

Subject: Open Water Swimming Advice

Date sent: 17th June 2020, 12:48pm

Great Barford C of E Primary Academy

Dear All,

Over the last few days I have become aware that a number of our families have been taking advantage of the beautiful weather and going to the river for a swim.

Although this activity is clearly not the responsibility of the school, we do still care deeply for our children and their families at all times. I would like therefore to share some reminders to everybody, shared with us by Ian Roberts (GBPA parent, and National Strategic Adviser for PE & School Sport).

There is a big difference between swimming in a pool and swimming outdoors. If you decide to swim in open water, then you should carefully consider the following factors:

- Make sure you have permission to swim at your chosen spot.
- Look out for safety signs
- If a sign says “no swimming” and/or “danger” don’t swim there. When there are signs, they are there for a reason.
- Avoid weirs, locks and other structures. These can create underwater currents that can pull even strong swimmers underwater.
- Have entry and exit points that are accessible by everybody. You need to be able to enter and exit the water slowly in a safe way. (The majority of accidental drownings involving children occur within 6’ of safety, where the child could not get out!). Avoid jumping into the water.
- Children should never swim, or indeed be near open water without parental supervision.
- Never turn your back on the water, and indeed the people swimming in it!
- Think about the water quality – is the water potentially polluted (e.g. looks dirty, is a strange colour or smells) or has any pipes running into it. Don’t swim in stagnant water.
- When open water swimming, cover cuts and abrasions, however minor, with sticking plasters. Don’t swim if you have deep cuts.
- Think about water temperature and the weather. Avoid swimming in strong winds, and where there is a big difference between air and water temperature.
- Be aware of tides and currents. A strong current can easily prevent you reaching where you want to swim, or it could pull you away from your planned exit point.
- Make sure you have access to your towel and warm clothing quickly upon exiting the water.
- If anyone feels ill seek medical advice by calling 111 – including rashes for up to three weeks after being in the water. Highlight that you have been swimming in open water and tell the operator the location that you swam in.
- Ensure you take all your belongings and leave the location as you found it. Take any litter with you and dispose when back at home.

I hope that you find this advice useful.

Take care,  
Sarah Evans  
Headteacher