

SUBMERSION POLICY

DATE: September 2018

Updated: September 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, January 2025

Kingfishers Swim Schools



'Forced infant submersion is not recommended by Swim England. Swim England believe submersion should be voluntary, as and when the child is ready. Progressive aquatic breathing activities should be taught by a qualified Level 2 Teacher to help a child establish water confidence.'

Our programme will not include forced submersion. However, we will encourage your child to gain confidence in getting their faces wet and towards child led submersion when they are able to make the choice themselves. We have made this decision based on hours of research whereby it was decided that there is no benefit to your child's swimming journey.

We will do this by doing 'wet activities' such as bobbing up and down, pouring water onto the back of the head, splashing and jumping in.

Accidental submersion may occur during these activities. This is not forced infant submersion.

Infant submersion is a grey area of risk which we are not willing to take. This article published by Swim England may help you to understand why we came to this conclusion.

Submersion

During the course of a lesson, it is possible that accidental submersion may occur, but this is very different to forcing babies or children's heads under the water. Due to the pressure of the water on the ears, the child does not have to be very far beneath the surface before experiencing pain.

Submersion of young babies

The forced submersion of young babies is not recommended by the ASA, a position fully supported by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA). It has been suggested that young babies have a natural breathing reflex which will prevent them from attempting to breathe underwater. This view point is not universally accepted within the medical profession and attempting to breathe underwater can lead to water intoxication (hyponatremia) caused by the young baby swallowing large amounts of water, the result of which can adversely affect the electrolyte levels of the baby.

'The ASA recommends a gradual process leading towards voluntary submersion by the child, without this being a forced activity. Acceptable forms of submersion are incidental submersion, voluntary such as the retrieval of objects and accidental.'

January 2025 Update

The STA have scrapped their original Starfish Awards and rewritten them towards a more child led approach. They have stated the following:

'For nearly two decades, STA's STARFISH Awards have been at the forefront of baby swimming, helping little ones aged 0-2 years develop essential physical, emotional, intellectual, and social skills – all while equipping them with key safety and safe hold skills in the water. Since those early days of baby swimming, before it became the mainstream activity we know today, the scientific understanding of early childhood development and the pedagogy behind baby swimming has advanced rapidly. As the leading experts in the teaching of baby swimming, STA has played a pivotal role in shaping these best practices over the last 20 years. Through continuous research and collaboration with worldwide industry experts, STA has ensured that its professional teaching practices, and the curriculum behind the STARFISH Awards remain aligned with the latest standards and scientific advancements in early years education.

In line with this, the updated STARFISH programme incorporates the latest holistic approaches to child-led teaching practices and reflects current submersion policies, which together support the creation of happier and more supportive learning environments. The new learning outcomes have also been carefully developed to reflect the most recent research on child development, ensuring that every milestone achieved is rooted in evidence-based practices.'