

Merton Schools Swimming Strategy & Guidance Document

Version 4: September 2012



Written by the Merton Schools Swimming Strategy Group.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Merton School Sport Partnership (MSSP) recognises that the ability to swim is a vital life skill which all children should learn as early on in their development as possible. The current level of children who can swim 25m unaided in Merton's primary schools is estimated to be at around 31%. National Curriculum requirements state that children should be able to swim 25m unaided by the end of Key Stage 2 and Ofsted recommend this figure to be around 80% of pupils. This concern was highlighted at the October 2011 MSSP Steering Group forum and the MSSP have been tasked with writing a strategy which provides guidance in order to support our teachers around their challenge to improve swimming within their school.

2. Aims

2.1 In October 2011 it became clear that many schools did not track or know their pupils' ability levels. Our strategy seeks to encourage Merton schools to formally assess swimming ability for their pupils at Key Stages 1-2 and to provide annual figures for year 6 pupils.

2.2 Questionnaires completed by teachers from Merton primary schools along with statistics provided by Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) suggest that the number of children able to swim 25m is low. We aim to support schools to increase the number of children at Key Stage 2 who can swim 25m unaided to meet the OFSTED recommendation by July 2017.

2.3 The strategy will provide a starting block upon which to build and improve school swimming in Merton. It will encourage local partners to communicate and work better together to provide opportunities to our schools. It will also provide generic guidance, recommendations and specific examples of local practice and problem solving from a range of Merton schools. It is hoped that our schools will then take from this the ideas and guidance that would work best for their school and their unique situation to overcome barriers and improve swimming.

3. Key Stage 1 and 2 Provision

3.1 Merton Audit

MSSP and Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) audited the current provision for swimming lessons in Merton's Pools. Consultation took place with GLL's strategic leads for school and top up swimming and Merton's primary schools to uncover the potential reasons for lower than average swimming ability. Questionnaires were completed by 27 of the 43 primary school PE link teachers at the MSSP conference in October 2011.

Feedback and results from consultation and questionnaires determined the following:

- a) Many teachers were unsure of the number of pupils who could swim 25m unaided
- b) Those schools which offered a short period of swimming (12 weeks or less at 30 mins per week) in order to try and provide for more year groups had a higher approximate percentage of non-swimmers than those who focused on one or two year groups for a longer period of time
- c) Travel options/logistics and cost were sometimes a barrier to participation at local pools
- d) Parental support out of school hours through lessons and family pool time appears to have a significantly positive impact on ability to swim
- e) GLL pools were generally regarded as good with one or two issues around upkeep/cleanliness of the facility (namely around Morden Park Pool and changing facilities at Canons Leisure Centre) and timetabling to suit school's needs
- f) Some schools noted that GLL do not always provide certificates at the end of their courses
- g) GLL staff ratio of 1 to 8 pupils is regarded as 'good', as recommended by the national governing body Amateur Swimming Association (ASA)
- h) Few of Merton's primary school teachers are trained and qualified to support swimming lessons, by having the Level 1 Teachers Swimming Award
- i) GLL's current commitment to booking lessons for schools is on a first come first served basis and they advise that this ensures children have an equal opportunity and entitlement to learn how to swim whilst in school.
- j) GLL's relationship with parents could be better to encourage them to take children to pools out of school hours.

3.2 Local and National Statistics

- a) GLL have advised that although they can provide some regional comparisons, they have little faith in our national statistics being wholly robust. 80% of children being able to swim 25m unaided is generally acknowledged as acceptable by Ofsted.
- b) GLL captured data for year 5 and 6 pupils learning to swim in their pools across London and around 48% were able to swim 25m in 2011.
- c) In Merton's GLL managed pools, assessments show that at the end of the spring term 2012 out of 1448 tested pupils (predominantly Key Stages 1-2) 402 pupils could swim 25m+ equating to 28%.

This included:

- 48 pupils attaining 200m+
- 40 pupils attaining 100m
- 94 pupils attaining 50m
- 220 pupils attaining 25m

Out of the 1448 pupils:

- 330 were from SEN schools; 10 of these pupils attained 25m
- 23 were from High schools; 8 of these pupils attained 25m

d) This information provides us only with results for those children that attended GLL school swimming lessons during that particular term. There is currently no Merton wide method in place to capture data around children's swimming levels before they leave primary school at the end of year 6.

3.3 GLL Guidance to Schools

GLL worked with the London Borough of Greenwich and the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) to provide a guidance document for school swimming. In this document they highlight that key factors which impact on swimming training include class size, frequency and lesson time. Further details are shown on the diagram (a) below taken from this document.

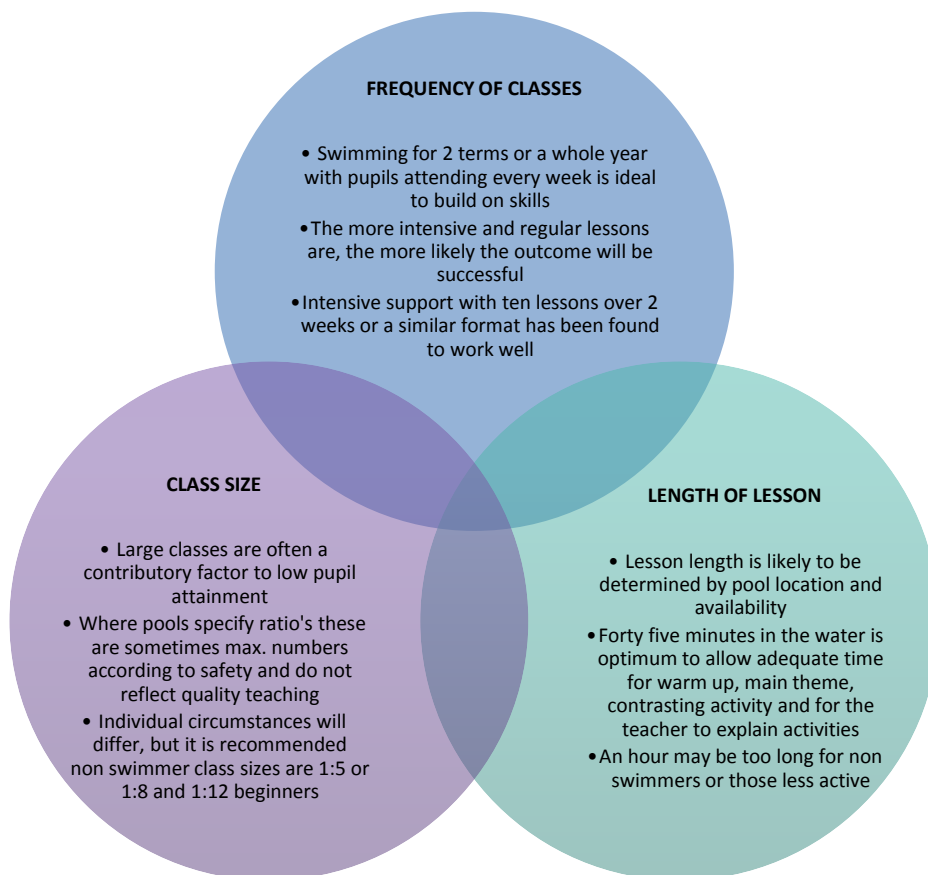


Diagram a.

3.4 National Curriculum Standards

*'Swimming activities and water safety **must** be chosen as one of the areas of activity unless pupils have completed the full Key Stage 2 teaching requirements in relation to swimming activities and water safety during Key Stage 1. Pupils should be able to swim unaided more than a distance of at least 25 metres. Advice and guidance for teachers and others to support the planning and teaching of swimming is available on the Department's website.'*

Excerpt from the Department for Education Website, 1st Aug 2012:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/popularquestions/schools/curriculum/a005562/is-swimming-a-compulsory-part-of-the-national-curriculum>

a) Key Stage 1 National Curriculum, Breadth of Study:

Swimming activities and water safety

9. Pupils should be taught to:

- a. move in water [for example, jump, walk, hop and spin, using swimming aids and support]
- b. float and move with and without swimming aids
- c. feel the buoyancy and support of water and swimming aids
- d. propel themselves in water using different swimming aids, arm and leg actions and basic strokes.

b) Key Stage 2 National Curriculum, Breadth of Study:

Swimming activities and water safety

9. Pupils should be taught to:

- a. pace themselves in floating and swimming challenges related to speed, distance and personal survival
- b. swim unaided for a sustained period of time over a distance of at least 25m
- c. use recognised arm and leg actions, lying on their front and back
- d. use a range of recognised strokes and personal survival skills [for example, front crawl, back crawl, breaststroke, sculling, floating and surface diving].

4. Considerations

The group have determined that alongside the general swimming guidance and recommendations from GLL, the ASA and OFSTED there are additional considerations to be taken into account when planning our strategy to improve the level of swimming ability within Merton's schools. These included:

4.1 Financial Constraints

- a) The schools and the MSSP are facing cuts each year so no additional funding has so far been secured to support this strategy. Instead we will have to find different ways of working to achieve our goals.
- b) MSSP will continue to seek external funding where possible and will work with Pro-Active South London, GLL and the ASA to keep up to date with any new initiatives which may support the strategy. GLL and MSSP feel school budgets for swimming need to be transparent and fit for purpose in order for all parties to work better together around this strategy.

4.2 Logistics and Transport for Schools

Schools start to plan their lesson timetable and budget for transport and support staff at least six months ahead.

4.3 Age Group of the Swimmers

Year 5 and 6 students may not be the best to focus on. By the time pupils are in year 6 their focus tends to be on academic attainment. Schools are therefore unlikely to want to focus on swimming as a major part of the lesson timetable. As they approach year 5, many children become more aware of their body image which can sometimes make them less willing to take part in swimming activities amongst their peers. It is also important for children to learn to swim as early as possible for their own safety around water.

4.4 Timetables

Although it might be preferable for children to receive an intensive course of swimming lessons it is not always possible for schools to alter their timetables in this way for shorter periods of time. It would therefore be more accommodating for schools to look at regular lessons over a longer period for a single group of children with the potential for more intensive top up swimming during school holidays where possible. This would be dependent upon parental support.

4.5 Parental Support

Schools can play a big part in providing opportunities for swimming lessons. There is only so much they can do if parents are unable or unwilling to provide opportunities to learn to swim and to enjoy swimming activities out of school hours.

4.6 Enjoyment

- a) GLL and teachers have noted that when the fun element is taken out of swimming some children lose interest and have less enthusiasm to learn. This may be the case when assessments at the start of lessons are formal and rigid. GLL have highlighted that new ways of assessing ability could be looked into as well as more preparation in the classroom so more time is spent actually

swimming in the pool. This can be done via PowerPoint presentations given to the school before attendance or a pre visit.

- b) There are currently no competitive or fun based swimming events in the Merton school's sports calendar.

4.7 Raising the Profile of Swimming

With the high academic priorities within schools, swimming does not always make it to the top of Head Teachers' priorities within the budget and as a curriculum target.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1** In light of the financial constraints and other considerations as detailed above we believe that the key factor, within our control, which will help us increase the number of children that can swim 25m unaided is to increase the consistency and time spent in the pool for the individual swimmer.
- 5.2** GLL recommend that by changing the timetabling structure to ensure that a child has regular weekly lessons over a period of at least one year there will be a significant positive outcome in terms of their swimming ability.
- 5.3** The recommended year groups to focus on are years 1–3. At this age we believe the children are less body conscious and less fearful of water. It also provides them with the earliest opportunity to learn a vital life skill.
- 5.4** An example of a recommended schedule for school swimming can be seen below (diagram b). The age group and schedule can be moulded to best suit the school.
- 5.5** With the recommended schedule we are aware that schools wishing to change to this format may notice a gap in provision for the first year i.e. the year 3s will not have had the planned ‘two summer half-term’s’ worth of preparation and lessons when they were in year 2. In this case we are working with GLL and other partners to provide some free and/or subsidised summer lessons to help bridge the 12 week gap that these pupils will encounter.
- 5.6** GLL will ensure that schools within Merton will get priority when planning school swim timetables at their pools.
- 5.7** The group will use this strategy to raise the profile of school swimming and its importance to teachers and parents. We will seek to implement a Key Stage 2 swimming gala to encourage more schools and parents to get involved in swimming.

5.8 Class Sizes

- a) Where schools have 60 or more pupils who are beginners or non-swimmers attending one time slot it becomes more challenging to programme an effective lesson as the shallow end and teaching pool become overcrowded. Schools are therefore offered more than one slot to ensure pupils can still access high quality teaching and facilities.
- b) As Merton schools continue to expand in response to the number of children living within the borough we will seek to maximise the number of schools and pupils who can utilise the pool at any one time. GLL are currently looking into purchasing mobile platforms which reduce the depth of the pool in any given area allowing more of the pool space to be useable by beginners and non-swimmers.

	Summer Half Term 1 Apr - May	Summer Half Term 2 Jun - Jul	Summer Holidays 6 weeks	Autumn Half Term 1 Sep - Oct	Autumn Half Term 2 Nov - Dec	Spring Half Term 1 Jan - Feb	Spring Half Term 2 Feb - Mar
Yr 1	Water Confidence Fun Taster Sessions In place of 1 x PE lesson p/w						
Yr 2	Classroom Based Swim Preparation during lesson time	Swimming Lessons In place of 1x PE lesson p/w	GLL Summer Swim Schools GLL to provide discounted learn to swim lessons and fun time family sessions for OSH				
Yr 3				Swimming Lessons In place of 1x PE lesson p/w	Swimming Lessons In place of 1x PE lesson p/w	Swimming Lessons In place of 1x PE lesson p/w	Swimming Lessons In place of 1x PE lesson p/w



Diagram b.

5.9 Teacher Training

- a) As part of the proposal we plan to deliver the ASA's teacher training course to our year 3, 4 & 5 teachers (and NQTs, AOTTs) on 4th October 2012 and then as required annually or biannually. The ASA and GLL have agreed to fund this course ensuring that it is free to all Merton school staff. This will limit the financial barriers to schools sending staff along. The training will ensure that teachers observing from pool side can get more involved and encourage and enthuse their pupils whilst in the pool. The pupils tend to do better when the teacher they know and trust is there to support their learning.
- b) By up skilling our teachers they will gain confidence and can also prepare the children at school before their swimming lessons to ensure health and safety, swimming preparation and other areas are covered. This will avoid wasting too much valuable pool time. Teachers in Merton will be provided with resources to support the delivery of these lessons.
- c) We believe that the take up of teacher training and a change of teachers' mind-set around their role on pool side will help to improve the learning of pupils. It needs to become common place once again for teachers to support on pool side and not for them to use the time to mark work and plan lessons.

5.10 Assessments and Tracking Attainment

- a) Assessments will take place by GLL instructors at the start and end of each term and full results will be passed on to the Partnership and schools so they can monitor their pupils initial ability and improvements. All pupils will receive a certificate from GLL and teachers should be provided with a register showing the swimming level achieved by each pupil.
- b) GLL will work with their swimming teachers to ensure that a new and more fun approach to assessments takes place. This will enthuse the children to learn and remind them how much fun swimming can be in the hope that they will learn more readily and want to attend the pool in their own time with their family and friends.
- c) We are currently working with LB Merton to adapt their Student Information Management System (SIMS) to support schools tracking of attainment. The system is to be piloted in 4 Merton Primary Schools from September 2012. It will include a simple option to mark progress of swimming attainment through the levels provided by GLL assessments. This will ensure that teachers have a way of tracking progress throughout the pupils' primary schooling. This data can also stay on the pupils' records as they transfer to Merton secondary schools.
- d) Swimming attainment is also now recorded in the Merton School Sport Mark Questionnaire completed by all schools in July each year. This will help us to record data across all our schools in order to better measure our data.
- e) MSSP staff will work closely with their Primary Link Teachers (PLTs) to ensure Swimming forms part of their School's PE and Sport Action Plan and will seek to provide any additional support as required by the school.

f) Attainment levels to be recorded by GLL instructors and schools will consist of:

GLL Award Level	Criteria	Classroom Work	Recommended level to join GLL Swim Schools:
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to enter and exit the water safely • Move by walking in all directions* • Be at ease with water on face and head • Push and Glide on Front and Back regaining a standing position* 	Water Safety Code, understanding resistance and buoyancy	STAGE 2
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blow bubbles into water • Travel on Back for 5m* • Travel on Front for 5m* • Rotate from Front to Back to a standing position 		STAGE 3
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jump in from poolside and submerge (min depth 0.9m) • Perform a Push and Glide into a log roll rotating 360 degrees • Fully submerge to pick up an object • Travel 10m on Back and Front 		STAGE 4
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform a Tuck Float for 5 seconds • Push and glide from the wall to the pool floor • Demonstrate effective leg kick on 3 strokes each over 10m** • Swim 10m on preferred choice of stroke 	Understanding of personal survival and actions required in emergencies	STAGE 5
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform feet first, head first and stationary sculling sequence • Tread water for 30 seconds • Perform a jump into deep water • Able to swim 10m on at least 3 strokes • Perform a jump into deep water and return to surface with eyes open 		STAGE 6
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swim 10m with clothes on to floating object and adopt HELP position • Perform a surface dive • Swim 25m on preferred choice of stroke • Perform a shout and signal rescue 		STAGE 7
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swim 25m Backstroke • Swim 25m Front Crawl • Swim 25m Breaststroke • Swim 25m Butterfly • Perform a sitting dive • Swim 50m continuously using 1 stroke • Perform a sequence with a duration of 1 minute which includes: Sculling, Rotation, Floating and Treading Water using an Eggbeater Kick • Swim 100m continuously using a minimum of 3 different strokes 	Understanding of skills relating to other aquatic disciplines and rescue techniques	Stage 8-10 competitive swimming, diving, rookie lifesaving, synchro, water polo or contact local swimming club

* Buoyancy Aids may be used. ** A float should be used

5.11 GLL Support

- a) GLL will commit to offering part funded places on their non-curriculum lessons for pupils from schools that commit to this programme. This can then act as an intervention in the event that a small number of children are not able to achieve required standards by the end of the programme.
- b) GLL will seek to improve relationships with parents and better promote their swim schools and pools. GLL will look to meet and greet parents outside the school's gates and deliver assemblies; primarily in those schools where swimming attainment and parental support is low.

- c) GLL will ensure that all schools receive certificates and attainment levels achieved for each pupil at the end of each half term.

5.12 Cost

- a) The current cost per pupil per lesson is around £1.66 and should not change. This does not include transport and staff support costs which the school may have to factor in.
- b) LB Merton Education department has confirmed that there is no set allocation of the schools budget which is ring-fenced for swimming. It is down to Head Teachers to allocate funds for swimming out of their overall budget each year.

5.13 Sustainability

- a) We hope that this programme, once embedded, will have a real impact on the number of Merton pupils who can swim 25m. If the recommendations are followed again year on year and further developed as required then this should be a financially viable structure on which to build.

5.14 Secondary Schools Key Stages 3 & 4

- a) The general feedback from the Merton Heads of PE suggests that many of our secondary school pupils are also unable to swim 25m. Although this is an area we plan to address it is not practical to focus on this age group in the first instance. By dealing initially with the primary age group the secondary schools will eventually see an improvement in the ability of the swimmers they take on roll at year 7.
- b) The MSSP are however looking into opportunities to fund some top up swimming for Key Stage 3 & 4 where PE departments have identified those who are most in need of lessons. It is much harder to timetable Key Stage 3 & 4 students to come out of school during curriculum time to swim.
- c) Our first task with Key Stage 3 & 4 will be to work with the PE departments to assess the ability of all their pupils in order for us to further this part of the strategy.

5.15 Competitive Swimming and Links to Local Clubs

- a) It is recommended that a Merton Schools Gala be set up for 2012/13 in order to raise the profile of school swimming and encourage schools and pupils to swim more.
- b) Schools will be asked to offer the role of Gala Organiser to their staff and a teacher will be selected to coordinate this with support from GLL and MSSP.
- c) LB Merton Education department will fund the teacher in charge through an honorarium for the first year of the event when extended planning and time will need to be spent coordinating.
- d) GLL will provide Morden Park Pool for the gala at no cost and will encourage local swimming clubs to get involved and support through officiating
- e) The Gala should include a competitive element for stronger swimmers as well as an inclusive competitive opportunity for improvers and children with special needs.

5.16 Inclusion

The recommendations in this document are transferrable and can be used to support any mainstream or special school to improve the swimming attainment of their pupils. Children with additional needs or disabilities may benefit from a smaller ratio of pupils to instructors, additional lessons and for school staff to be actively supporting in the water.

5.17 Out of School Swimming

- a) GLL will further work with us to promote their family swimming and London swim school. The GLL swim Guarantee will also provide incentives for pupils after the Key Stage 1/2 delivery. Free vouchers for public sessions in holiday periods and discounts on intensive intervention courses will be provided where possible.

6. Case Studies

Head teachers from the Merton Schools Swimming Strategic Group felt it would be useful to demonstrate how their schools manage swimming lessons. Below are some examples of local practice.

a) Links Primary School

Links Primary school is on the outskirts of Mitcham and they have found their current swimming set up is not quite as effective as they would like it to be. They use GLL's Canons Leisure Centre and take the children there via public transport which works well for them. They take year 3 for half a term, then year 4 for half a term and then year 5 for half a term each academic year, which means the children only get 6 weeks of swimming per year.

They charge the pupils £2 each, the PTA donates £500 towards costs and Links cover the shortfall.

During the spring term they were fortunate to be involved in the 'Make a Splash' programme at Harris Academy Merton where a small group of non-swimmers had free lessons in the temporary pool. This really helped to improve the children's ability.

This coming year the Head Teacher plans to change their schedule to focus on one year group for the whole year, in the hope that by the end of the year the majority can swim 25m. She has also been working closely with GLL to try and get more time in the pool and is looking to move to Wimbledon LC to achieve this.

b) Garfield Primary School

The Head Teacher at Garfield has set about plans to increase swimming lesson provision from their previous 'one class swims for half a term per year' structure. Garfield now use GLL's Wimbledon Leisure Centre and focus on year 3 and year 4 alternating each half term. The pupils will receive six half term's worth of lessons over the two year period.

The lessons are paid for by the school and cost approximately £2,500 p/a for 60 children per year group. Their PE coordinator/PLT records data on achievement and all children receive certificates from GLL.

c) St Teresa's Primary School

The Head Teacher, Justin Dachtler, at St Teresa's allocates £2,000 p/a to swimming and also charges parents £1 per lesson. This year they are piloting lessons for reception classes. No other years are currently swimming. The pilot group are fortunate to have the use of Perseid's small pool and they take three groups of 20 children at a time. They have sought their own swimming instructors to take the lessons.

Justin is a qualified swimming instructor and his view is that it is best to teach them as young as possible and that water confidence is important as well as the 25m badge. He believes it is vital that Head Teachers see this as an important part of children's schooling and not just a bolt on.

d) Pelham Primary School

Pelham is a small primary school which uses Wimbledon LC for swimming lessons. Pelham are able to walk the children there and they provide lessons from Reception to Year 5. Each year group gets one term of lessons per year. There is no charge at Key Stage 2 as swimming is part of the curriculum and Governors have therefore agreed to fund this. From reception to Key Stage 1 parents are asked for a voluntary contribution towards the cost.

Pelham are aware that they need to track their pupil's attainment for swimming better as they do get this information from GLL and all pupils receive certificates. One thing they recommend as a good practical solution is to send Reception classes along with year 5 to help balance out pool availability across the main and teaching pools

e) St Matthew's Primary School

For the last ten years St Matthew's have provided swimming lessons weekly across the academic year for year 2 and 3. They feel they are lucky as they ask parents to pay for the lessons/travel and 90 per cent are happy to. The school then pick up any short fall. They believe that swimming continuously over two years gives the children a really good chance of making clear progress; 99% of their pupils can swim 25m + by the end of year 3.

Providing lessons for pupils at this young age means they have less fear, no embarrassment during changing and are able to learn more quickly. Erin Shardlow, the PE Coordinator/PLT says she absolutely recommends swimming weekly for a substantial amount of time at a young age as the benefits and progress are clear.

7. Outcomes

- 1.1 We are ambitious in our aims and anticipate that the number of pupils in year 6 who can swim 25m will increase as follows:

2012 approximate data for Key Stages 1& 2 – 31%

July 2013 – 40%

July 2014 – 45%

July 2015 – 50%

July 2016 – 55%

July 2017 – 80%

If years 2 and 3 are a focus for most schools from 2012/13 it is likely to take five years to see the full impact of this strategy as they are measured at year 6. Hopefully by raising the profile of swimming, better tracking of pupil progress and training teachers we will also support an increase in attainment in the first four years.

- 2.1 We will use new SIMS data to record attainment and the Merton School Sport Mark to collate this information in July each year. GLL staff will ensure that attainments are communicated at the end of each half term to the primary school teachers
- 3.1 MSSP and GLL will provide new school's data and a brief report on the outcomes of the strategy in September each year.
- 4.1 MSSP and GLL will provide each school's PLT with support to resolve any barriers specific to their school deemed to be affecting their swimming levels.
- 5.1 This document will be a 'live' document which is updated annually and available to download online at www.mertonssp.org.uk

8. Group Representatives

Merton Schools Swimming Strategic Group Consists of the following members:

Andrew Clark – Swimming Development Manager, GLL

Suzanne Philpot – Aquatics Development Manager, GLL

Claire Bryant – Regional Sports Officer, GLL

Yvonne Norman – Head Teacher, Garfield Primary School

Sue Taylor – Head Teacher, Links Primary School

Justin Dachtler – Head Teacher, St Teresa's Primary School

Maria Keenan – Head Teacher, Pelham Primary School

Nicola Ryan – Director of Merton School Sport Partnership

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