

# More support needed for teaching swimming in schools

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Britain could become a nation of non-swimmers if drastic changes aren't made to ensure all young people have access to adequate lessons and facilities, according to academics at the University of East Anglia (UEA).

Dr Craig Avieson and Dr Penny Lamb, of UEA's School of Education and Lifelong Learning, warn [swimming](#) provisions are falling to secondary [physical education](#) (PE) teachers, with 51 per cent of British children aged 7-11 unable to swim 25 metres. Children should be able to swim at least that length by the time they leave primary school, under curriculum requirements for Key Stage 2.

"It is a national problem that children cannot swim by age 11," said Dr Avieson, who along with Dr Lamb is publishing an article in the journal *Physical Education Matters*, outlining findings and presenting a new training model for teachers.

"Ensuring children have basic swimming skills is the responsibility of both primary and secondary schools and this is a chance to do something about it," said Dr Avieson.

"Teaching children such an important life skill should be a priority and there should be joined-up thinking between primary and secondary schools to address this issue."

Lack of funding, cost of transport and limited access to a pool - particularly in rural areas - are some of the reasons for a decline in swimming provisions for primary school students. With additional support and training for teachers, Dr Avieson and Dr Lamb believe there is hope of improving upon the findings of a 2013 Ofsted report, which showed one-fifth of 120 [primary schools](#) did not meet the required swimming standard for Key Stage 2.

In their article, Dr Avieson and Dr Lamb present a new model that uses the Amateur Swimming Association's (ASA) National Curriculum Training Programme to prepare trainee teachers to give swimming instruction.

Developed through a pilot study with UEA's secondary PGCE Physical Education programme, the model gave trainee teachers confidence in teaching swimming and increased awareness of ways to support lower-ability children.

In February the government announced additional funding of £150 million a year until 2020 to improve provision of PE and sport in

primary schools. Dr Avieson, a lecturer and former assistant head teacher, said national curriculum changes for 2014 and the increased government funding are incentives for improving swimming provisions for young students.

The article's findings are supported by the ASA, which conducted the largest-ever school swimming census involving more than 3,500 primary schools, in 2013. It found that on average, just 0.25 per cent of curriculum time was allocated to swimming, compared to 5 per cent allocated to other aspects of PE. Almost 20 per cent of schools – and 25 per cent of academies – do not know their swimming attainment rates or do not offer swimming at all,

"With 51 per cent of primary school children unable to swim the minimum of 25 metres, it has become essential for secondary PE teachers to understand the fundamental, core aquatic skills of swimming and how these skills transfer to the development of swimming strokes and other aquatic activities," said Susan Barlow, manager of the ASA's School Swimming programme.

"The NCTP allows secondary PE teachers to gain this knowledge and understand where these key skills fit.

The number one resource is school teachers: with the correct training they can give pupils the best possible start to swimming."

Barlow said the ASA recently created a website aimed at [teachers](#) to provide the essential guidance and support needed to meet the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum requirements. It can be found at: <http://www.swimming.org/schoolswimming>.

**More information:** 'Preparing trainee teachers for teaching swimming: an innovative model of delivery', Dr Craig Avieson and Dr

Penny Lamb, is published in *Physical Education Matters*, May 6, 2014.

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