

Company fined after 3-year-old nearly drowned at children's holiday camp

- Three-year-old girl found unconscious during swimming pool free-play session.
- Child became trapped beneath large float during holiday camp activity.
- HSE investigation found inadequate safety documentation and communication.

A company that runs holiday camps for children across the country has been fined £6,000 after a three-year-old girl nearly drowned during a swimming pool free-play session.

The incident occurred on 26 July 2023 at Bishopsgate School in Egham, Surrey, where Oxford Active Ltd was running a holiday camp. The three-year-old girl was found face down in the swimming pool underneath a large float and was not breathing. Staff intervened and were able to resuscitate her.



The float involved

The girl was part of a group of 19 children aged between three and five who were taking part in a free-play swimming session. Most of the children were non-swimmers, including the three-year-old. Staff had fitted her with two sets of armbands and provided her with a foam noodle before she entered the pool. A number of floats were present in the pool, including a large rocket-shaped float, beneath which the child became trapped. When she was found unconscious, she was no longer wearing the armbands or using the noodle.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Oxford Active Ltd's documentation relating to pool safety and supervision was insufficiently detailed and lacked clarity. The investigation also found that the content of this documentation was not communicated effectively to staff, meaning appropriate control measures were not properly understood or implemented.

HSE guidance on [swimming pool management](#) highlights the importance of effective supervision arrangements, particularly where young or non-swimming children are involved. This includes ensuring suitable adult-to-child ratios, clear rules on the use of floats and inflatable equipment, robust risk assessments for free-play sessions, and effective emergency procedures so incidents can be identified and responded to immediately.

Oxford Active Ltd, of Oxford, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £6,000 and ordered to pay £12,000 in costs at a hearing at Chichester Magistrates' Court. A victim surcharge was also applied, amounting to forty percent of the fine, capped at £2,000. In addition, £2,000 compensation was awarded to the child's family.

After the hearing, HSE Inspector Russell Beckett said:

"It is vital that children are able to learn to swim in a safe environment and that parents can trust their children will be properly looked after while doing so.

"Fortunately, the three-year-old child recovered well, but this incident could very easily have had a tragic outcome."

This HSE prosecution was brought by enforcement lawyer, Neenu Bains and paralegal officer, Farhat Basir.

Further information:

1. [The Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We are dedicated to protecting people and places, and helping everyone lead safer and healthier lives.
2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
4. Relevant guidance can be found here: [Swimming pool management: Leisure activities](#)
5. HSE does not pass sentences, set guidelines or collect any fines imposed. Relevant sentencing guidelines must be followed unless the court is satisfied that it would be contrary to the interests of justice to do so. The sentencing guidelines for health and safety offences can be found [here](#).