

School Swimming and Water Safety at Glynne Primary School – Y4 boys and girls Spring/Summer 2025

1. Introduction

This combined Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) report presents the perceptions and experiences of Year 4 boys and girls at Glynne Primary School regarding school swimming. The analysis seeks to explore the emotional, educational, and practical dimensions of their swimming lessons through a thematic synthesis of both group interviews.

2. Methodology

The data were drawn from semi-structured group interviews and analysed using the IPA approach. Recurring themes were identified through interpretative and descriptive coding, focusing on emotional transitions, safety awareness, learning preferences, and environmental factors that influenced student experiences.

3. Key Themes and Interpretations

3.1 Emotional Transitions: From Apprehension to Confidence

Both boys and girls described an initial discomfort or anxiety related to cold water and the anticipation of swimming. However, once in the pool and actively participating, many reported growing confidence and enjoyment. This emotional shift often coincided with moments of achievement or recognition from teachers.

Examples:

- "Sometimes I just feel like I don't want to do it... and then when I get in and do a length, I feel actually it's quite alright."
- "Sometimes I feel a bit anxious because I don't want to get in the water because it's very cold... then you feel okay."

3.2 Supportive Teaching and Encouragement

Teacher encouragement and instructional clarity were pivotal in shaping a positive experience. Pupils valued demonstrations, gestures, and feedback, which helped reduce anxiety and promoted skill development. Encouraging words and patience helped even the more hesitant swimmers feel like 'success stories.'

Examples:

- "They just tell us what to do... if we're stuck, they help us a lot."
- "First she says have a go... then she would normally give us advice to improve it."

3.3 Active and Kinesthetic Learning

Students from both groups appreciated learning through movement and practice. Trial, error, and repetition allowed them to master swimming skills, making the experience memorable and rewarding.

3.4 Water Safety and Responsibility

Awareness of water safety was a consistent and well-retained theme. Children recalled characters, protocols, and emergency techniques that shaped their understanding of real-world risks.

Examples:

- "If someone's in the water, don't try to go in... shout for help or call 911."
- "It teaches us what we do if we're like in that emergency."

3.5 Environment and Practical Barriers

Issues such as cold water, cramped changing spaces, and lack of privacy were shared concerns. These factors occasionally distracted from the learning experience and affected student comfort and readiness.

Examples:

- "As soon as you sit down on the seat ready to get changed, it feels really cold."
- "I feel uncomfortable changing in front of people."

3.6 Fun, Social Bonds, and Motivation

Fun activities, social engagement, and achievement milestones (like swimming 25 metres) contributed to a sense of pride and motivation. Both boys and girls associated swimming with personal growth and enjoyable learning.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The students' experiences reveal school swimming as a multifaceted activity that blends emotional growth, safety education, and physical skill. Despite environmental discomforts, positive teacher influence, active learning strategies, and the fun nature of the lessons left a meaningful impact.

Recommendations:

- Enhance privacy and comfort in changing facilities
- Maintain clear, supportive instruction and encouragement
- Maintain and reinforce water safety messages
- Preserve fun and motivational elements such as games and progression milestones