

Risk Assessment – Beach Paddling and Swimming

Area of Operation: beach paddling and swimming

Who is at risk?

- Staff
- Students
- Members of the public

Hazards	Risks	Safety Measures to Control Risks
Deep water	Drowning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Swimming in the sea may only happen at lifeguarded beaches between the marker flags. ○ When paddling, Clear water and can see the bottom. ○ There must be shadow entry to the water, no steep banks. ○ No wave over knee height, of the shortest person - no strong tidal flows ○ No strong no shore winds. ○ There is easy access to emergency services, no isolated beaches. ○ Maximum Supervision Ratio: 1:4 and the supervising adult must be confident in the water. ○ All planned activities involving swimming or paddling, staff must ensure there is a throwline and first aid present.
Changing tides and currents	Risk of students being pulled into deeper water or cut off by raising tide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Check tide times and currents before arrival; only use areas known to be safe for paddling and swimming. ○ Ensure students stay within marked boundaries and remain in designated knee-deep or safe swimming zones. ○ If swimming, a lifeguard must be on duty ○ No walking on sandbars, as they may become submerged by fast-rising tides and pose a trapping risk
Uneven seabed or hidden objects	Risk of trips, slips, or cuts from rocks, shells, or other sharp objects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conduct a preliminary check of the area, removing any visible hazards. ○ Advise students to wear water shoes and to walk carefully. ○ Staff carry a first aid kit for minor injuries. ○ Shoes should be conceded when organising planned activity involving paddling.
Cold water shock	Risk of hypothermia or shock upon entering cold water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure students enter the water gradually to allow their bodies to adjust. ○ Monitor for signs of discomfort or cold and respond as needed.

Hazards	Risks	Safety Measures to Control Risks
Large waves or strong winds	Risk of hypothermia or shock upon entering cold water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only allow swimming and paddling in calm weather conditions; monitor weather forecasts. Ensure students stay close together and within the shallower areas. - All planned activities involving swimming or paddling, staff must ensure there is a throwline and first aid present.
Separation or wandering	Increased risk of accidents or distress if students become frightened	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have staff closely monitor body language and verbal cues. Staff trained in calming techniques to provide support. All supervising staff must be aware of emergency procedures Remind students of agreed boundaries -Arrange meeting point if they do get separated from the group, this would normally be the lifeguard station.
Proximity to public or crowded beaches	Risk of interaction with strangers or separation in crowds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select a quieter section of the beach or visit during off-peak times. - Ensure students stay within group boundaries, with staff positioned at perimeter points
Use of public toilets	Risk of separation from the group, interactions with strangers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have staff accompany students to toilets as needed while ensuring privacy. Choose toilets close to the activity area for easy monitoring. - Set a designated meeting point near toilets in case anyone becomes separated.
Strong sun exposure	Risk of sunburn or heat related illnesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage use of sunscreen, hats, and protective clothing. Plan breaks in shaded areas where possible. Monitor for signs of heat exhaustion or sunburn.

Information

Lifeguarded beaches

Swimming is permitted at lifeguarded beaches if all the following conditions are met:

- Lifeguards are on duty.
- Participants remain within the designated swim zones (e.g. between red and yellow flags).

Supervision Ratios:

- Strong swimmers: 1 staff member to 2 participants (1:2).
- Weak swimmers: 1 staff member to 1 participant (1:1).

Non-lifeguarded beaches

Water activities are significantly restricted at non-lifeguarded beaches. Entry is permitted to knee depth only, and all the following conditions must be met:

- Water is clear and the bottom is visible.
- Shallow entry, with no steep banks.
- Avoid areas where the ground is muddy or has loose pebbles that may cause instability.
- Waves are no higher than the shortest participant's knee.
- No strong tidal flows or offshore winds.
- There is easy access for emergency services (no isolated beaches).
- No walking on sandbars, as they may become submerged by fast-rising tides and pose a trapping risk.

Supervision Ratio:

- Maximum 1 staff member to 4 participants (1:4), and the supervising adult must be confident in the water.

Lightning

All water activity must stop immediately. Seek shelter for at least 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder – No Go

For all planned activities involving swimming or paddling, you must have a throwline and first aid kit with you.

Solo Supervision

If you're the only supervising adult, you must carry a mobile phone in a waterproof pouch when entering the water.

International Beach Visits

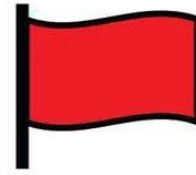
The criteria above apply to all UK beaches. For any beach visits abroad, an individual risk assessment must be completed.

Beach Flags



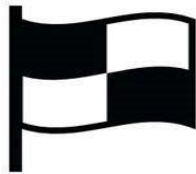
RED AND YELLOW FLAGS

Lifeguarded area: safest place to swim, bodyboard and use inflatables.



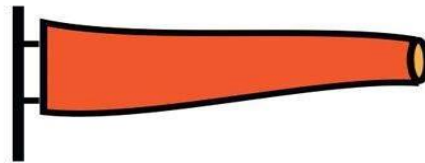
RED FLAG

Danger! NEVER go in the water when the red flag is up, under any circumstances.



BLACK AND WHITE CHEQUERED FLAGS

For surfboards, kayaks and other non-powered craft. NEVER swim or bodyboard here.



ORANGE WINDSOCK

Indicates offshore or strong wind conditions. NEVER use an inflatable when the sock is flying.

The RNLI website has a list of lifeguarded beaches in the UK: www.rnli.org/find-my-nearest/lifeguarded-beaches.

Example of a suitable beach for paddling:



- Clear water with visible bottom.
- Shallow, gradual entry (no steep slopes)
- Small, gentle waves (below knee height of the shortest participant).
- No strong tidal currents or offshore winds.
- Good access for emergency services.
- This beach may be suitable, but be aware that conditions change

Example of an unsuitable beach for paddling:



- Steep entry banks.
- Strong tidal currents.
- Poor or difficult emergency access.
- Isolated location with limited communication options.
- This beach would not be suitable

To be read in conjunction with the following:

- Student's Risk Assessments
- Participant Consent / Medical Information
- Emergency Action Plan Flow-Chart

Reviewed: September 2025

Approved by: **RAISE-AP** Educational Directors, September 2025

Next Review Date: September 2027