

The Physical Education Advisory Service

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Water safety and Drowning Prevention

Dear Colleagues

We would like to draw your attention to **Drowning Prevention Week**, 14 June – 21 June 2025.

Drowning Prevention Week is deliberately timed ahead of the school summer holidays when children spend more time outdoors when vital water safety skills can help keep them safe. With the current hot weather, children, particularly older children, may look to go swimming in open water to cool down and have fun. In Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, almost all schools have nearby risky places where children could enter water. One school has 40 different such sites within a mile of the school gate!

There is an increasing risk of young people coming to harm around inland bodies of water. Young people are drawn to risk and keen to impress their friends, so are taking greater and greater risks around water.

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) review the deaths of all children who die before their 18th birthday. They have highlighted a worrying increase in preventable deaths by drowning in the locality over the last year. In collaboration with Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council the Child Death Overview Panel has recommended that information around water safety is shared across all educational settings to prevent future deaths.

Accidental drowning fatalities among children have risen by 46% compared to the five-year average and tragically, 41 children have lost their lives in the last year — the equivalent of almost two classes of children. Two of these casualties were in our area.

- 46% of drownings occur in the June, July and August
- Males continue to over-represent - 83% of those children were boys

Even the strongest of swimmers can get into trouble in water outdoors and we have particular concern for young people who could be putting themselves and others at risk without knowing the dangers.

It is essential that young people can assess and manage risks around water, in order to make informed decisions.

Young people therefore need, and are calling for, education to support them to recognise and manage risks around water, including resisting pressure from peers and understanding what to do if they, or their friends, get into trouble in the water.

Resources and Support

Resources for lessons and assemblies

I have created a portal containing resources from The **Royal Life Saving Society** and the **Canal & River Trust**. These are very good and will be of immense use for schools.

Please download, use and share widely

<https://www.cambslearntogether.co.uk/cambridgeshire-services-to-schools/cambridgeshire-physical-education/swimming/water-safety>

Drowning Prevention Week 2025

<https://www.rlss.org.uk/Pages/Category/drowning-prevention-week-2021>

Water Smart Schools

This is a free accreditation programme for primary, secondary, and specialist schools - helping students gain essential skills for life. The Water Smart Schools Award provides a structured framework to help schools deliver high-quality, sustainable water safety education.

<https://www.rlss.org.uk/pages/category/water-smart-schools>

No More Water Deaths

West Mercia Search and Rescue have created a very good resource that all young people could work through, possibly within PSHE or as whole school learning challenge during Drowning Prevention Week. I think this would be a fabulous teaching and learning tool for children from Y5 through to KS4.

This is a **free** online course that teaches the risks, how to help someone in water, and the basics of saving a life.

It's suitable for all ages, and contains loads of information on dangers from water, and how to rescue someone who's in trouble. It takes 20-30 minutes to do the online course... **There is even a FREE certificate when you finish.**

<https://westmerciasar.org.uk/homeanddry/free-water-safety-online-course/>

Contacts:

The Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service are keen to support schools with water safety messaging, through provision of assemblies and onsite teaching

<https://www.cambsfire.gov.uk/community-safety/outdoor-safety/water-safety/>

To book a visit or find out more about what is available, please use their contact form

<https://www.cambsfire.gov.uk/contact-us/contact-form/>

For further advice and guidance about swimming and water safety, please contact Ian Roberts – Cambridgeshire Lead Adviser for PE & School Sport.

ian.roberts@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Yours faithfully



Ian Roberts – Lead Adviser for Physical Education and School Sport



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