

# Team Scotland teach Pirniehall Primary pupils how to swim!

Scottish Swimming had the eyes and ears of Ministers and invited guests at a Parliamentary Reception on the importance of every child in Scotland being given the opportunity to learn to swim before they leave primary school, officially launching the start of its #everychildcanswim campaign in partnership with [Scottish Salmon](#).

Recent research suggests that approximately 30 to 40% (15,000 to 20,000) of children in Scotland are leaving primary school unable to swim, a high percentage of those children who cannot swim living in the socially deprived areas of Scotland. With the provision of primary school swimming lessons being a non-statutory requirement in Scotland, delivery of school swimming lessons differs extensively between and even within local authorities.

Ahead of the reception the governing body and Edinburgh Leisure held a swimming lesson at the Royal Commonwealth Pool and gave 40 primary school children from Pirniehall Primary School in Edinburgh the chance to be taught to swim by Team Scotland members Kathryn Johnstone, Corrie Scott, Andrea Strachan, Kieran McGuckin, Jack Thorpe and James Heatly, IPC European Championships Qualifier Scott Quin, and European Juniors Finalist Megan Briggs, who all train at the pool. The athletes not only helped the children with their lesson, but showed them how much fun swimming is, with a great deal of splashing and lots of noise. The children have benefitted from the Top Up Programme, funded by the Scottish Government, which helped to recruit additional swimming teachers.

Speaking ahead of the Parliamentary Reception, Forbes Dunlop,

Chief Executive Officer at Scottish Swimming, said: "Swimming is the sport for all, the sport for life. Learning to swim at an early age sets a positive foundation towards a lifetime of participation and enjoyment in a variety of water sports and aquatic activities. We are delighted to be given the opportunity to share our vision and campaign on such a platform and we hope to secure the appropriate backing, which will support our continued efforts to provide not only swimming in schools, but also offer quality training to Local Authorities to help deliver the programme."

Scottish Swimming's vision is to ensure that every child can swim. The governing body believes that it's never too early to introduce children to water and give them a firm foundation in a skill that will put them on a journey towards a lifetime of participation and enjoyment.

The vision is backed up by Sir Peter Heatly CBE DL, Triple Commonwealth Gold Medalist and Life Vice President of the Commonwealth Games Federation, who attended the Parliamentary Reception: "I have been involved with swimming all my life in one capacity or another; as a competitor, technical official, volunteer, manager, administrator and parent. It is so important that every child learns to swim, as it is both a life skill and a confidence builder. Swimming presents children with the option of participating in a more active lifestyle and, while some may go to be the next generation of stars, all will be healthier and safer – there is no downside."

Scottish Swimming has developed a learn to swim pathway which includes early years swimming, school swimming and community learn to swim programmes, so nothing is left to chance. The early years programme, Start to Swim, encourages adults and babies/young children to play together in the pool with the emphasis being on fun. The programme has been supported by investment from Scottish Salmon, who share the importance of children leading a healthy, active lifestyle through good diet

and regular physical activity.

The next stage is pre-school swimming lessons, which give young children water confidence and basic swimming skills. This programme provides a positive foundation for Scottish Swimming's school swimming programme Triple S, Scotland Safe Swimmer, which provides both a minimum standard to help 'waterproof' children and a training programme to assist local authorities and leisure trusts to deliver quality school swimming programmes that will increase the number of children leaving school knowing how to swim.

The Scottish Government has played a significant role in the last 4 years to support the improved delivery of swimming lessons for primary school children across Scotland through their funding of the Swimming Top Up Programme, which to date has amounted to an investment of £1.8 million resulting in an increase of over 20,000 children learning to swim.

Cabinet Secretary for Commonwealth Games and Sport, Shona Robison said:

"The Commonwealth Games is only months away and this year is an excellent opportunity to inspire a generation of swimmers. I share the ambitions of Scottish Swimming to leave a lasting legacy from the Games and for every child to have the opportunity, facilities and the support to learn to swim. Swimming is an important skill that leads to a lifetime of participation and opens up many new ways to stay fit and enjoy sport. We are delighted that the continuation of the Top Up programme will give every child the opportunity to learn to swim, whether it's in their school or local community right through to 2015."

Liz Smith, Shadow Minister for Sport and Education and host of the reception said:

"May I warmly congratulate Scottish Swimming on their efforts to provide many more children across Scotland with the

opportunity to learn to swim. The statistics which show that possibly just over a third of Scottish children cannot swim when they leave primary school is a stark reminder of just how much work we have to do to make this a universal provision.

“Swimming is an essential part of personal fitness. It is also fun and a great way of making new friends and boosting community activity within local pools and leisure centres.”

While the Top Up Swimming Programme provides an opportunity to help save a life and enrich the lives of a whole generation, Scottish Swimming strongly believe the provision of swimming lessons should be an entitlement throughout the country and not dependent on where an individual lives. If children don't learn to swim at school, they may grow up not learning to swim at all.

But swimming is not only an essential life skill, but a sport which opens doors to health, fitness and great friendships, regardless of age or ability. A fact shared by key athletes like Michael Jamieson and Hannah Miley, who are currently preparing for the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow this summer and also back the campaign.

Olympian and reigning Commonwealth Champion for 400m IM, Hannah Miley, said, “I initially got into swimming not because my family wanted me to become an Olympic swimmer, but they genuinely wanted to make sure me and my brothers were safe or knew how to be safe around water. Olympic silver medallist, Michael Jamieson, also supports the campaign: “It would be great to ensure more children in Scotland learn to swim and are safe in, on and around water. I learnt to swim when I was 5 when my parents signed me up to swimming lessons at my local pool and believe every child in Scotland should be given the opportunity to learn to swim before they leave primary school.”

Scottish Swimming's campaign to ensure that every child can

swim is ongoing. For more information please go to [www.scottishswimming.com/everychildcanswim](http://www.scottishswimming.com/everychildcanswim) and show your support on social media using the hashtag #everychildcanswim.