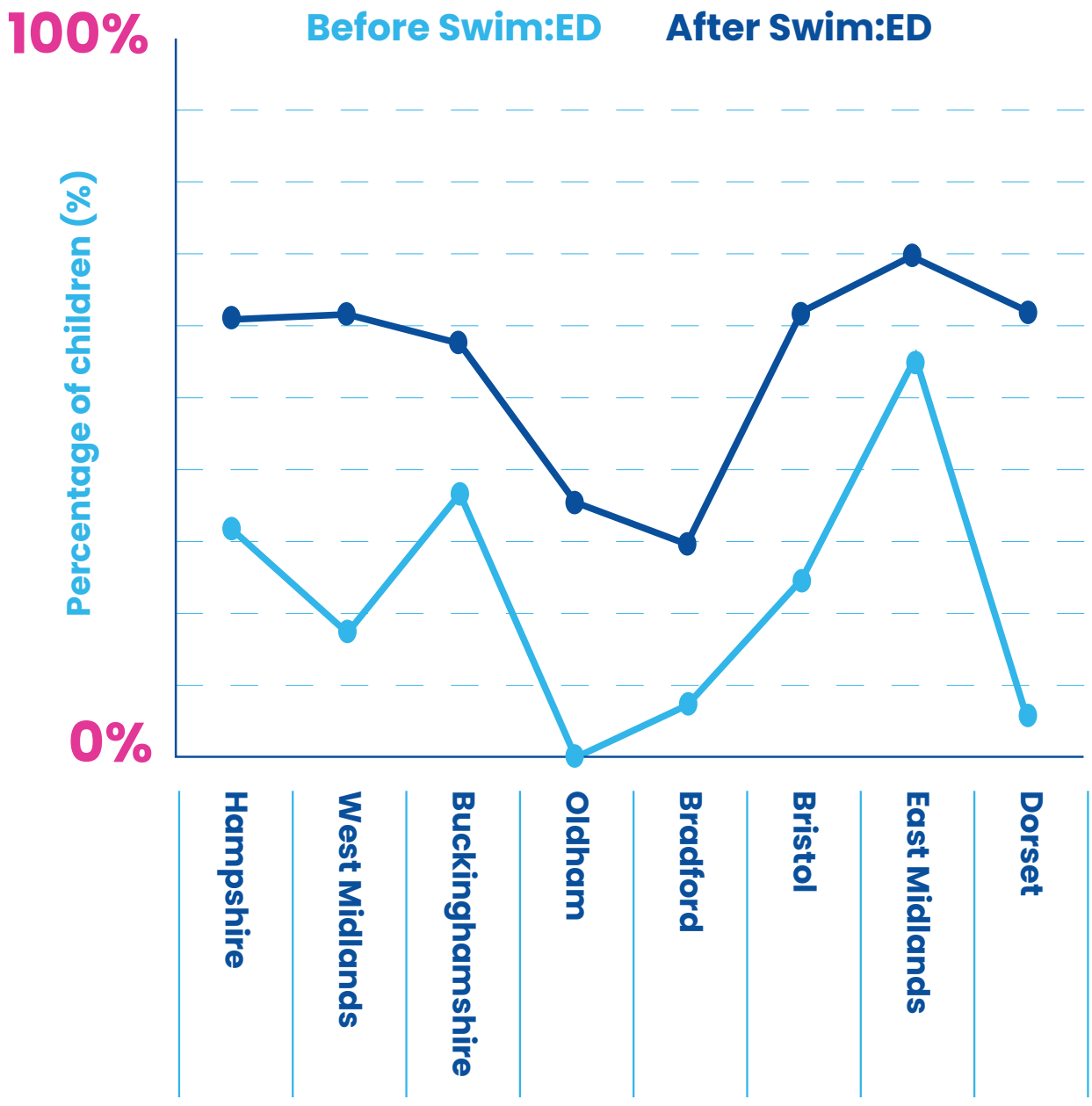
Pre and post-programme percentages for each key category.



Regional Results

With support from our local delivery partners, we've extended Swim:ED's reach nationwide – bringing the programme's proven benefits to schools across the UK.

Percentage of children able to swim 25 metres unaided



Swim:ED has revolutionised swimming lessons at Timberley Primary Academy, saving us logistical challenges and assisting Year 6 attendance. With improved swimming skills and heightened water safety awareness, the impact on our children is beyond measure.

Ian Griffiths

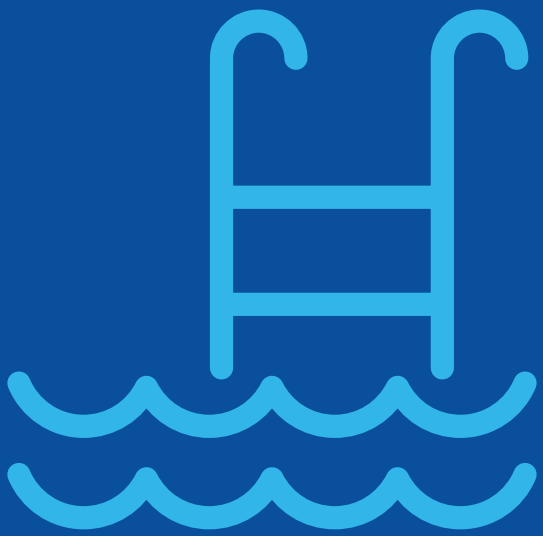
Deputy Head
Timberley Primary Academy

Looking Ahead

We believe that swimming can drive social impact and change pupils' lives for the better. So we're taking action to ensure Swim:ED does more good, for more children.

For the 2024/25 academic year, we've expanded our reporting to capture anonymised data about gender and ethnicity. We're also learning whether swimmers might receive free school meals, have special educational needs (SEN), or speak English as an additional language (EAL).

With a detailed snapshot of potential learners, we can connect with underserved communities, create custom programmes for individual needs, and bring quality swim education to pupils who need it most.



Case Study

Woodlands Academy of Learning

Walsall

The Swim:ED team quickly became part of the school team, maintaining strong communication with every year group. The programme created a central focus for the summer term, generating a real buzz of excitement throughout the school.

Tamsin Newton

Headteacher
Woodlands Academy of Learning

25m soared

Children able to swim 25 metres unaided soared from **0 to 55%.**

3 in 4 understand water safety

Thanks to Swim:ED, **75% of pupils** now have essential water safety knowledge.

Before Swim:ED, the swim programme at Walsall's Woodlands Academy of Learning was ineffective and time-intensive. 'One of the biggest challenges was the distance to the pool, which required travel by coach and **took up the entire afternoon**, taking pupils out of their usual curriculum,' said Headteacher Tamsin Newton.

'Many children felt self-conscious being watched by their peers, and the once-weekly 30-minute sessions meant they often forgot what they'd learned by the next lesson.

Additionally, the large and deep off-site pool at a secondary school was intimidating for some, as it was unfamiliar and potentially overwhelming. We also faced issues with broken pools, which resulted in missed lessons.'

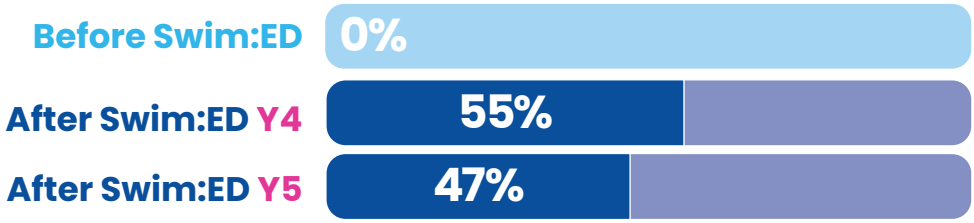
Woodlands discovered Swim:ED through local not-for-profit organisation Active Black Country – and were impressed by the team's proven track record and delivery capabilities. After a series of planning meetings with the Swim:ED team, Woodlands **established an on-site pop-up pool with long-term value in mind**. By investing in the pool's initial setup, including the installation of outdoor electricity and changing facilities, the school **boosted sustainability** and reduced second-year costs.

Succeeding from a standing start

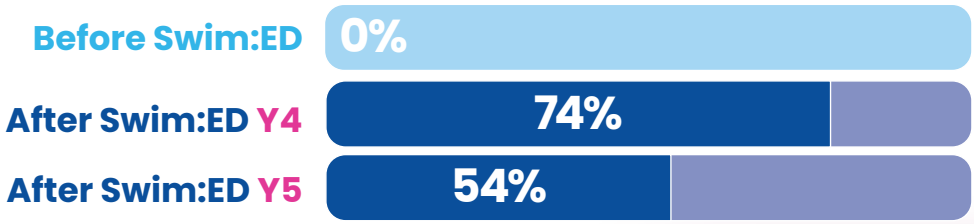
Woodlands launched their swim programme with weekly lessons for Years 4 and 5, taster sessions for Year 3, and an after-school swim club. With a central coordinator handling all swimming arrangements, **teachers were free to focus on lessons**, rather than liaising with coach drivers, swim teachers, and local leisure centres.

The results and feedback were outstanding. When the Swim:ED programme began, no Woodlands pupil could swim 25 metres unaided. Within three weeks, **55% of Year 4 and 47% of Year 5 children had achieved the national curriculum target**. Similarly, 74% of Year 4 and 54% of Year 5 pupils could perform safe self-rescue.

Percentage of children able to swim 25m unaided



Percentage of children able to explain water safety



Powering positive results

The pop-up pool was many pupils' first experience of swimming at school – and several had never had any form of swim instruction. Although some children were initially nervous, **confidence and enthusiasm quickly grew** across each year group.

The children loved the sessions. They were eager to bring their kits every day and couldn't wait to swim.

Tamsin Newton, Headteacher

The intensive daily sessions ensured **learning was consolidated and retained**, while the pool's inclusive setting sharpened pupils' social skills. The school noted **improved relationships**, with children supporting and helping peers they might not usually interact with. Other positive outcomes included:

- A stronger sense of trust with swim coaches compared to off-site instruction.
- A calmer, more focused environment, allows children to learn specific skills and correct stroke techniques.
- Staff collaboration across year groups, creating a more effective teaching and learning model.
- Stronger connections across different friendship groups.
- Clear pupil progress records, enabling ongoing achievement tracking and recognition.
- Free, accessible swim lessons, helping parents struggling to find out-of-school swim instruction.

Shaping more than swim skills

Woodlands' pop-up pool has **redefined swim education for over 220 children** – and counting. Headteacher Tamsin Newton believes the programme increased water confidence across all year groups and delivered transformational breakthroughs for individual pupils, helping them **overcome fears** and **manage behavioural challenges.**

Through the pool on the playground, we have seen a significant difference in the progress and enjoyment of swimming for our children. They feel safe and comfortable on the school grounds, which enables them to be receptive to learning new skills.

We are impressed by how much the children enjoy their daily swimming lessons and also by how many literally learn to swim in the space of three weeks!

Tamsin Newton, Headteacher

Case Study

The Heights Primary School

Reading

It has been such a positive experience working with Swim:ED. The whole team were really professional and worked incredibly hard with us to ensure that the programme was as successful and impactful as it could be. Nothing was too much trouble for them. The children absolutely loved their swimming lessons and we are all delighted with the outstanding progress they made in such a short but intense period of time.

Karen Edwards

Headteacher
The Heights Primary School

25m doubled

With Swim:ED, over **two times more** pupils can swim 25 metres unaided.

Water safety improved

Children who understand water safety rose from to **26.4%** to **65%**.

When The Heights Primary School moved to a new permanent site in Caversham, Reading, their swim education options narrowed considerably. Their **closest pool was unavailable**, while two other facilities were closed for refurbishment. These logistical challenges left The Heights unable to organise swimming lessons for specific year groups.

Before the move, pupils had walked to a nearby pool – and Headteacher Karen Edwards wanted to continue the school's commitment to low-impact travel:

'We strongly believe in sustainable transport to and from school and in trying to minimise our carbon footprint. We really liked the idea of not having to transport the children to a pool and back on a coach each week.'

The Heights looked to Swim:ED to provide a sustainable solution that **maximised children's time in the classroom**. They chose an intensive three-week programme, with daily lessons for 150 children in Years 3, 5, and 6 and four sessions for Year 4 pupils in the last week of term.

Instant impact

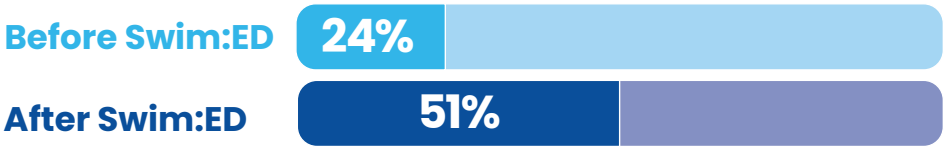
Swim:ED's targeted programme **delivered immediate results**. Within three weeks, pupils with little or no water confidence could swim unaided, with the **percentage of children able to swim 25 metres rising from 24.3% to 51.2%.**

More experienced swimmers developed proficiency in a range of strokes and strengthened their self-rescue capabilities. By the programme's end, **65% of pupils could demonstrate water safety techniques**, compared to 26.4%.

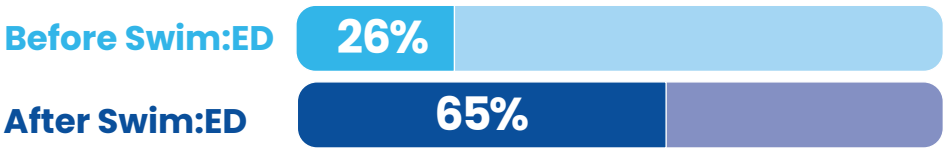
The onboarding from Swim:ED was excellent! They were responsive, and any questions or concerns were discussed and resolved swiftly and efficiently. Swim:ED worked tirelessly over the May half-term to ensure we were ready for lessons to begin and then continued to work closely with the school to deliver the programme effectively.

Karen Edwards, Headteacher

Percentage of children able to swim 25m unaided



Percentage of children able to explain water safety



Community-wide benefits

The Heights' pop-up pool sparked unexpected connections across the school community.

The school came together to accommodate and facilitate the Swim:ED programme. Staff were prepared to park off-site as the pool was set up in the school's car park. Parents very generously offered their driveways for staff to use over the seven-week period, and children were prepared to come into school earlier and leave later when a few lessons had to be rearranged.

Members of the local community, who had previously been quite critical of the school being at its permanent site, supported us with this programme. Everyone went above and beyond to ensure the experience was a success.

Karen Edwards, Headteacher

As pupils' swim skills developed, their self-assurance grew too. Children swam in small groups, often with others they might not usually work with, and **established broader, more inclusive peer relationships.** Out of the water, pupils' new-found confidence – and the 'extra' teaching time gifted by an on-site pool – empowered them to **navigate hurdles in other areas of their school work and lives.**

I'm so grateful that my child has finally found a positive swimming experience. He is autistic and very anxious and has always hated swimming. You have completely changed his mindset and that is down to you boosting his confidence and honing his technique. Please keep doing what you do – you are amazing!'

Parent

INNOVATION. INCLUSION. INFLUENCE:

What's next for the Swim:ED programme?

Every child deserves a safe, supportive, accessible place to swim. At Swim:ED, we're committed to making it happen.

Building better swim education means always aiming higher. We've adopted a failure-tolerant approach, ensuring we remain agile and responsive to challenges. We continually seek feedback and collaborate closely with key stakeholders, facilitating regular, in-depth discussions that shape how Swim:ED evolves.

We're working to make swimming a positive and pivotal part of children's lives. Looking ahead, we aim to share Swim:ED's benefits with more schools – and continue elevating inclusion, innovation, and effectiveness in swim education.

Swim:ED

Our key development areas include:

Working with compliance specialists to meet all health and safety requirements related to pop-up pools.

Creating space-specific CPD for swim instructors and lifeguards, ensuring they continue to meet high teaching and safety standards in a portable pool environment.

Improving pool security as an industry standard. We want every pop-up pool to be housed in a purpose-built temporary structure with robust security protocols to prevent unauthorised access.

Making pool design more inclusive, with step-free access for pupils with additional needs.

Streamlining pool plant operations to maximise ease of use and efficiency.

Enhancing sustainability and reducing the carbon footprint of our pop-up pools.

Furthering relationships with research institutes to showcase the impact of swimming and water safety. Right now, we're working with the University of Chichester, thanks to funding from the Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS).

Leveraging our links with the UK Innovate Edge programme – the UK innovation agency's resource for empowering business innovation – to shape the future of swim education.

Extending pupils' swim journeys beyond the pop-up pool. We're teaming up with instructors, leisure centres, and other key stakeholders to maintain momentum and cultivate a lifelong love of swimming.

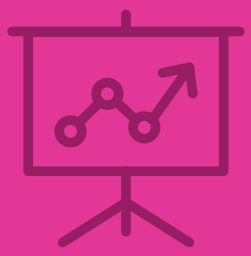
Our 12-month Goals

Work with compliance experts to meet all pop-up pool H&S requirements

Strengthen ties with the wider swim community

Improve sustainability and inclusion

Boost security, efficiency, and innovation



Collaborate with research institutes

Launch targeted training for teachers and lifeguards

The progress made by the children and the confidence they had in the water was more than we could have hoped for.

Chris Hattam

Headteacher
Westbourne School

Start your Swim:ED transformation

Swim:ED is fundamentally changing how primary schools deliver swimming and water safety education.

Our innovative programme is customised to align with schools' specific needs, with a core mission to improve pupils' swimming proficiency and water safety skills.

We're also helping businesses grow and excel in the educational sector.

To learn more about swim programmes and delivery partnerships,

visit swim-ed.co.uk

email info@swim-ed.co.uk

or call 0121 663 1798

Connect with us for the latest updates and insights:

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