



Young people urged to stay safe around open water as hot weather continues

Dear Headteacher,

Across the UK, recent hot weather has already been linked to a high number of water-related deaths, many involving children and young people. With further warm weather anticipated over the summer period, the Merseyside Water Safety Forum would like your support in raising awareness of key water safety messages with children, young people and families before the summer holidays, particularly around the coast and inland waterways including rivers, lakes and reservoirs.

We also understand that water safety will become part of the curriculum under PHSE moving forwards – this is an opportunity to save lives and impart education on our children.

One drowning is too many. Please ask teaching staff to reiterate these simple life-saving messages to learners and families. Knowing what to do can save a life.

Key Messages

- There has already been a high number of water-related deaths across the UK during recent hot weather, and further warm weather is anticipated. Drowning risk increases significantly during periods of hot weather, including when air temperatures reach or exceed 25°C.
- Please remind learners never to jump into open water from bridges, piers, rocks or ledges. Cold water, hidden hazards, changing depths and currents can quickly lead to difficulty, even for confident swimmers.
- Be aware of sudden changes in depth, current and underwater hazards.
- Cold water shock is a key factor in drowning, even for experienced swimmers. This occurs when the person inhales deeply as a reaction to immersion. This can be triggered in water of 12 degrees and under which is common in England and lead to respiratory failure and increased fatigue.

Always follow the **Water Safety Code** when in, on or around water.

- **Stop and Think** – take time to assess your surroundings and look for dangers.
- **Stay Together** – when around water always go with friends or family and swim at a lifeguarded venue.
- **Float** – if you find yourself in trouble in the water.
- **Call 999** – in an emergency, do not enter the water.

Children and young people should be actively supervised around open water. Friends can help by staying together, but they should not be expected to act as lifeguards or enter the water to rescue someone.

If you find yourself in trouble in the water, **float to live**:

- Tilt your head back with your ears submerged.
- Try to relax and breathe normally while you move your hands to help you stay afloat.
- It's OK if your legs sink, we all float differently.
- Once the effects of the cold-water shock pass, shout for help.

For students in or above key stage 3, we would urge that if you see someone else in trouble in the water this summer, remember **Phone, Float, Throw**:

- **Phone** 999 to get help
- Tell the person in the water to stay calm and **float** on their back
- **Throw** rescue equipment (if available) to help them until the emergency services arrive.

Resources

Please share this letter with parents and guardians before the summer holidays.

Please also share the accompanying social media post or water safety graphics on your school channels.

StayWise has free education resources available to download from the [website](#). These resources are designed to support schools to deliver age-appropriate water safety messages in line with the Curriculum and include practitioner materials, activities and supporting content that can be used in lessons, assemblies, wellbeing work and wider safety education.

We encourage teachers to explore the resources and download the materials most relevant to their setting and learners. The package covers themes including recognising risk, making safe decisions around water, the Water Safety Code, cold water shock, Float to Live, and what to do in an emergency.

Yours faithfully,



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Chair of the Merseyside Water Safety Forum

Group Manager Community Safety – Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service