



**Children & Families
Overview & Scrutiny Committee
29 April 2009**

**Report from the Director of Children
and Families**

For Information

Wards Affected: ALL

Swimming Opportunities in Brent

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides Members with details about the provision of swimming facilities and opportunities in the Borough.
- 1.2 The report includes information about swimming within the curriculum, levels of attainment and swimming participation outside of school.
- 1.3 The report also provides information about the Council's plans for additional future swimming facilities in the Borough and our involvement in National initiatives to increase participation in swimming.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Members note the findings of the report.

3.0 Detail

Background

- 3.1 There are currently two public swimming pools in Brent at Vale Farm and Willesden sports centres. There are also 3 pools provided as part of commercial leisure operations at 3 sites and swimming pools on 2

special school sites: Manor (NW10) and Grove Park (NW9) and 4 primary school sites: Uxendon Manor (HA3), Roe Green schools (HA9), Wykeham (NW10) and North West London Jewish School (NW6).

- 3.2 In November 2008 the Council's Executive agreed the Planning for Sport and Active Recreation Strategy for the Borough. This strategy identified levels of current and future provision of sports facilities in the Borough. The strategy identified that the Borough requires two additional public swimming pools and Members agreed that the number one priority in terms of indoor sports provision should be the provision of a third pool that serves the North of the Borough.

Swimming within Schools

National Curriculum provision of swimming

- 3.3 Under the national curriculum for physical education, swimming is compulsory for all pupils in Key Stage 2 in primary schools. Nationally, across all primary and secondary schools 85 per cent provide swimming.
- 3.4 The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority also state that there are 2 core units of work for Swimming Activities and Water Safety. Each core unit takes a minimum of between 8 – 12 hours of water time. Therefore within school swimming we should be aiming to provide at least 16 – 24 hours of swimming time within KS2.
- 3.5 We know that some schools, both in Brent and nationally fall well short of providing this amount of swimming. Some schools providing as little as 3 hours a year and some schools not providing swimming at all despite it being a KS2 requirement , although the latter is not an issue in Brent now that Willesden sports centre has opened.
- 3.6 The attainment level for KS2 is to be able to swim 25 metres by the end of key stage 2. Current data suggests a National figure for KS2 attainment of 69%. A figure significantly lower than the suggested 80% reported by OFSTED back in 2000.

Brent Curriculum provision of swimming

- 3.7 The advisory teacher for PE visited 17 out of 52 schools and was able to determine that provision for swimming is good in the majority of schools he visited, In almost every case, the schools have opted to enter into a service-level agreement so that the leisure contractor, Leisure Connection manage and coordinate provision. In Brent 80% of schools provide swimming.

- 3.8 The majority of the swimming teaching is good. Often, swimming teachers are well qualified swimming instructors, trained by the leisure contractor.
- 3.9 Participation rates amongst those that attend the swimming are high. Pupils enjoy swimming and it has a perceived positive impact on their personal development and well-being.
- 3.10 There is some anecdotal evidence to suggest that pupils from some black minority ethnic groups often start with less experience of swimming than other groups and make the least progress.
- 3.11 A weakness in many Brent schools is that they do not allow enough time for swimming and, as a consequence, some pupils fail to meet the required 25 metre standard. Schools are particularly reluctant to give more time to swimming when they had been allocated morning sessions at the pool; in particular, they are reluctant to disturb their pattern of work for literacy and numeracy. The time available was also squeezed by the need to travel some distance to the pool for just 30 minutes of swimming. Most schools do not offer extra-curricular swimming
- 3.12 Most schools offer swimming to Years 3 – 5 and therefore it is difficult to get an accurate picture of the number of pupils able to swim 25 metres at the end of Key Stage 2.
- 3.13 890 KS2 (years 3 to 6) pupils from 24 Brent primary schools currently swim at Vale Farm Sports Centre.

		Non Confident	Confident Non Swimmer	5 Metres	10 Metres	25 Metres	Over 25 Metres	No. of pupils
BASELINE TOTALS 08:	KS2 all years	278	303	205	77	27		890
		31%	34%	23%	9%	3%	0%	

- 3.14 44% of year 6 pupils in the schools visited during summer 2007 reached the expected standard, swimming 25 metres unaided by the end of key stage 2. The data is ascertained by pupil response rather than actual observation and testing and therefore viewed as unreliable and likely to be inflated.
- 3.15 862 Year 7 pupils from 7 local secondary schools participated in a Brent swimming survey in 2008. The results are provided below.
- 39% can swim 50m or more

- 61% can swim 25m or more
- 25% can only swim 25m
- 36% can swim less than 25m
- 96% indicated that they went swimming during PE lessons at primary school

There was no significant difference between girls and boys in the data.

- 3.16 54 schools use either Vale Farm or Willesden totalling approximately 2085 Brent pupils swimming each week in these facilities as part of the schools swimming programme
- 3.17 Schools that have their own pool and provide generally more extensive and comprehensive swimming opportunities on site.
- 3.18 Top Up Swimming is a scheme that targets those not reaching the 25metres at KS2. In Brent we have organised Top-Up sessions for 3 years. Whilst 100% of Top Up Swimming participants make improvements in swimming ability and confidence, around 62% of participants achieve the KS2 minimum requirement.

Non curriculum swimming

- 3.19 Willesden and Vale Farm sports centres both provide a main and teaching pool. During the period January to December 2008 there were a total of 423,120 visits to these centres for swimming. Of these:
- 49% (206,000) were visits by young people:
 - 21% (90,000) were visits by young people as part of a school
 - 15% (65,000) were visits by young people as part of a learn to swim programme
 - 5% (24,047) were visits by young people as part of Kids swim free
 - 6% (27,000) were 'other' swimming visits by young people.
- 3.20 These centres offer a varied programme of use and approximately 16 water hours at Vale Farm sports centre and 22.5 hours at Willesden sports centre are taken up for school swimming, with approximately 50 schools from Brent and 1 school from a neighbouring Borough's swimming at these centres.
- 3.21 There are 845 juniors enrolled per term on the learn to swim programme at Vale Farm and 672 juniors enrolled at Willesden sports centre. These courses cover complete beginners through to master classes as well as offering other aquatic activities such as water polo and kids fun sessions.
- 3.22 Free swimming for juniors has been provided since 2005 and the table below shows the take up since then. The scheme has proved very

popular although take up drops off as young people become used to the offer.

- 3.23 Table to show the total number of free swims per annum per pool during the school holidays

Pool	2004 (paid swims)	2005	2006	2007	2008
Vale Farm SC	7,220	15,672	13,648	8,914	7,945
Willesden SC	-	-	-	12,011	15,356
Total	7220	15,672	13,648	20,925	23,301

- 3.24 There is one swimming club in Brent; Brent Dolphins and this club offers both opportunities to learn to swim and competitive swimming. The club has approximately 400 members, the majority of which are juniors. The club uses both swimming pools and holds galas at Willesden sports centre.

4.0 New Developments

- 4.1 From April 2009 the DCMS is making funding available to local authorities in England to offer free swimming during public sessions to over 60's and free swimming to 16's and under. Brent has signed up to both these initiatives and is also looking to extend this provision to offer, for example, free sessions for parents and toddlers, over 60's water aerobics, return to swimming / learn to swim sessions for over 60's, girls only lessons, crash courses and master-classes for juniors during the holidays and hopefully other aquatic activities such as canoeing, snorkelling and water polo for juniors.
- 4.2 It is also hoped that we will be able to make use of some of the schools swimming pools to offer targeted sessions such as sessions for disabled children, disabled children and sibling sessions and girls / women only sessions.
- 4.3 Brent will be piloting the use of a temporary pool which will be located at Preston Park school for half a term from Easter to Whitsun. This pool will enable us to offer additional swimming provision to local schools in the area. It will also help to ascertain the effectiveness of more regular daily swimming instruction on the overall achievement of pupils. The temporary pool will also be used outside curriculum hours to offer structured community swimming opportunities predominantly for children but with some adult participation as well.

- 4.4 To progress the third pool, consultants have been engaged to consider potential sites and review management and procurement routes. They will also be looking into what funding may be available to assist the Council identify the capital and revenue to enable the third pool to be built.
- 4.5 The consultants will be reporting back in May to a steering group that includes officers from across the Council. They will feed back on the recommended facilities to be provided, site options appraisal, funding options, procurement options and recommending the most appropriate and achievable option for the Council.

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