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for Transport

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From the Parliamentary
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Dear Nick,

Water Safety Education and School Swimming

I am writing to seek your views on school swimming lessons and water safety education following a recent round table discussion I chaired during Maritime Safety Week. The discussion included raising awareness of the newly adopted [UN Drowning Prevention Resolution](#) and the work of the [National Water Safety Forum](#) (NWSF).

At the round table, presentations were provided by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution to introduce the UN resolution, and from key NWSF members who provided information about the work already in place to support the resolution actions.

During the discussion Catherine West MP, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Swimming, explained that swimming and water safety are already included in the National Curriculum with three requirements:

- Perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations.
- Swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25 metres.
- Use a range of strokes effectively, for example, front crawl, backstroke and breaststroke.

It was highlighted that despite this requirement, even before the impact of Covid, almost one in four children could not swim the statutory distance when they left primary school. Covid has exacerbated the situation, with a recent report from Swim England and the APPG for Swimming indicating that 1.88 million children are missing out on swimming participation in the 2020/21 academic year.

Concerns were raised around the impact this could have on increased levels of child drowning and the future adult population not being adequately prepared to be safe in and around the water. The full report can be found here: www.swimming.org/swimengland/impact-coronavirus-school-swimming-report/

I understand the Chair of the NWSF, Dawn Whittaker, has offered the NWSF's assistance to help enhance the resources to support water safety education in schools. I am sure this will be a great practical asset to aid teaching in schools and my officials have informed me that you are planning to meet NWSF representatives in the Autumn. I also commend the Department for Education for extending the £320 million PE and Sport Premium for the next academic year which will make a real difference for school swimming and water safety. Ensuring this important curriculum requirement is met will assist in saving lives from drowning.

In closing I would like to seek your views on a classroom-based enhancement to the current water safety and swimming curriculum and your views on including the requirement for school swimming lessons as part of the Ofsted inspection regime?

I am copying this letter to Catherine West MP, Chair of the APPG for swimming.

Yours sincerely,



ROBERT COURTS MP

MINISTER FOR AVIATION, MARITIME AND SECURITY