



POLICIES

Leschenault Catholic Primary School

Topic:	Swimming		
Policy No:	2-B4		
Policy Area:	Education		
Updated:	2017	Date of Review:	2019

Rationale

Swimming is an enjoyable recreational activity and it also forms the basis upon which all other forms of aquatic activity rely on. Swimming activities are offered in most years of schooling.

Examples include:

- swimming and water safety instruction (in-term lessons)
- competitive swimming (carnivals, water polo)
- excursions (camp)

It is important that teachers recognise these guidelines are applicable even when the primary activity is not swimming. For example, when a school is undertaking a hiking activity to a destination beside a body of water. If the group decides to go for a swim then at this point these guidelines become applicable even though the primary purpose of the activity is hiking.

Identifying Risks

- Teachers/assisting adults/instructors must understand the dangers associated with swimming activities and respect the different types of aquatic venues (beach, pool, river, lakes etc). Every aquatic venue is unique and must be evaluated prior to and on arrival and regularly throughout the session. The nature and hazards associated with swimming activities can change within minutes due to changing weather conditions. Many popular venues have levels of lifeguard services depending on the time of year. Teachers should utilise this service and ask for advice on the safest area to conduct the activity.
- The major injury concerns that may occur during swimming activities are:
 - Drowning: victims beyond their depth and unable to return to a position where they can stand (eg swept out by rip currents or off-shore winds)
 - Spinal damage: impact on hitting the bottom or unseen objects when diving, victim
 - dumped by waves
 - Sunburn: unprotected exposure to sun
 - Marine stingers: especially during the months from December-March
 - Hypothermia: extended duration in water (not necessarily cold conditions)
 - Open cuts/wounds: caused by rocks and submerged logs, cracked tiles, slippery surfaces.

Risk Management Approach

The swimming ability of the students in the class is a major factor when determining the duty of care responsibilities that teachers must afford their students in aquatic activities. It is reasonable that an assessment of student swimming ability should be made as close to the commencement of the activity as possible. Revisions of the assessment would be necessary if any circumstances surrounding the activity were to change. For example, the type of condition of the water-based environment changed, or the medical fitness, or preparedness of the child to undertake the activity changed.

It is important that provision is made for the safe participation of all class members, consideration given to each student's swimming ability as determined by the teacher/assisting adult/instructor.

This may involve:

- additional close supervision, restricting them to the shallow water only
- restricting them to areas alongside the edge of the water
- implementing a 'buddy' system (ie pairing or grouping students)
- using buoyancy devices
- using ropes, poles or other objects to act as a safety device etc.

Accreditation

- Catholic schools in Western Australia recommend the START (School Teacher Aquatic Resuscitation Training) qualification because it combines surf and still water risk management. This qualification is valid for 12 months and staff can access the training at www.rise.wa. It is essential that at least one teacher/assisting adult/instructor in each swimming activity hold this accreditation or an equivalent national or international accreditation.
- The specific qualification for swimming instruction (in-term lessons) is the AUSTSWIM qualification or equivalent.
- The generally accepted and recognised form of accreditation for surf activities, currently available in Western Australia, is the Surf Life Saving Australia-Surf Rescue Certificate. It is essential that at least one teacher/assisting adult/instructor in each swimming activity hold this accreditation or an equivalent national or international accreditation. There is a basic requirement to maintain currency of the Surf Life Saving Australia accreditation.
- The Royal Life Saving Society has implemented an additional module to the Bronze Medallion that covers the topic of surf awareness. With this in mind the Royal Life Saving Bronze Medallion is considered an appropriate qualification to conduct surf activities.

A teacher/assisting adult/instructor supervising swimming activities must hold one of the following accreditations when undertaking aquatic activities:

- School Teacher Aquatic Resuscitation Training (START)
 - Royal Life Saving Society Bronze Medallion
 - Surf Life Saving Surf Rescue Certificate
- It is also recommended that other teachers/assisting adults/instructor involved with aquatic activities hold a senior first aid certificate or some equivalent first aid accreditation.
 - For teachers operating in isolated areas, or those who assume responsibility for coordinating more demanding programs, as an option a higher level of first aid training may be obtained.

Use of Outside School Instructors

Teachers have a duty of care under common law to take all reasonable steps to avoid acts or omissions where it can be reasonably foreseen that an injury may occur and that steps are taken to remove any inherent dangers. This duty of care cannot be passed on to instructors or any other person other than another teacher.

While instructors can be utilised to provide specialist instruction to students, the overall duty of care remains with the teacher even if an outside instructor is conducting the activity. Schools should ensure that outside instructors are appropriately qualified and accredited. Because public liability insurance is granted only to operators who conform to minimum standard of current best practice, school engaging the services of outside instructors for swimming activities must obtain written confirmation that these instructors have specific insurance coverage for swimming activities.

In determining an instructor's ability to manage swimming activities the following is to be checked:

- past history
- recent teaching and personal experience
- records of rescue and first aid accreditation and of any in-service training in relevant areas.

Student Qualifications, Experience Responsibilities and Preparation

- All students should be capable of remaining calm and able to support themselves in the water some distance from the shore/edge.
- Students involved should be able to demonstrate proficiency by swimming at least the maximum distance of the swimming area. Possession of a swim certificate equivalent to Wade Rescue, or a Surf Survival certificate, would be an advantage.

Ratios

It is important to recognise the teacher/assisting adult: student ratios is dependent upon the following considerations:

- type of activity
- environment in which the activity is occurring ie clam vs moving water, weather conditions
- type of hazards inherent in that area, ie submerged objects, rocks, unstable banks etc
- level of probability that the identified hazards may cause injury and the type of injury that may occur
- minimum ability of the students
- qualifications of the leader and students

When determining teacher/assisting adult/instructor: student ratios, the teacher-in-charge is to consider the above criteria to determine an appropriate ratio. This consideration remains at the discretion of the teacher-in-charge and should be determined prior to the activity occurring, but may also be altered by the teacher-in-charge.

As a guide to best practice (assuming compliance to standards relating to the above safety factors) indicative ratios are illustrated below:

- Swimming and Water Safety Instruction in still water 1.16 primary schools
1.32 secondary schools
- Competitive Swimming 1.32
- Excursions 1.12
- Excursion in open water 1.8
- Where water activities are undertaken at locations supervised by professional staff the above ratios should not be utilised. Adequate supervision by teaching staff will be required to maintain duty of care requirements.

Safety Considerations

Pre-Activity

- Briefing students about the program, including use of equipment.
- Appropriate methods of communication (ie megaphone, air-horns, whistles) must be determined prior to the activity and clearly understood by all students.
- Appropriate emergency procedures and signals must be determined prior to the activity and clearly understood by all students.
- Establishing and communicating the roles of the assisting adults.
- Ensure students have successful completed knowledge and performance requirements.
- Ascertain any medical condition of a participant that may affect performance. Special note should be made of medication, history, dosages, times to be taken, location of the medication and the effect if dosages are missed.
- The teacher-in-charge must have a copy of all planned documents, including student detail forms. A further copy should be given to the school contact person.
- The teacher-in-charge must test the area themselves or an appropriately qualified person for the activity before deeming the venue suitable.

During Activity

- Vigilant supervision of students is vital at all times. Static and/or mobile supervision is to be undertaken depending on the venue.
- A roll check must be called before entering and after leaving the water.
- Head counts must be conducted at regular intervals.
- The area must be in clear view of the observer(s).
- In open water the activity area should be clearly defined (by markers on the shore or natural features) and not exceed 200 metres along the shore, unless the activity requirements warrants a greater distance.
- The instructor must constantly evaluate the physical and mental performance of students.
- Staff responsible for the safety of students must be changed and ready to enter the water at all times. While students on shore/edge they must be adequately supervised.
- Where possible, board/ski riders providing water safety should patrol on the water.
- The duration of the activity is dependent on experience/competencies of students, weather and water conditions. Time limit for the activity must be decided before entering the water.
- Where conditions adversely change the teacher-in-charge must re-evaluate the continuance of the activity.

Emergency Situations

Emergency provisions should include planning for rescue situations to be undertaken by teachers/assisting adults of the activity. Consideration should also be given for the ability of the teacher-in-charge to contact external emergency services where rescue operation requirements exceed the skills and expertise of the supervising teachers/assisting adults/instructors.

Safety Equipment

- Appropriate clothing for protection against warm and cool weather
- Sunscreen
- Sun hats
- All beginners should wear approved buoyancy vests
- Flags to mark activity area

Emergency Equipment

- Rescue board and/or rescue tube
- First aid kit including thermal blanket or sleeping bag
- A support/transport vehicle must be readily available at the selected location
- Satellite telephones may also be considered in isolated or remote areas

Venue – Location

- The teacher-in-charge must ensure that the venue conditions are matched to students' level of ability and experience.
- It is strongly recommended that open water swimming be undertaken in an area patrolled by qualified lifeguards.
- While at the beach, it is strongly recommended that students should swim in an area patrolled by qualified lifeguards.
- Rocks, submerged hazards, snags, muddy and slippery surfaces must be considered in selecting the location because of the nature of injuries that can occur at these locations.
- **Competitive swimming starting blocks should be used in venues where the depth of the pool is less than 1.2m for a distance of 5m from the starting block.???**
- Local information/advice should be obtained.
- The venue chosen must be directly accessible to an ambulance service or indirectly via a 4WD.

Weather Conditions

The teacher-in-charge is required to constantly monitor conditions, as these can change very rapidly.

Further Information

Organisations to Contact

- The Royal Life Saving Society Australia-WA Branch
PO Box 28, Floreat 6014
Phone: 9383 8200 Fax:9383 9922
Email: risswa@msn.com.au
- Surf Life Saving Western Australia
3 Hasler Road, Osborne Park 6017
Phone: 9244 1222 Fax: 9244 1225
Email: siswa@siswa.asn.au