



PAPER B – UKSA TEST THE WATER PROGRAMME

POLICY AND RESOURCES
COMMITTEE

PAPER B

8 APRIL 2025

The purpose of this Report is to recommend Members consider a request from UKSA for a financial contribution towards the Test the Water Programme.

1) Background

The following request has been received from UKSA:

I am writing to you on behalf of the UK Sailing Academy (UKSA) based in Cowes on behalf of your local primary Schools – St Frances Primary Academy.

UKSA transforms lives through the power of the sea. Our inspirational pathways inspire and engage children taking part in our outdoor learning activities and educational programmes, enabling them to build confidence and develop vital life skills.

Each year UKSA offers every Year 6 child on the Island a half-day water-based adventure, aiming to support all young Island children to gain water-confidence, understand the importance of water safety, and to support students to develop vital life skills such as communication, resilience, and teamwork. We offer this experience free of charge, meaning that every child can participate regardless of background or financial situation. We call this inspiring programme ‘Test the Water’, and it is funded entirely through the donations of individuals and local Island businesses.

The whole sailing experience was amazing, and it was great to learn new things. At the start I was very nervous because I’ve never been on a boat before, but it was really fun and can’t wait to do it again.

2023 Test the Water participant

Since its launch in 2014, the program has provided many children their first experience at sea, boosting their confidence and self-belief. Unfortunately, for many children and young people living on the Island, they have never had the opportunity to go to the sea before, despite growing up so close to it. UKSA works closely with every Island primary school (plus home educators) to offer the programme free of charge to every Year 6 aged child, taking students out of the classroom and encouraging them outside of their comfort zone. For many children, this new experience gives them a unique opportunity to thrive and positively impacts them both on the day and when back in school, boosting their confidence and encouraging them to try new things. From this introduction to water sports, we then offer follow-on programmes to give further opportunities to those wishing to seek more adventures and the possibility of a maritime career.

I visited UKSA in year 6 with the Test the Water programme. It was a really nice way to get us on the water and a step in. After Test the Water I came back and did a week’s Dinghy course, and when I was old enough, I came back to UKSA and got a job as a Watersports Instructor. I’m now working towards becoming a Senior Instructor.

Jamie, UKSA Watersports Instructor

In 2023, we welcomed 1,038 Year 6 children from 38 primary schools and 37 home-schooled students. With the rising cost of living, outdoor learning has become inaccessible to many families. A recent study reported that 52% of children do not tell their parents about a school trip due to money concerns, 34% of children on the Isle of Wight live in poverty, and 22% of Island children in primary school are in receipt of free school meals. At UKSA, we believe that charity starts at home, and we overcome these barriers by fully funding all Year 6 Island students to participate in this transformative program.

For the new academic class of 2024, we aim to continue offering these opportunities to the next Year 6 class. The program's cost is £42 per student, so we need to raise £63,000 to ensure participation for all 1,500 Island students. It is only through local support that we can meet this demand and empower children and young people to reach their true potential, as we rely solely on donations from individuals and local businesses to continue offering this inspiring programme.

A £42 donation funds one child, £420 funds ten, and £1,260 would fund the entire class of 30 students from Ventnor, however any amount towards achieving our goal would be gratefully received. We are seeking the support of the Ventnor Town Councillors to help UKSA remove barriers to outdoor education.

2) Recommendation

It is recommended that members consider the request from UKSA and whether a donation is possible.