

## **Making Waves: Promoting Water Safety and Inclusive Swimming Initiatives**

### **Introduction**

In a world surrounded by water bodies, water safety is a vital skill that everyone should possess. However, ensuring that children, especially those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), receive proper water safety education and swimming opportunities can be quite a challenge.

Funded through the Department for Education (DfE), the aim of the Swimming and Water Safety programme is to improve and increase opportunities for pupils with SEND by increasing the quality and impact of Physical Education/School Sport/Physical Activity provision and training. This is done through innovating new content and delivery approaches and delivering swimming and water safety lessons (experimenting with timetabling and delivery).

Schools involved are asked to collectively review and directly enhance swimming provision. As part of this schools develop, test and evaluate innovative approaches in partnership with Swim England, to address the current challenges of engagement for young people with SEND to access and/or participate in swimming opportunities.

The impact of this project will see young people with SEND offered high-quality opportunities, developing life skills, independence as well as swimming ability which will further support schools' outcomes both for curriculum opportunities as well as life chances for their pupils.

In Northamptonshire, an inspiring initiative is underway to make sure that no child is left behind when it comes to water safety and swimming. In this update, we'll dive into the efforts being made to promote water safety and inclusive swimming initiatives in the county.

### **SEND SPECIFIC - Water Safety Promotion and Awareness**

One key aspect of this initiative revolves around promoting the Swim England School Charter, a comprehensive resource for schools to enhance water safety education. The Charter, which is now offered for free, has been enthusiastically endorsed and promoted to schools throughout the year, with multiple reminders sent out over the last three months. The message is clear: swimming lessons alone are insufficient to cover all water safety needs, especially given the limited time available for pool sessions.

Schools are encouraged to collaborate with swimming pools to ensure that water safety is integrated into the curriculum and discussed regularly with students. This information, along with Swim England and water safety resources, has been shared with over 330 contacts in Northamptonshire through the Northamptonshire Sport Inclusion School Network and with over 320 schools via the School Sports Managers.

### **Inclusive Swimming Lessons and Water Safety**

The initiative's impact is particularly evident in its work with SEND students. For instance, at Northampton School for Girls, a secondary school with an SEN unit, weekly swimming lessons for eight SEND children have been taking place since March. These lessons not only focus on improving swimming techniques but also provide essential water safety knowledge. As a result, these students have been awarded the Swim England School Water Safety Foundation Certificate.

The initiative has also included students who use wheelchairs. Their participation in swimming lessons has not only improved their physical well-being but has also boosted their confidence, communication skills, and ability to socialise with others. Collaboration with their physiotherapists ensures that swimming remains a fun, enjoyable and productive learning experience rather than a physio chore of exercises in the pool.

To cater to the diverse needs of students, class times have been adjusted to allocate more individualised attention. This ensures that each student's swimming needs are met, enhancing the overall quality of instruction and outcomes for the children, who are taught exclusively, in small groups of four so the focus is on each student, in a quieter more conducive environment.

### **Additional Support and Future Plans**

The initiative extends its support beyond the initial contact and support established through the Swimming Inclusion program. For example, following the initial work at Northampton School for Girls – and after enabling and establishing a programme to ensure school swimming is inclusive to all – funding has been arranged to enable and provide additional ongoing weekly swimming lessons to continue the progress of the children's swimming skills, technique, and ability.

Ensuring that the provision can continue has provided an enormous benefit for girls involved. It has not just improved their swimming, but also their confidence, participation, positivity, and we've seen general improvements in other lessons too.

Each year in partnership with the Lead inclusion School Friars Academy, the Northamptonshire Sport Inclusive Programme, is offered to both mainstream and special schools for any SEND children who would like to participate in and benefit from, the range of activities on offer. These include events such as sports leadership opportunities, running festivals and come and try opportunities as well as participating at the County School Games. Working in Partnership with our Governing Body County Development officers we are building on the Inclusive Programme each year.

This year we have added the opportunity for schools to receive free training and delivery opportunities, equipment, training programmes, lesson plans, and support to deliver sports specific SEND sports sessions in schools, alongside the trained SEND leaders who have participated in the Leadership Programme.

### **Conclusion**

The swimming initiative in Northamptonshire is making significant waves in promoting water safety and inclusive swimming opportunities for all students, including those with special educational needs. By emphasising the importance of water safety education and partnering with schools, this initiative is not only improving swimming skills but also enhancing the safety and well-being of young individuals in the region. With a commitment to inclusivity and a passion for water safety, Northamptonshire is setting a shining example for communities everywhere.

### **NORTHAMPTONSHIRE SPORT – in partnership with Friars Academy – Northampton Lead Inclusion School**

Northamptonshire Sport employ a part time County Inclusion Officer, which not only allows the delivery of the YST Lead Inclusion School initiatives led by Youth Sport Trust but also enables a whole inclusive programme of activities to develop and thrive across the whole county. This post allows us to establish and build strong links with schools, increase commitment and participation throughout the year, provide help and support whenever needed and encourage access to additional funding, training, and equipment. In addition, the County Inclusion Officer works directly with School Games Organisers daily to ensure all SEND children in the county have access to not only an Inclusive specific Programme but to all School Games and additional sports opportunities, competition and festivals programme that are central to the School Sports Partnerships. This allows for the both the School Games programme and the inclusion programme to offer a range of opportunities and ensure everyone has equal access.

One size doesn't fit all, and some SEND children/schools access both or either of the programmes available across the county. The Northampton Sport Inclusion Officer works in partnership with the PE lead at the Lead Inclusion School and meets regularly to ensure that the YST initiatives are central to the work the county inclusion programme offers. The inclusion programme is also shaped and designed by regular meetings with the schools who have signed up to take part in the inclusion programme of activities, and

who also provide ongoing feedback from events and opportunities they participate in to improve and meet needs.

They have a calendar for the year which has different focus areas from leadership to participation opportunities for all of the county to get involved in.

The NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Inclusive Programme of Activities – 23-24 is seen below:

INCLUSIVE ACTIVITY PROGRAMME 23-24		sport
OVERVIEW		
LEADERSHIP SEPT – DEC 23	PARTICIPATION SEPT 23 - JULY 24	OPPORTUNITIES THROUGHOUT
<p><b>SEND SPECIFIC LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME</b></p> <p><b>GENERIC LEADERSHIP CAMP</b> Leaders presented with T-shirts, Training, activities, resources, STFP</p> <p><b>SPORTS SPECIFIC TRAINING CAMPS</b> Tennis / Cricket / Golf / Football</p> <p><b>LEADERS AT SCHOOL</b> To assist in PE lessons and school / club opportunities supported by teachers.</p> <p><b>LEADERS LOGBOOK</b> For personal record of achievement and recording hours for celebration and reward celebration at School Games Finals.</p> <p><b>LEADERS TO RUN SCHOOL COME &amp; TRY / FESTIVALS &amp; OPPORTUNITIES</b> Run by leaders, hosted by individual schools.</p> <p><b>OPPORTUNITIES TO LEAD AT</b> Northamptonshire School Games Sports Specific Governing Body Events. County Partnerships Competitions throughout the year.</p> <p><b>CELEBRATION CEREMONY</b> Presentation and recognition of Leaders achievements to take place at the School Games Finals.</p>	<p><b>COME AND TRY OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <p><b>SEPT – DEC 22</b> Tennis, Cricket, Football, Golf aimed at any SEND children that would benefit from the experience of participating in different sports in a fun relaxed environment. Sessions run by the SEND LEADERS</p> <p><b>FESTIVAL OPPORTUNITIES</b> <b>JAN – MARCH 23</b> Participating schools to host and deliver opportunities of their choice run by the LEADERS having completed their leadership training. Schools invited to attend with their SEND children.</p> <p><b>SIGN UP TO SPORTS SPECIFIC GOVERNING BODY – FREE TRAINING, RESOURCES, (EQUIPMENT) &amp; LESSON PLANS</b> <b>JAN – MARCH 24</b> Opportunity for schools who sign up, to deliver a minimum of 6 weeks of sports sessions in schools, following coaches delivering session in school</p> <p><b>OPPORTUNITIES IN THE COMMUNITY APRIL – JULY 24</b> Football / Golf / Cricket / Tennis Club / Hub SEND link sessions.</p> <p><b>ADDITIONAL COMPETITIONS</b> School Games opportunities.</p>	<p><b>MATP</b> MOTOR ACTIVITY TRAINING PROGRAMME offers bespoke PE / activity support and guidance for children with severe needs</p> <p><b>SWIMMING</b> 121 swimming support for SEND students attending school swimming lessons, and Water Safety support/resources.</p> <p><b>COUNTY FOOTBALL LEAGUES</b> In partnership with Northants FA who help to co-ordinate the Secondary Special School Football League</p> <p><b>LORD TAVENERS TABLE</b></p> <p><b>CRICKET COUNTY COMPETITION - FEB 23</b> Winners to represent Northamptonshire in the Regional Competition, with the National Finals being played at Lords</p> <p><b>COMPETE AT THE SCHOOL GAMES FINALS – JULY 24</b> Schools who signed up to deliver the sports specific training initiatives - will be invited to attend a SEND competition at the School Games finals, to determine the County Champions.</p>
<p><b>ONGOING SUPPORT</b> - Support and resources to help with any specific PE inclusion issues.</p> <p><b>GOVERNING BODIES LINKS</b> - Sharing of good practice, dissemination of information from National &amp; Local Governing Bodies – promoting training opportunities – free coaching opportunities in schools. Club links.</p> <p><b>TERMLY INCLUSIVE NETWORK MEETING</b> - Meet with other schools, to discuss &amp; share info and support.</p> <p><b>CLUB &amp; COMMUNITY LINKS</b> – Access to community opportunities, clubs, coaches, initiatives and local projects.</p>		

## YST Lead Inclusion Schools

There are 53 Youth Sport Trust Lead Inclusion Schools across England who are recognised for their expertise in engaging young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) to participate, compete and lead through PE, physical activity and school sport. To find out who is the Lead Inclusion School in your area, take a look at this [interactive map](#).

Lead Inclusion Schools are inclusion champions and visionaries for what high quality, meaningful and inclusive PE and school sport should look like for every child. They work to empower teachers to be more inclusive in their practice, provide meaningful competition and competition pathways for young people, raising their aspirations and providing inclusive leadership opportunities.

This network forms part of the Youth Sport Trust's ongoing commitment to equality and diversity. Through our work we strive to ensure that every young person has the opportunity to participate in high quality PE and sport, regardless of their background, ethnicity, gender, ability or any other personal characteristic.