



2026 Autism Swim Programme

The aim of the Autism Swim programme is to provide invaluable social opportunity within sport, as well as develop water skills and swimming progression.

As an Autism Swim provider, Love to Swim target four key areas:

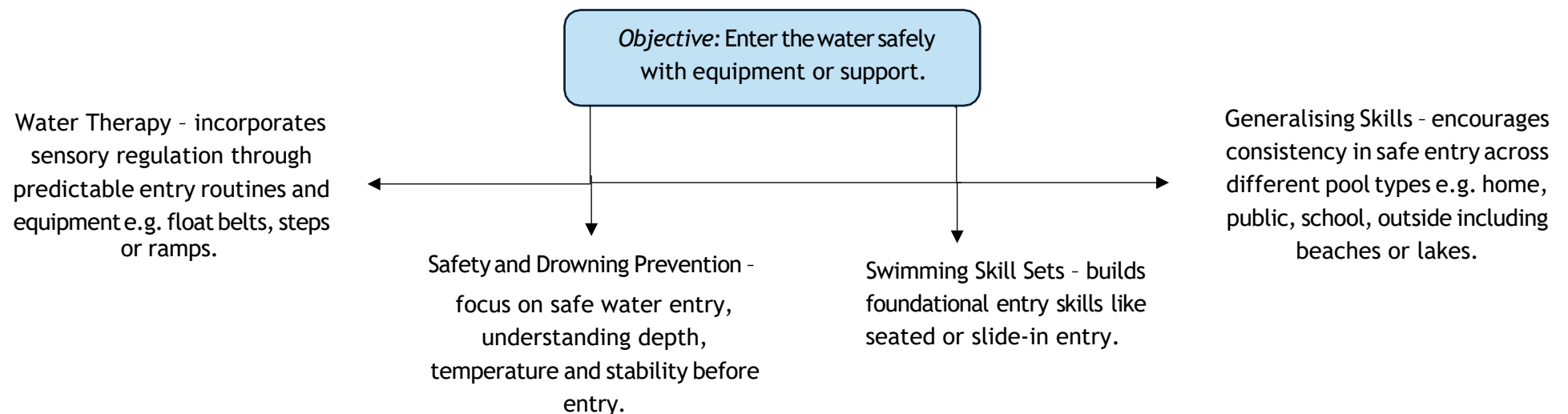
1. **Water Therapy** – Aim to develop skills which promote improved body awareness, balance, sensory processing, mobility, attentiveness and socioemotional development i.e. water familiarisation, ensuring there is comfort in the water and therapeutic benefits of water are encouraged.
2. **Safety And Drowning Prevention** – Aim is to demonstrate safe behaviours in and around water. This ensures pupils have a better understanding of the risks around themselves and others, enforcement of holding onto the side of the pool and being able to float on one's back to indicate for help.
3. **Swimming Skill Sets** – Aim is for swimmers to develop skills related to water familiarization and propulsion. This ensures a pupil can float, kick and move their arms as a functional swim stroke.
4. **Generalising Skills** – Aim to encourage extension of skills already obtained through generalisation of learned skills into other bodies of water, as well as exploration of other activities which use swimming for example, water polo, synchronised swimming or surfing.



We have incorporated Swim England's framework of The Alpha Step Awards. We have done this to ensure there is a clear set of targets for swimmers to meet. It also parallels with the key areas for Autism Swim approval, ensuring children can develop confidence and offer the opportunity to participate in a range of water-based activities.

The 3 x Alpha Step Awards are designed to build confidence in those who may need additional support during their swimming lessons and reward the development of the early stages of buoyancy, coordination, spatial awareness, breathing, and pool safety. This recognises that every learner has different needs, and provides flexibility to learners as they do not have to achieve all the outcomes to achieve an Award. As an alteration of this framework, we do not use a skill number to determine whether a swimmer is ready for the next stage. Rather, we require a swimmer to complete all learning objectives, in order to be moved up, similar as the Learn to Swim, Swim England framework.

We use these, ensuring that there is an integration of the 4 main AS outcome key areas by our Autism Swim certified teachers. Here is an example of this:





Autism Swim 1 – Foundation <i>Minimum 4 years old</i> Complimentary 'I CAN' and Puffin Awards	
Learning Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enter the water safely with equipment or support. 2. Blow to move a floating object over 3 meters. 3. On the spot move selected object around. 4. Be rocked through the water with support. 5. Float with support. 6. Be towed (forwards, backwards and sideways) in a variety of directions. 7. Exit the water safely with equipment or support.

Autism Swim 2 – Supported Movement Complimentary 'I CAN' and distance Awards	
Learning Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enter the water safely with minimal support. 2. Tolerate face being splashed or wet. 3. Whilst travelling, move objects in or through the water. 4. Turn 360 degrees with minimal assistance. 5. Float on front or back with support. 6. Travel through the water using limbs with minimal support. 7. Exit the water safely with minimal support.



**Autism Swim 3 – Independent Basics
Complimentary 'I CAN' and distance Awards**

Learning Outcomes

1. Enter the water safely with no assistance or support.
2. With mouth submerged, blow bubbles.
3. Move objects to or from a partner in various directions.
4. Lie back and move to a vertical position with support.
5. Float on front or back without support.
6. Travel 3 meters on front or back with or without floatation equipment.
7. Exit the water safely with no assistance or support.



Autism Swim 4 – Transitional Complimentary 'I CAN' and Rainbow distance Awards	
Learning Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Submerge fully and exhale bubbles 3 times with controlled breathing. 2. Front-to-back or back-to-front roll with minimal support, and demonstrate a safe “roll to back and float” for 5 seconds. 3. Push and glide 2–3m on front and back. 4. Travel 5m on front and back independently. 5. Supported deep-water entry and return to poolside. 6. Maintain a vertical position with minimal support (pre-treading). 7. Identify simple ways to signal for help.

Autism Swim 5 – Advanced Implemented Water Safety outcomes Complimentary Rainbow distance Awards	
Learning Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Performing a swivel entry. 2. Jumping in and immediately rotating 180 degrees to travel back to the side. 3. Floating on the back for 30 seconds. 4. Fully submerging, exhaling and resurfacing. 5. Log rolling from floating on the front to floating on the back. 6. Treading water in an upright position for 15 seconds without flotation equipment. 7. Performing a signal for help on the back, while holding onto floatation equipment. 8. Exit the water safely without support. 9. Show an understanding of water safety.



Following completion of the Autism Swim stages, we suggest 3 exit routes:

1. Swimmers are welcome to join the mainstream LTS lessons, should they feel this appropriate.
2. Swimmers can continue in the advanced Autism Swim specialised lessons, where distance and swimmer's stroke and technique are focused on.
3. Swimmers can be made aware of water-based clubs which might be of interest to them, including disability clubs should this be preferred.