



Will Quince MP

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families

Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/contactus/dfe

16 May 2022

Letter to Chair of the Petitions Committee – Catherine McKinnell MP

Dear Catherine,

Thank you for writing to Robin Walker to follow-up on the petition debate raised by Rebecca Ramsay to 'Increase curriculum content about water safety as part of swimming lessons' in July 2021. I am replying as minister responsible for physical education and school sport. This is an important issue and I am pleased to be able to write to you to provide further details of the work the Department is undertaking with school swimming and water safety partners as a result of the debate.

As outlined in your letter, classroom-based water safety education for primary and secondary pupils that complement pool-based lessons provides an important opportunity for children and young people to learn these critical life skills. The Department is working closely with the National Water Safety Forum to support the development and launch of a new framework and water safety resources for key stages 1-3. Since the debate a number of actions have been completed through the sector's National Education Plan:

- A high-level audit of current sector and organisational approaches to water safety education in schools
- An education framework covering key stages 1-3. This includes a list of core competencies.
- 30 minute lessons for key stages 1-2 covering core competencies. The key stage 3 lesson is in development.
- A series of resources for schools to engage in a week of themed activities. These are being piloted and tested.

The National Education Plan also includes subject-specific lessons mapped to Key Stage 3 curriculum to support the teaching of locally-identified risk factors, training and continuing professional development for the school workforce and water safety school educators from the sector.

The Department will continue to work with National Water Safety Forum members to help ensure the resources meet the needs of teachers and I welcome the sector's efforts to act on feedback from officials to test and pilot resources with schools. I understand that the Black Swimming Association has commissioned

Leeds Beckett University to undertake a national benchmark survey and I am pleased to see the sector working to develop the evidence on what works and to ensure resources and messaging work for all pupils.

Officials and the sector have discussed options for a panel to support water safety in schools. The work outlined above has shown that the sector and government can work effectively together to support schools through the National Water Safety Forum's Water Safety Education Group. The structure of this established group allows a wide range of expertise to be drawn together and supports clear and joint messaging. Our intention is to use this existing forum as an advisory group.

Officials will be meeting with Rebecca Ramsay, Royal Life Saving Society UK, Royal National Lifeboat Service and Swim England on 5 May to discuss progress and next steps, including ongoing departmental support for Drowning Prevention Week in June.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Will Quince', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Will Quince MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families