

Information about swimming and life-saving education at school

Dear parents / guardians

Why are swimming and life saving on the curriculum?

The purpose of swimming and life-saving education is to keep children safe in and around water. All children shall be proficient swimmers and know how to get both themselves and others out of danger in water.

Good swimming and life-saving skills allow your child to take part in fun, social water activities in their free time, such as going to the beach with friends and family, or pursuing water sports for fitness and exercise.

What will my child learn?

During the compulsory school years, children shall go from being confident in water to being able to swim using a variety of strokes both above and under the water, for long distances. Children shall go from knowing how and when to call for help, to being able to get themselves to safety and perform life-saving activities in water. This is stipulated in the curriculum for physical education.

From autumn 2017, it is compulsory for schools to ensure that all children are proficient swimmers by the end of Year 4.

What is "a proficient swimmer"?

A child is considered a proficient swimmer when they can fall into deep water, swim 100 metres on their stomach, during which time they dive down and pick up an item with their hands, stop and rest for 3 minutes (float on their stomach, orientate themselves, roll over and float on their back); then swim 100 metres on their back and get out of the water and on to land.

How will the school evaluate whether my child is a proficient swimmer?

The school is required to use seven mandatory exercises to determine whether a child is a proficient swimmer. Together they are known as the "compulsory proficiency test". The exercises are included in the ongoing teaching and are not conducted as a separate test.

The exercises start out with the easiest first and become progressively more challenging. On completion of the seventh and final compulsory exercise, your child is considered a proficient swimmer.

How can I help?

As a parent / guardian, there are several things you can do to help your child become a proficient swimmer. Let your child play with water in the shower, bathtub and washbasin, under supervision. Encourage your child to get used to having water on their face and teach them to blow bubbles in water with both their mouth and their nose (for example, "let's pretend to be a motorboat" or "let's blow some bubbles"). As they become comfortable in water, you can encourage them to open their eyes under water ("let's see if there is any treasure down below"). Let your child set the pace.

Some children also attend swimming classes or go to the swimming pool or the beach in their spare time. This can also help your child become confident and safe in water and eventually become a proficient swimmer.

It can also be a good idea to practise the changing room situation at home. Make sure that your child knows how to take their clothes off, keep track of their things, and not least how to shower and wash thoroughly. This will save time in the changing room, meaning more time in the water and for the actual lessons.

What happens in swimming and life-saving lessons?

Schools organise swimming education differently; however, it is common for boys and girls to swim together, but get changed and shower separately. The youngest pupils are usually accompanied by an adult of the same sex in the changing rooms.

It is also common for some parts of the swimming education to take place outdoors. This is to ensure that children acquire the knowledge and skills they need to be safe in and around water.

It is a requirement that there is always one qualified teacher present during swimming lessons. The people who are going to teach the children must also be able to swim and perform life-saving activities. The school is required to have good safety routines for swimming lessons, and your child will be well looked after both in the pool and outdoors.

Pupils' rights

If your child or you as a parent or guardian feel that he / she has not received adequate swimming and life-saving training, you can complain to the head teacher. If your complaint is rejected, you can contact your County Governor ("*Fylkesmannen*"). It is the County Governor's Office that oversees the municipalities and schools.

Who can answer my questions?

Contact your child's contact teacher, the head teacher or the parents' council ("*FAU*") representative at the school, if you have any questions about your child's swimming education.