

23rd May 2024

Dear Students,

Staying Safe Around Water and Understanding the Risks of Weil's Disease

Looking ahead to half-term, I am sure you are all eager to engage in various outdoor activities as the weather gets warmer. Water-based activities can be a lot of fun and are a great way to stay active. However, it is important for all of us to be aware of water safety and the potential health risks associated with water activities.

Water Safety Tips:

- Always swim in areas that are designated for swimming and are supervised by lifeguards.
- Never swim alone. Use the buddy system, ensuring that you are with a friend or family member at all times.
- Pay attention to the water conditions and weather forecasts before planning any water-related activities.
- Follow all posted safety signs and warnings when near water bodies.
- Wear appropriate life jackets and safety gear when boating, kayaking, or engaging in similar activities.
- Do not jump from bridges into water as you don't know what is beneath the surface. You cannot always see any other water users and the water may be shallow with roots and other obstructions which could cause you to become entangled. If you jump into the water, you could injure yourself and others; the consequences could be serious and even fatal.

You may have seen on the news in the last few days that two boys tragically died following an incident on the River Tyne.

When taking part in activities in and around water, it is important to be aware of Weil's disease, also known as Leptospirosis. This is a bacterial infection that can be contracted through water or soil contaminated by the urine of infected animals, most commonly rats. While it is rare, it is important to be aware of the risk, especially when participating in water sports or activities in natural bodies of water. You can become infected if water or soil gets into your mouth, eyes or a cut. We have been made aware that a local student recently suffered a severe infection after swimming in the River Stour at Dedham.

Preventive Measures:

- Avoid swimming or wading in water that might be contaminated with animal urine.
- Cover any cuts, sores, or scratches with a waterproof plaster before getting into the water.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after water activities, especially before eating.

- If you develop any flu-like symptoms after being in natural water, such as fever, muscle pain, or headaches, seek medical attention immediately and mention the possibility of Weil's disease.

Let's all enjoy the benefits of being near and in the water, while also taking the necessary precautions to ensure our health and safety.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'GF Anstee-Parry', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mr Anstee-Parry