



Our Lady of Mt Carmel School Mullewa

SWIMMING ACTIVITIES POLICY

Originally released: 2002

Revised: 2004

Due for Review: 2008

GENERAL CONDITIONS

The overall responsibility for the welfare and safety of students and staff lies with the principal of the school. However, the responsibility for the welfare of students is a shared responsibility with the teaching staff while students are under their care. Assisting adults/instructors also have a responsibility for the care and welfare of students on a camp or excursion while under the direction of teaching staff. Teachers must recognise that the potential consequence of any aquatic accident is drowning. Teachers must be vigilant to not only prevent accidents but most significantly, in the case of aquatic activities, be prepared to respond quickly in an emergency to ensure that the rescue is executed immediately.

Swimming Activities

- swimming and water safety instruction (in-term lessons)
- competitive swimming (carnivals, water polo)
- excursions (including celebrations and end-of-year reward days)

RISK MANAGEMENT APPROACH

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. Teachers should utilize lifeguards available.

The emphasis should be on thorough risk management planning (site-specific and activity-specific) before approving and conducting the activity. The level of risk will change as any of the elements of the activity change; that means changes to the environment, equipment, student ability, or teacher capacity etc.

Major Risks

- drowning
- spinal damage
- sunburn and sunstroke
- marine stingers
- hypothermia
- open cuts/wounds

TEACHER/ASSISTING ADULTS/INSTRUCTORS QUALIFICATIONS, EXPERIENCE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Knowledge and Experience

At least one of the teacher(s)/assisting adult(s)/instructor must be:

- proven competent swimmers
- experienced in identifying and setting up a safe instructional area
- capable of effecting a rescue for any situation (not restricted to the immediate instructional area)
- competent in basic first aid
- understand and be able to interpret long and short range weather forecasts (phone 1196)
- able to constantly evaluate environmental conditions before and during activities
- able to constantly assess and evaluate physical performance of students
- be prepared to cancel the activity if conditions are adverse

Accreditation

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

The Royal Life Saving Society Bronze Medallion; and/or
The Surf Life Saving Surf Rescue Certificate

It is also recommended that other teacher/assisting adults/instructor involved with aquatic activities hold a senior first aid certificate of 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 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 a specialist instruction to students, the overall duty of care remains with the teacher even if an outside instructor is conducting the activity. The school should ensure that outside instructors are appropriately qualified and accredited.

Because of public liability insurance is granted only to operators who conform to a minimum standard of current best practice, schools engaging the services of outside instructors for swimming activities must obtain written confirmation that these instructors have specific insurance coverage for swimming activities.

Outside instructors to also show evidence of a current police clearance.

In determining an instructors' ability to manage swimming activities the following should be checked:

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

STUDENT QUALIFICATIONS EXPERIENCE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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.

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 calm vs moving water, weather conditions
- type of hazards inherent in that area, ie submerged objects, rocks, unstable banks, slippery tiles, broken tiles, diving blocks 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.

Recommended ratios

Open Water Environment (seaside venue, flowing river, beach/surf venues)

Primary students (4-12 years approximately) – up to 1:8

Closed Water Environment (swimming pools, sheltered coastal or river venues)

Primary students – up to 1:32

Recommended ratios for particular activities

- swimming and Water Safety Instruction (in-term swimming lessons) up to 1:16 for primary students
- competitive swimming (carnivals intra and interschool, triathlon) up to 1:32
- outdoor pursuits/physical recreation and sport (water polo, life saving classes) up to 1:12
- excursions (including celebrations and end-of-year reward days, school picnics, Rottnest trips) up to 1:12

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.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel ratios for in-term swimming lessons

In-term swimming lessons

Qualified Bronze Medallion Holder (in water) + 1 supervising adult (on land) : 8 students

School excursions

Junior Primary = Class teacher + 2 adult supervisors

Middle/Upper Primary = Class teacher + 1 adult supervisor

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

Pre-Activity

Briefing all teachers on Swimming Activities Policy and their role during lessons ie duty of care.

Venues for swimming must be checked for suitability prior to the activity being undertaken.

Teacher-in-charge to have a list of all students taking part in the activity.

Students to be briefed about the program, including use of equipment.

Appropriate methods of communication (ie megaphone, whistles) must be determined prior to the activity and clearly understood by all the students.

Appropriate emergency procedures and signals must be determined prior to the activity and clearly understood by all students.

Set boundaries and limitations that clearly defines the swimming area. NB the whole swimming area must be in full view of the supervising adults.

Establishing the roles of the assisting adults.

Ensure students have successfully completed knowledge and performance requirements.

Ascertain any medical condition of a participant that may affect performance. Special note should be made of medication, dosages, times to be taken, location of the medication and the effect if dosages are missed. (Check asthma and allergies list)

Ensure all students are protected in as far as possible from sunburn and/or sunstroke. Every child to be wearing bathers and a rash shirt or t-shirt. All students to have applied sunscreen under the supervision of the classroom teacher and aide where possible. Students to be wearing school hats for all pre-activity directions and activities.

The teacher-in-charge must have a copy of all planning documents, including student detail forms.

A further copy should be given to the school contact person. (Principal)

Teacher-in-charge to check through Royal Life Saving Society Multi-Point Checklist (attached)

During Activity

The teacher-in-charge, or an appropriately qualified person for the activity, must test the area themselves before deeming the venue suitable.

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 monitor 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 must be adequately supervised.

The duration of the activity is dependent on experience/competencies of students, weather and water conditions. Time limits 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. These conditions include high temperatures and the amount of time students have been exposed to the sun, keeping in mind the risk of sunburn and/or sunstroke.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Because of the risks inherent in aquatic activities, the teacher-in-charge should devise a suitable emergency procedure that will ensure access to emergency support without compromising the duty of care to the group or a casualty. The principal should ensure that all teaching and supervising staff understand the Emergency Plan and if appropriate, the need for effective communication with the Emergency Services.

A 'good rule of thumb' is that emergency assistance should not be more than one hour away. Beyond that parameter, the principal needs to make clear informed decisions within a risk management framework, about such excursions, having regard for the possibility of a 'worst-case' scenario.

Where an aquatic activity is to occur at a venue other than the Mullewa Shire Swimming Pool, the teacher-in-charge is to devise a suitable emergency procedure for the particular venue. The plan is to include the action to be taken by suitably qualified instructors and teachers when attending the victim/s, and the action to be followed by classroom teacher/s and aides in dealing with other students not involved in the incident. When an excursion is to be held at a venue with suitably qualified staff (eg. Geraldton Aquarena), the teacher-in-charge is to follow the emergency plan as set out by the particular venue.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Emergency Situation Action Plan

1. Immediate continuous blowing of whistle if emergency situation identified
2. All students to leave water executing a safe exit and gather on lawn area beside their belongings. Class teacher(s) to do a head count and alert assisting adult or teacher aid of any missing children. Class teacher to remain with students on dry land.
3. Teacher-in-charge and one other adult with appropriate qualification(s) to perform rescue (if needed) and carry out any emergency first aid or resuscitation required.
4. Nominated adult helper/teacher aid to alert pool manager (Mick Wall) of emergency situation and ring for help (if required). (Telephone and emergency numbers situated on western wall of pool kiosk).
5. Teacher-in-charge/assisting adult and pool manager to remain with victim(s) until outside help arrives (if required).
6. Nominated adult to transport child to hospital (if required).

SAFETY EQUIPMENT

Student Equipment

- Appropriate clothing for protection against warm and cool weather
- Sunscreen
- Sun hats
- All beginners should wear approved buoyancy vests (Our Lady of Mount Carmel beginners to only enter water waist high)

Emergency Equipment

- Rope to mark activity area
- Rescue board and/or rescue tube
- First aid kit; with thermal-blanket or sleeping bag
- School Asthma kit (bag) including student asthma/allergies list
- A support/transport vehicle must be readily available at the selected location
- Mobile telephone with spare battery (if required)

VENUES, LOCATIONS

The teacher-in-charge must ensure that the venue conditions are matched to the students' level of ability and experience.

It is strongly recommended that open water swimming and swimming, whilst at the beach, be undertaken 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 not 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.