



MOUNT HAWTHORN EDUCATION SUPPORT CENTRE

Swimming and Water Safety Policy

2021-2023

BACKGROUND

Generally, activities conducted in aquatic environments require a high degree of risk analysis and management. However, the level of risk will vary according to the nature of the activity. Swimming and water safety programs do not present the same level of risk as “free” swims and other less structured water-based activities. Activities conducted off the school site must comply with the Department of Education and Training policy *Excursions: Off School Site Activities*. The Swimming and Water Safety Section of the Department of Education and Training is responsible for the safe coordination of the Vacswim and InTerm swimming programs.

The procedures and guidelines specified in this section do not apply to these programs. In the case of Mount Hawthorn Education Support Centre, water based activities are most likely to be limited to swimming in a swimming pool on a recognised School Swimming Program at a local swimming pool. Since our students all have special needs, it is unlikely that they will be attending any other kind of water based activity and if they do, it will be swimming pool based.

PROCEDURES

In planning a swimming and water safety program, the teacher-in-charge must consider the:

- risks relevant to the
 - Environment
 - Students’ capacity
 - Activities to be conducted
 - Capabilities of the supervisor/supervisory team
 - Involvement of external providers
- required level of supervision
- supervision strategies
- means of identifying participants
- information to be provided to parents/guardians for their consent;
- communication strategies
- emergency response planning
- briefing for participant.

Where a swimming and water safety program is to be held off the school site at which the students are enrolled, the Department’s policy, *Excursions: Off School Site Activities* requires that the teacher-in charge prepare an Excursion Management Plan. The teacher-in charge must complete the checklist at Appendix A of *Excursions: Off School Site Activities* and submit it to the principal for endorsement.

ASSESS RISKS

The teacher-in-charge must conduct a risk analysis of the:

- environment
- students' capacity
- activities to be conducted
- skills of the supervisor/supervisory team
- involvement of external providers

ASSESS THE ENVIRONMENT

The teacher-in-charge must establish the suitability of the venue(s) relative to the students' skills and experience, the planned swimming and water safety activities and the supervision required.

- consideration must be given to the potential risk of injury
- selected activity areas are to be appropriately defined
- venue signage with respect to diving must be adhered to

Where practical, the teacher-in-charge is to have first-hand knowledge of the venue. Other sources of information may include the:

- venue manager
- local ranger or land manager
- lifeguard
- other schools that have conducted similar activities at that location
- external providers

ASSESS THE STUDENTS' CAPACITY

Prior to participation in a swimming and water safety program, the-teacher-in-charge must ensure that students have the required swimming and water safety skills to participate safely.

Where diving is to be performed, consideration must be given to diving competence and depth of water.

The teacher-in-charge must be aware of student health care maintenance and/or intensive health care needs.

A reassessment must be undertaken if any circumstances surrounding the activity change. This includes any change in the condition of the aquatic environment, or in the medical fitness, e.g. conditions such as asthma, epilepsy or fatigue or capacity of the students to undertake the activity.

ASSESS THE ACTIVITIES TO BE CONDUCTED

The full range of activities to be conducted during a swimming and water safety program is to be assessed and decisions made in relation to the selection of activities and areas to be used.

Assessment of additional skills required by students to participate safely in activities such as:

- diving or jumping from various heights
- swimming under water
- swimming in turbulent water
- entering and exiting the water

ASSESS THE EQUIPMENT TO BE USED

The teacher-in-charge must confirm that equipment to be used is checked to ensure that it is appropriate to the activity, safe and in working order.

ASSESS THE SKILLS OF THE SUPERVISOR/SUPERVISORY TEAM

The teacher-in-charge must ensure that there is a supervisor/supervisory team with appropriate experience, knowledge and skills to identify and manage potential risks at any stage during the swimming and water safety program.

Collectively, the supervisor/supervisory team must have the skills to:

- identify and establish a safe activity environment
- effect a rescue and render emergency care
- monitor and respond to weather and environmental conditions before and during activities
- monitor and assess the physical well-being of the students

At least one member of the supervisory team must hold a recognised qualification

Where a member of the non-teaching staff, external providers or volunteers agree to perform tasks that require them to care personally for students in the absence of a member of the teaching staff, the teacher-in-charge must consider the suitability of that adult for the task being assigned taking into account the:

- number of students involved
- age, experience and capabilities of the students
- activities to be undertaken
- characteristics of the venue
- health status, skills, and experience of the adult
- the role of supervisors will be determined by the teacher-in-charge

Adults, who are not teachers, but who possess the appropriate experience, competencies and/or qualifications, may be supervisors.

Non-teaching staff, volunteers and external providers have a right to refuse a request to personally care for students and to have their decision respected by members of the teaching staff.

Volunteers may be requested to complete a Confidential Declaration indicating whether or not they have any convictions or whether there are any circumstances or reasons that might preclude them from working with or near children. See *Excursions: Off School Site Activities Appendix C*.

Lifeguards on duty may be considered as members of the supervisory team only where their sole responsibility, at that time, is to actively supervise the area in which the activity is being conducted.

ASSESS THE INVOLVEMENT OF EXTERNAL PROVIDERS

Where an external provider is engaged, the teacher-in-charge must be satisfied that the provider is competent.

External providers (and their staff), other than a staff member of a TAFE College or a University, involved in activities with students must have a current national police certificate.

The teacher-in-charge and the manager of the venue/external provider must clearly establish the respective responsibilities of their staff.

The teacher-in-charge must inquire whether the selected external provider(s) has the appropriate level of public liability insurance. See *DoE Excursions: Off School Site Activities Appendix D*.

Activities may involve the use of the services of other government agencies or private companies. In such cases, Department staff must not sign indemnities, disclaimers or other documents provided by the agencies or companies which absolve them from liability for their own negligent acts or omissions.

The suitability of an external provider may be determined from the information provided (via telephone, website or correspondence) relating to:

- recent experience (including maintained logbooks)
- peak body organisation accreditation
- commercial operator's permit
- other licences and permits required by statutory authorities and land owners
- current qualifications, accreditation and any other relevant training of instructors
- public liability insurance
- reference from previous school clients

DETERMINE THE REQUIRED LEVEL OF SUPERVISION

The level of risk in aquatic activities is dynamic and must be constantly monitored.

Supervisory requirements must be considered in accordance with the:

- age of the students
- experience and ability of the students
- student medical conditions or disabilities
- supervisor(s) competence and experience
- type of activity to be undertaken
- nature of the environment, e.g. open or closed water
- location of the activity
- weather

MINIMUM LEVEL OF SUPERVISION

For swimming and water safety programs, there is a minimum level of supervision for students in the water. At no time will there be less than one qualified supervisor.

CLOSED WATER

For students enrolled at Mount Hawthorn Education Support centre, all of whom have special needs, there must be at least one qualified supervisor for every 5 students. In addition, there must be a suitable level of additional support from volunteers or school

staff to support particular identified students, such as very young or particularly high needs students.

QUALIFICATIONS

A qualified supervisor must hold a qualification recognised by the Department of Education and Training. For closed water environments, recognised qualifications include:

- Level I, II or III Coach (relevant to the specific activity) under the National Coaching Accreditation Scheme;
- RLSSA¹¹ Bronze Medallion
- SLSA¹² Bronze Medallion
- SLSA Surf Rescue Certificate
- AUSTSWIM Teacher of Swimming and Water Safety Certificate (recognised as being appropriate for swimming pools only)
- RLSSA Swimming Instructors Certificate (recognised as being appropriate for swimming pools only) and
- equivalent award as recognised by the Director General

ESTABLISH SUPERVISION STRATEGIES

Supervision strategies must ensure that the safety and well-being of students is maintained at all times.

The teacher-in-charge is to determine the number of supervisors and the supervisory strategies.

The teacher-in-charge must recognise that the number of schools and other user groups at a venue will increase the potential risk. The teacher-in-charge must determine the nature and number of other groups using the venue. Supervisory strategies must reflect the additional risk. It is essential that students in the water are actively supervised at all times. That is, the supervisory team has a clear view of all students.

The appropriate number of supervisors directly monitoring the students in the water must be maintained at all times.

Supervision strategies for students not in the water must reflect the risks associated with the proximity of water.

From time to time, a supervisor may need to leave his or her position. In such a situation, the supervisor should alert others on duty of his or her impending absence to ensure adequate supervision is maintained. However, the appropriate number of supervisors

directly monitoring the students in the water must be maintained at all times. As part of a management plan, a roster should be developed both to relieve and rotate supervisors.

DEVELOP A MEANS OF IDENTIFYING PARTICIPANTS

Students and supervisors must be easily identifiable.

The teacher-in-charge is to decide on a suitable system(s) of identification for participants based on the assessment of the aquatic environment, students' swimming and water safety skills, the type of activities to be undertaken, and the number of students.

Systems for identifying students include:

- the wearing of 'lifesaver' or swimming caps, neoprene armbands or rash shirts
- confining students to designated areas not being utilised by other schools or the public

PROVIDE INFORMATION AND SEEK CONSENT

Parent/guardian consent is required for all swimming and water safety programs. Information must be provided to parents/guardians to enable them to make informed decisions about their children's participation. Parents/guardians must be reminded to provide information about any changes to their children's health or fitness prior to the commencement of the swimming and water safety program.

Consent may be obtained for the duration of a swimming and water safety program.

The teacher-in-charge should ensure that parents and guardians of culturally and linguistically diverse students are provided with all necessary information regarding a swimming and water safety program.

DEVELOP A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Planning for a swimming and water safety program must include the development of a strategy that enables regular communication amongst all members of the group. The strategy must clearly identify a signal for gaining the full group's attention. An emergency signal must be selected and explained to all participants.

The communication strategy must enable contact with on-site and off-site support services. An alternative mode of communication must be available in case of the failure of the primary communication method.

Communication strategies that enable regular communication amongst all members of the group may include public address systems, megaphones, air horns, whistles, hand signals or flags.

VAC SWIM AND IN TERM SWIMMING PROGRAMS

This is a uniform system of whistle signals:

- one blast – stop, look and listen
- three long blasts – activity finished
- Short blasts in succession and arms waved above head – emergency, in which case clear the water immediately and assemble in a safe area nominated by the supervisor

COMPLETE EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLANNING

The teacher-in-charge must develop or obtain a suitable response plan that will ensure access to emergency support without compromising the safety and welfare of the group or of a casualty.

The teacher-in-charge is to ensure that emergency procedures, including emergency signals, are clearly understood by all students and supervisors.

All supervisors must be familiar with the evacuation procedures and the location of emergency equipment.

Supervisors must be appropriately attired to provide assistance during the activity.

A nominated supervisor must have ready access to:

- a list of the names of participating students and their parent/guardian contact telephone numbers
- the Student Health Forms and the relevant Health Care Authorisation Plans of those students who are known to have particular health requirements
- relevant health information of supervisors
- the teacher-in-charge must be familiar with the action to be taken when either the group or an individual participant becomes lost

Suggested emergency equipment includes items such as a rescue tube or board, first aid kit and communication equipment. Mobile phones should not be relied upon as the sole method of communication.

For off-site activities, an emergency response plan may include:

- a list of all participants and their contact and medical details, including the number of staff and external providers, their first aid qualifications and expertise
- the name of the venue to be used, its location and contact telephone number
- a map of the area(s) to be used, including the planned travel routes and alternative routes, time of departure and estimated time of arrival
- transport access details, e.g. by foot, bus, bus parking, train, including barriers
- location of the nearest telephone
- an estimate of the time it might take to raise an alarm and the amount of time that might elapse before appropriate support could be provided

BRIEF STAFF AND SUPERVISORS

The teacher-in-charge is responsible for ensuring that all relevant information about respective responsibilities and obligations is clearly communicated to school staff and supervisors. Topics that must be included are:

- emergency procedures and signals
- methods of communication
- appropriate use of any equipment
- roles of supervisors
- the system for identifying students and supervisors
- areas demarcated specifically for identified student groups
- standards of acceptable behaviour