

Schools' Safety Guides

January 2024

If you require information on any health & safety issue or to book on one of the health & safety courses indicated, please contact one of the Health & Safety Team

 01922 655793 (general enquiries), 01922 655604 (training)

 safetyandfire@walsall.gov.uk



Walsall Council

Document information

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If you would like this information in another language or format, contact:

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Introduction to the Guides

These guides have been produced to provide head teachers, and others, with management responsibilities summaries of key health & safety issues within schools and other educational settings.

Please note the guides are overviews and do not go into detailed descriptions of legal requirements, etc. However, they do cover the key points managers should be familiar with and each guide provides a deep link to Health & Safety Executive (HSE) and other appropriate resources.

Further information on any health & safety issue is also available from the health & safety team; in addition, a range of supporting documents, including model policies and risk assessments are available on [Walsall Link](#) (this and most other links take you to the Open Pages; you will need to log in to access the Traded Services pages).

Note: some guides are still in development, please contact the health & safety team if you have any questions regarding other topics.

Model policy and forms

A model health & safety policy or statement of intent for schools to adapt and adopt, along with a range of health & safety forms (accident & aggressive incident report, model risk assessment, etc.) are available separately on [Walsall Link](#).

Acknowledgement

In the interests of best practice, some of the information contained in these guides has been taken from HSE guidance and adapted to reflect health & safety in a school environment.

Useful contacts and resources

Walsall Council's Health & Safety Team

- [Chris Close](#) Health & safety manager 01922 65 4620 (07944 279927)
- [Davinder Singh](#) Health & safety adviser 01922 65 4690
- [Susan Popham](#) Health & safety adviser 01922 65 2483
- [Jim McCulloch](#) Fire safety adviser 01922 65 5754
- [Nazmin Iqbal](#) Health & safety support officer 01922 65 5604

- Health & safety advisers (general enquiries) 01922 65 5793
- Radiation Protection Officer (RPO) 01922 65 5754

Walsall Council – other teams

- **Emergency Planning** 01922 652221 – Office hours
01922 650000 – Out of hours
- [Insurance & Loss Control Services](#) 01922 65 2909
(Risk & Insurance)
- [The Corporate Landlord team](#) 01922 65 2536

Other useful contacts

- **Employee Assistance Programme** 0800 023 9324
(Walsall Council's employee wellbeing programme)
- **UK Health Security Agency (ex Public Health England)**
(Advice on infection control issues) 0344 225 3560

In addition, you may find the following resources useful:

Department for Education

Department for Education advice on health & safety in schools:

[Health and safety in schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/health-and-safety-in-schools)

Health & Safety Executive

HSE advice and information about health & safety in the education sector:

[Education: health and safety in schools, further and higher education \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/education/)

CLEAPSS (Consortium of Local Education Authorities for the Provision of Science Services)

If you have signed up for CLEAPSS, your subscription gives you access to a range of practical advice, including risk assessments, on science and technology issues:

[CLEAPSS Home page](https://www.cleapss.org.uk/) science@cleapss.org.uk 01895 251496 (helpline)

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Accident & Incident Reporting

Introduction

The Reporting of Injuries, Disease and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) require employers to report certain accidents, etc., to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE).

This guide gives a simple overview of RIDDOR, along with best practice for recording, reporting, and investigating accidents and other incidents.

RIDDOR requirements

The RIDDOR regulations require certain injuries, diseases, and dangerous occurrences to be notified to the HSE – failure to do so is a criminal offence!

What needs to be reported?

RIDDOR requires the following to be reported if they are a result of an accident or physical violence at work:

- **Death** – of an employee or member of the public (including pupil)
- **Specified Injury (ex “major” injury)** to an employee – as defined in the regulations (see Further information)
- **Over Seven-Day Injury** to an employee at work that results in a worker being incapacitated for **more than seven consecutive days** (not counting the day of the accident but including weekends and rest days)
- Injury to a **member of the public** (including pupil) that **‘arises out of, or in connection with, work’*** and which results in the person being **taken from the scene of the accident to hospital** for treatment

In addition, RIDDOR sets out a list “**Reportable Occupational Diseases**” and significant “**Dangerous Occurrences**” that must be reported. Note dangerous occurrence are defined in the regulations (see Further information) and should not be confused with “near miss” incidents.

Deaths, major injuries, and accidents where members of the public are taken to hospital must be reported without delay and within 10 days, whereas for seven-day injuries, employers have up to 15 days to report the incident.

Deaths and major injuries can be reported to HSE’s Incident Contact Centre by phone - 0845 300 9923 or online - www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/. All other reportable incidents should be reported online.

*A note about pupil and public accidents

To fall under RIDDOR, accidents to pupils/the public must be work related – the regulations use the term **‘arising out of, or in connection with, work’**. This means that many accidents (including some that result in serious injury) are not reportable – unless they are due to the condition of the premises/equipment or inadequate supervision (see Further information). If in doubt, please contact the health & safety team for clarification.

Other accidents and incidents

The RIDDOR regulations only cover a small proportion of accidents/incidents in school and by themselves do not give an overall picture of accidents, etc., to staff or pupils/visitors. Consequently, it is good practice to also record all other, less serious incidents and near misses that fall outside the scope of RIDDOR.

Walsall Council requires **all** accidents and aggressive incidents to school staff to be reported to the health & safety team, using the Accident and Aggressive Incident form. Similarly, accidents to visitors and pupils should also be reported using the form.

Note: pupils will experience many events that could be classed as accidents/incidents/near misses, but where health & safety has little or no role to play; examples include nosebleeds, playground fights, torn clothing, grazed knees, etc. It is important that these are recorded locally (possibly using a diary or incident book), especially if there may be later questions from parents, however such incidents do not need to be formally reported.

Non-council schools do not have to follow Walsall's procedures but are encouraged to do so, so that all Walsall schools can learn from incidents or emerging trends.

Investigating incidents

Head teachers must ensure that all accidents/incidents receive a suitable level of investigation and should put in place measures to minimise the risk of similar accidents/incidents recurring.

Staff responsible for reporting or investigating accidents should receive appropriate training; however, if staff have not been trained, a useful tool in accident investigation is to ask the question "why?" and then repeat this for each response. This helps get to the underlying cause of the accident, which is usually more important than the immediate cause.

Training

The health & safety team run regular Accident Reporting and Investigation training courses; please contact the team for further details – see page 1 for contact details.

Further information

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on accidents, aggressive incidents or RIDDOR reporting requirements.

More in depth guidance on Accidents & Aggressive Incidents including information on RIDDOR, notes on how to complete the Accident and Aggressive Incident form, and details on how long records should be kept is available on [Walsall Link](#).

Further information on RIDDOR is also available on HSE's website: [RIDDOR - Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations - HSE](#).

Asbestos

Asbestos: the duty to manage - overview

If your building was built before the year 2000, it may contain asbestos. Asbestos containing materials (ACMs) can cause serious harm to health; therefore, the law says that ACMs in workplaces must be managed.

Where can I find asbestos in my premises?

Asbestos is a very versatile material, unfortunately this means that it is present in many products; examples include asbestos cement (as found in garage roofs, gutters, and drainpipes), asbestos insulation board (found in partition walls, ceiling tiles, etc.), asbestos lagging (often found moulded onto pipework or boilers), and sprayed coatings (on walls, ceilings, beams, and columns). It is even present in some floor tiles and the glue that holds them in place. In short it can be almost anywhere on your premises, so, unless you know otherwise, you should presume it is present.

What do I do to manage it?

ACMs do a valuable job and only become a problem if they become worn or damaged and asbestos fibres are released; consequently, to manage ACMs on your premises you need to know where they are, monitor their condition, and share information with anyone who might accidentally damage them (contractors or staff).

Managing asbestos should include the following:

- All premises built before 2000 should have an asbestos management survey carried out by a competent, asbestos surveyor and an asbestos register should be developed based on the survey
- If you already have a survey/register, you should review it periodically to ensure that it has been kept up to date (e.g., when ACMs have been removed)
- A risk assessment should be carried out and an asbestos management plan should be produced. A model plan is available from [Walsall Link](#). This should indicate the condition of all ACMs and what action is being undertaken including any removal or monitoring. If an area cannot be surveyed, you should presume that it contains ACMs and manage it accordingly
- Any removal of, or work on, ACMs will be subject to the Control of Asbestos Regulations. This is usually specialist work, requiring specialist training and equipment and hence should be carried out by licensed asbestos removal contractors. There are exceptions for low-risk work, but you must ensure you receive advice before using non-licensed contractors
- Where ACMs are removed, you should ensure that your asbestos register is updated accordingly. You should also keep evidence of clearance tests carried out after the removal to show that the area was safe for reoccupation
- Any ACMs that remain in place must be monitored, by suitably trained staff, to ensure they remain in good condition and do not suffer damage or deteriorate. The frequency of monitoring will depend on local circumstances (e.g., potential for damage) and should be identified as part of your survey report; all monitoring must be recorded
- Any staff who may deal with ACMs or accidentally encounter them should receive asbestos awareness training

- In some buildings, e.g., CLASP type schools, the potential for asbestos fibre release is greater, hence all staff should be made aware of the asbestos controls in place at induction
- Before contractors are allowed to work on the structure of the building, they should be made aware of any ACMs they could potentially disturb and the precautions they should follow
- Extensive refurbishment or demolition work could potentially reveal additional ACMs that the asbestos management survey would not have shown up (possibly, because ACMs were hidden or inaccessible); consequently, a refurbishment/demolition survey must be carried out before major refurbishment or demolition work

What should we do if ACMs are accidentally damaged?

If ACMs are accidentally damaged, you must:

- Evacuate the area immediately.
- Arrange for an air test to determine the level of asbestos contamination.
- Ensure a licensed contractor carries out a thorough environmental clean of the area and removes or seals the damaged ACMs as appropriate.
- Arrange for further air tests after cleaning to prove the area is safe for reoccupation.

Records of all air tests must be retained.

Asbestos quick check

- Does the site have an up-to-date asbestos survey/register? Yes/No/NA
- Is a risk assessment in place & has an asbestos management plan been produced? Yes/No/NA
- Are remaining ACMs monitored regularly? Yes/No/NA
- Is information on the location of ACMs shared with contractors? Yes/No/NA

Training

Any staff who may deal with ACMs or accidentally encounter them should receive asbestos awareness training.

The health & safety team run regular Asbestos Awareness training courses; please contact the team for further details – see page 1 for contact details.

Further information

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on asbestos management.

Further information on asbestos is also available on HSE's website: [Asbestos - HSE](#).

Care and control – use of reasonable force

Unfortunately, situations may arise in school that need authorised people (teachers and others) to use the **minimum degree of force** necessary **for the shortest period of time** to prevent a child from hurting themselves, others, or property. This guide provides a simple overview of safety issues associated with care and control.

Reasonable force

The over-riding principle must be that reasonable force is only applied when all other behaviour management strategies have failed. The following points may help:

- **Reasonable force** – there is no legal definition of reasonable force, however DfE guidance recognises that 'force is usually used to control or restrain' and that reasonable means 'using no more force than is needed' in the circumstances
- **Physical contact** –situations in which proper physical contact occurs between staff and pupils (e.g., care of pupils with disabilities; in games/PE and to comfort pupils)
- **Control** – active control may be used to divert a pupil from a destructive or disruptive action, for example by guiding or leading a pupil by the hand, arm, or shoulder with little or no force. Control may also be passive such as moving between two pupils or blocking a pupil's path
- **Physical restraint** – use of reasonable force when there is an **immediate** risk to pupils, staff, and property or to maintain good order. Always used as a last resort.

The scale and the nature of any physical intervention/restraint should be both reasonable in the circumstances and proportionate and should also consider the differing needs of the individual to be controlled, including age, size, special educational needs, disability, etc.

What schools need to do

Schools should produce a policy a behaviour policy that includes "use of force". In addition, they should have the following in place:

- A general risk assessment and action plan for use of reasonable force
- Individual student risk assessment and action plans where appropriate
- A serious incident book to record all physical intervention and restraint incidents

The DfE guidance states that as well as all staff members, the legal power to use reasonable force can also apply to those whom a head teacher has temporarily put in charge. This includes volunteers, parents on a school trip, etc. While it is recognised that this is legally correct, caution should be used in determining appropriate authorisation of this group of adults.

The five Cs

Successful implementation of a Use of Force/Care and Control policy includes several key elements:

- **Control** – schools should publish their arrangements for managing destructive or disruptive acts (e.g., school policy, prospectus statement). All incidents of intervention and restraint should be recorded

- **Communication** – schools should include a statement on the use of reasonable force in the school prospectus
- **Competence** – appropriate training is very important in putting into practice the use of reasonable force and this is based on a regular assessment of the skills employees need to develop
- **Co-operation** – schools should include their School Improvement Adviser on policy development. Parents and, where appropriate, members of the inclusion support teams should be included when making plans to deal with individual students
- **Complaints** – in the event of a complaint by a parent or pupil, such a complaint must be speedily and thoroughly investigated. Suspension must not be an automatic response and schools should refer to the DfE guidance on 'Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Teachers and Other Staff'

Risk assessment – general and pupil specific

Care and control strategies must be based on risk assessment and schools should assess the general likelihood and severity of disruptive and dangerous behaviour and develop a graduated behaviour management action plan that only uses physical intervention and restraint as a last resort.

In addition, schools should carry out a specific risk assessment when disruptive or dangerous behaviour is reasonably expected in an individual student. The purpose of the risk assessment is to reduce the likelihood of the requirement to use physical intervention and to create a safer environment for staff and pupils.

Recording and monitoring

Records should be kept whenever physical restraint is used; these should be monitored and reviewed regularly. This should include the views of the child following the incident. In addition, injuries and aggressive behaviour aimed at staff may need reporting using the accident and aggressive incident procedure.

Training

Use of force/care and control should be included on induction so that all staff are aware of the standards. In addition, specific intervention and restraint training may be necessary for those who may have to physically intervene and restrain children.

All physical intervention training for dealing with pupils with special educational needs should be by a trainer accredited to the British Institute for Learning Disabilities (BILD) Physical Interventions Accreditation Scheme. The only programmes in this field recognised by Walsall Council are PROACT-SCIP (Positive Range of Options to Avoid Crisis and Use Therapy – Strategies for Crisis Intervention and Prevention) which is approved for use in special schools and TEAM TEACH Intervention Training.

Further information

Please contact Morag Manson (07342075937) or Becky Warren (01922 653476) if you require further information on Use of force/care and control.

More in depth guidance on "Use of reasonable force in the care and control of children and young people", including a model policy and model forms, is available on [Walsall Link](#).

Contractors – selection and control

If you use contractors, the school (as the “client”) must ensure that they are carefully chosen and actively monitored. In addition, you must ensure that a two-way exchange of information takes place – so that the school is given copies of relevant risk assessments/method statements, etc. There should be a suitable signing in and out process for all contractors which includes a process for ensuring that the contractor is made aware of any hazards in school – such as the presence of asbestos.

If the work is subject to the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations (CDM), the “client”, has very specific duties, including checking the competence of contractors; in addition, if the project is notifiable (i.e., it lasts longer than 30 days or involves more than 500 person days of construction work) other duties apply.

This guide should be read in conjunction with the Permit to Work (PTW) safety guide.

Who is a contractor?

When thinking of contractors, most people think construction and similar work; however, the term contractor covers a wide range of activities. In fact, a contractor is anyone that the school employs directly to carry out work or services on its behalf. Examples in schools include: the “animal-man” (who brings animals into schools), companies who send trades people to service and maintain equipment on the school site (e.g., boiler servicing and repair, PAT testing, etc.), cleaning and kitchen staff (if not employed directly by the school), trade persons called to carry out any repairs (e.g., glaziers, plumbers, etc.).

How do we select contractors?

When considering which contractors, you are going to use to work on your behalf, the following questions may be useful to ask:

- Does the contractor have any history of being served notices, or been prosecuted by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE)?
- Does the contractor have the correct type and level of insurance cover (e.g., Public Liability)?
- Are they competent/suitably qualified to carry out the work (e.g., Gas Safe Registered if working on gas equipment)?
- Do they have experience of the type of work you want done?
- Are they members of relevant trade or professional bodies?
- How do they select sub-contractors?
- Have you used them before?

The above is not exhaustive. Time spent researching your contractor prior to them being appointed could help save you more time and money in the long run, especially if an incident should occur with a contractor, you have employed directly.

What documents do we need from the contractor?

Depending on the size of the work/services being carried out by the contractor, various documents may need to be provided by them. The minimum documentation that they should provide for any work/services usually includes:

- **Insurance** - you should obtain copies of any insurance documentation relevant to the work, e.g., Employers' Liability, Public Liability and possibly Professional Indemnity insurance
- **Risk assessment(s)** - these should identify any hazards that the work will involve (e.g., from equipment and substances brought on site, hot work, etc.) and how the contractor is going to control the hazards and minimise the risk to staff and pupils
- **Method Statement(s)** - these describe how the contractor will carry out tasks safely (e.g., using a scaffolding tower to change lighting in the sports hall)
- **Contractors Job Registration Form (CJRF)** - this document (a council form but recommended for use by all schools) is completed jointly by the contractor and school and acts as a checklist to ensure that all necessary information and documents have been shared.

A permit to work may also need to be considered for high-risk tasks – see Permit to Work guide for additional information.

What documents do we need to complete?

Please note – council schools must let **the Corporate Landlord** team know, in advance, about any substantive work that will affect the structure of the school using the “Notification of proposed planned maintenance or building works” form – please contact **the Corporate Landlord team** for further information.

When you have received copies of risk assessment, method statement and the CJRF from the contractor, you should carry out your own risk assessment. If there are any hazards or risks that have not been adequately controlled or if there are hazards at the school that the contractor has not identified, these must be assessed by the school.

If appropriate, the school's asbestos management plan, the action to take in event of a fire, first aid emergencies and welfare arrangements must be shared with the contractor prior to any work/services commencing.

Monitoring and supervision of contractors

The school must supervise and monitor any contractor whilst they are on site. If the contractor does not follow the documented method statements or risk assessments they have provided or are seen to carry out unsafe acts whilst on the site, then the school must stop their work. The senior contractor should then be contacted to resolve any issues before work is allowed to start again.

Accidents/incidents involving contractors

Any accidents or incidents that involve contractors must be recorded and reported to the health & safety team. See Accident & Incident Reporting guide for additional information.

Further information

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on control of contractors or CDM.

Further information & guidance on contractors and on CDM is available from the HSE:

- [Using contractors: A brief guide INDG368 \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/indg368/)
- [Construction - Construction Design and Management Regulations 2015 \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/l24/)

COSHH

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health – overview

All hazardous substances used in the workplace must have a COSHH assessment undertaken before they are brought into use.

What substances need to be assessed?

The COSHH regulations cover a range of substances used in or produced by work including:

- Substances classified as dangerous to health under European regulations on Classification, Labelling and Packaging of Substances and Mixtures (known as the CLP Regulation). In practice any chemical/product with one of the following warning labels:



Fatal or toxic...



Label used to indicate less serious health hazards such as skin irritancy/sensitisation (replaces the older harmful or irritant symbols)



Causes severe burns...



Label used to indicate serious longer term health hazards such as carcinogenicity and respiratory sensitisation

Note: CLP also covers other issues such as flammability and dangers to the environment, so you may come across products with similar labels. Whilst COSHH may not apply to these, other safety or environmental legislation does so a general assessment, along the lines of COSHH should be carried out.

- Substances with workplace exposure limits. These are listed in the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) publication 'EH40 - Occupational Exposure Limits'.
- Biological agents (bacteria and other microorganisms), if they are directly connected with the work, or if the exposure is incidental to the work.
- Any kind of dust in substantial concentrations.
- Any other substance, which creates a risk to health, e.g., pesticides.

Note: work involving asbestos or lead is covered by more specific legislation and hence does not come under COSHH.

Implications for schools

In many schools, especially those who buy in cleaning, catering, and caretaking services, COSHH may not be a major issue – since the service provider should have undertaken COSHH assessments for any product used by their staff.

However, hazardous substances are used in most workplaces and schools must ensure that assessments are in place for any they use which could include art and science materials, cleaning and maintenance products, and office consumables.

Note: hazardous substances used in science and design & technology are covered by assessments and model procedures provided by CLEAPSS - the advisory service providing support in science and technology for schools. Any school using the service will be provided with appropriate assessments.

Issues to consider if you use hazardous substances

- Wherever possible, you should use non-hazardous products or substitute products for less hazardous ones
- Where hazardous substances are used, controls should be in place to minimise the risk
- Staff must be informed of how to use products safely and should receive training if appropriate
- Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, goggles, and masks, must be provided, if the assessment indicates they are needed; staff must use any PPE provided
- All hazardous substances must be stored appropriately and securely when not in use
- Where hazardous substances are used by contractors (e.g., bought in cleaning services) or others working within the school, their employer should make the assessments available to the school

Training

Any staff who undertake COSHH assessments should be trained to ensure they are competent; in addition, all staff who use hazardous substances should receive training to ensure they know the precautions to take.

The health & safety team run a course on the principles of COSHH; please contact the team for further details – see page 1 for contact details.

Further information

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on COSHH or hazardous substances.

Further information on COSHH is also available on HSE's website: [Control of Substances Hazardous to Health \(COSHH\) - HSE](#)

Display Screen Equipment (DSE)

The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations require employers to minimise the risks in DSE work by ensuring that workplaces and jobs are well designed. The Regulations apply where staff members **habitually** use DSE as a significant part of their normal work. Other people, who use DSE only occasionally, are not covered by the requirements in the Regulations (apart from the workstation requirements). However, their employers still have general duties to protect them under other health & safety legislation.

What is the problem?

Computer workstations or equipment can be associated with neck, shoulder, back or arm pains, fatigue, and eyestrain. These aches and pains are sometimes called upper limb disorders (ULDs) or repetitive strain injuries (RSI). Usually these disorders do not last, but in a few cases, they may become persistent or even disabling. These problems can be avoided by following good practice.

What is DSE?

For most of us, DSE simply refers to the computers/laptops we use at work. However, the definition is quite wide and includes handheld devices (e.g., **smartphones**), microfiche and TV screens, etc. The regulations do not just cover DSE in the workplace; they cover any work on DSE e.g., at home or at other sites. Certain requirements may also apply to screens that form part of process control equipment, etc.

Habitual v occasional users

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) suggest that employees who use DSE for a **significant** part of their working day (i.e., **continuous or near continuous periods of an hour or more at a time**) are likely to be classed as **habitual users**.

Whilst other, "occasional", users of DSE are not covered by the DSE regulations, the DSE workstations they use are; consequently, their workstations should be assessed.

DSE assessments

A DSE assessment should be carried out for each habitual user of DSE and their workstation(s); in addition, an assessment should be carried out for all other DSE workstations.

Walsall Council has produced a DSE self-assessment form to be used to assess users/workstations (other forms are available). Assessments look at issues including:

- Seating
- Work surface
- Display screen
- Environment
- Lighting
- Monitor
- Mouse and keyboard
- Software

Each school should have a competent person who reviews the self-assessments and ensures that any problems identified are followed up.

Assessments should be reviewed regularly (annually in Voluntary Controlled and Community schools) and whenever there are changes to the equipment or workstation.

Portable devices

Portable devices (e.g., laptops) and handheld devices (e.g., **smartphones**) are also subject to the DSE Regulations if they are in prolonged use - e.g., are they used “habitually” as per HSE’s suggested classification?

Prior to using these devices, you must assess their suitability for the task along with any health & safety implications - remember these devices are designed for portability, rather than prolonged use. You may need to take additional steps to reduce the risk from portable DSE use e.g., if a laptop is used for prolonged periods at a location, you should consider providing a docking station (with separate keyboard and/or monitor).

Eye and eyesight tests

Habitual users and those who are to become habitual users of DSE are entitled, **at their request**, to an eyesight test. Once requested, the employer (head teacher in schools) must ensure eyesight tests are provided as soon as possible and without charge to the employee.

If the examining optician prescribes corrective lenses specifically for DSE (middle distance) work, the school has a duty to provide them; however, employers only have to provide basic frames/prescription lenses. Employees can request more expensive frames/lenses, in which case they must pay the difference between the basic allowance and the cost of more expensive glasses, contact lenses or other corrective appliances.

Training

Employers should provide training to ensure employees can use their DSE and workstation safely and know how to make best use of it to avoid health problems - for example by adjusting the chair. A copy of the HSE leaflet “Working with VDUs” can be given to staff - this provides information and instruction on the safe use of DSE. The leaflet can be downloaded from the HSE website: [Working with display screen equipment \(DSE\) \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/working-with-display-screen-equipment-dse/)

Further information

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on DSE issues.

Further information on DSE is available on HSE’s website: [Working safely with display screen equipment: Overview - HSE](https://www.hse.gov.uk/working-safely-with-display-screen-equipment/).

Educational visits and trips

School trips have clear benefits for pupils, and large numbers of successful visits and outdoor learning activities take place each year. However, misunderstandings about health & safety law can sometimes discourage schools and teachers from organising these activities.

This guide aims to tackle some of the myths surrounding educational visits. It also outlines the support available to schools and the measures they can take to minimise the risk.

Myth 1 – if things go wrong, we risk prosecution

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) state – 'Where sensible and proportionate steps have been taken by a school and its staff, it is highly unlikely that there would be a breach of health & safety law involved, or that it would be in the public interest for HSE to bring a prosecution.

Prosecutions taken by HSE invariably involve a fatality (or near fatality) where there was recklessness or a clear failure to adopt sensible precautions. The fact that an accident occurs does not mean there was a breach of health & safety law if sensible, proportionate, and appropriate precautions have been taken. Fears of prosecution by schools and their staff have been grossly inflated and are unwarranted. Such fears should not be a barrier to school trips taking place'.

If further evidence is required - HSE statistics indicate that in the five-year period between 2005/06 and 2009/10 there were only two prosecutions involving school visits.

Myth 2 – organising a trip is overly bureaucratic

Trips need to be well planned; however, there is no need to go over the top and a lot of work has already been done on your behalf. For instance, the health & safety team has produced a range of generic risk assessments covering all types of educational visits (see **Further information**); these can be easily adapted for most visits schools undertake.

Regarding parental consent, you'll be pleased to hear that (except for nursery age children) written consent is not required for most educational visits as many of these take place during school hours and are a normal part of a child's education. However, parents should be told where their child will be at all times and of any extra safety measures required.

Written consent should be requested for activities that need a higher level of risk management or those that take place outside school hours; however, these can be covered by a 'one-off' consent form, which schools can ask parents to sign when a child enrolls. Note: parents must still be told in advance of each activity and be given the opportunity to withdraw their child from it.

Visit approval and notification of activities and visits

Walsall Council delegates the responsibility for formal approval of all visits to establishment head teachers/managers.

The council's **Emergency Planning team** no longer needs notification in advance of any visits; however, for all visits, the school/establishment must have visit and participant details,

including emergency contacts and any known health issues of participants, readily available in school/the establishment.

Where visits take place out of school/office hours, an emergency base contact must be available who will have ready access to these details "out of hours". All staff involved in the visit must have contact details for the base contact in case of emergency.

Role of the Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC) and group leader

There is no legal requirement to have an EVC; however, Walsall Council schools must have one and they are strongly recommended for all others.

Where an EVC is appointed, they should be an experienced member of staff; their role includes:

- Liaising with the health & safety team
- Supporting the head teacher and governors with visit approval decisions
- Ensuring that emergency contacts and arrangements are in place for each visit
- Ensuring that staff and volunteers who lead or supervise a visit are competent

In addition to the EVC, each trip should be managed by a group leader whose role includes:

- Following the 'Educational Visits Standards'
- Ensuring that accompanying adults are fully briefed on their roles/responsibilities
- Ensuring that the visit and activities are suitable for the group
- Preparing, where appropriate, a specific risk assessment for the visit
- Ensuring that minimum supervision ratios are in place

Training

Any staff who supervise and plan/participate in educational visits should receive training.

The health & safety team run regular EVC training courses; please contact the team for further details – see page 1 for contact details.

Further information

The health & safety team has produced a document, 'Educational Visits Standards', along with a range of generic risk assessments (all available on [Walsall Link](#)). The standards and the school's EVC should be consulted, in the first instance, for any query regarding educational visits.

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on educational visits.

Further information on school visits & trips is also available on HSE's website: [HSE - School trips - Tackling the health and safety myths](#)

Electricity and gas safety

Introduction

This guide gives a simple overview of electricity and gas safety issues and the checks that should be taking place.

Portable electrical appliance testing

The Electricity at Work Regulations require all electrical equipment to be maintained so that it is safe; however, this does not necessarily mean that all equipment must be tested.

For most office and other low risk equipment, HSE's advice is that **visual checks** (by the user) for obvious signs of damage and perhaps simple tests (a **formal visual inspection**) by a competent member of staff are sufficient to prevent danger; however, for other equipment such as earthed appliances (e.g. kettles and some floor cleaners), or extension leads, a **combined inspection/test**, by a suitably trained person, at appropriate intervals will be required.

A **formal visual inspection** mainly looks for obvious damage; however it may also include removal of the plug cover to check the fuse, cord grip, and integrity of the connections within the plug as well as ensuring the wires are connected correctly; consequently, anyone who undertakes these checks must be competent with appropriate basic electrical knowledge and training in what to look for and the precautions to take (e.g. ensuring the equipment is unplugged).

In practice, many schools find it convenient to have **formal visual inspections** done by the same person who carries out the **combined inspection and testing**; this is often carried out by a contractor but could be carried out by suitably trained school staff (see Training below).

HSE guidance on maintaining portable electric equipment in offices and other low-risk environments, which includes suggested inspection intervals, is available from: [Maintaining portable electrical equipment in low-risk environments \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/peel/)

Higher risk equipment

Whilst most equipment in schools is low risk office equipment, some will be subject to greater wear and tear (e.g., floor buffers) or will be used in potentially corrosive environments (e.g., laboratory equipment/swimming pool areas). This equipment may require more frequent inspection and testing to ensure it remains safe. The frequency of the inspection and testing should be identified following risk assessment of the equipment. These inspections could include pre-use, daily, weekly, and monthly inspections in some circumstances.

Fixed equipment

Not all electrical equipment is portable, for example, heavy duty kitchen equipment and traditional wood and metal working equipment is often connected directly into the mains supply, rather than plugged in. This equipment should also be checked periodically.

Portable appliance register

Any formal inspection and testing carried out should be recorded; a portable appliance register is ideal for this purpose. To avoid confusion, all equipment should be uniquely identifiable in the register.

Electrical installation

The electrical wiring within or, in certain cases, external to a building should be tested periodically by a competent electrical engineer to ensure that it is safe. For most commercial premises, including schools, the suggested intervals between periodic tests and inspection are five years, although for leisure facilities this should be every three years and for swimming pools annually.

It should also be noted that HSG179 (Health and Safety in Swimming Pools) recommends that RCDs, in those environments, are tested and inspected daily, weekly and three monthly.

Gas safety

All gas appliances are required to have an annual gas safety check carried out by a "Gas Safe Register" registered contractor under the Gas Safety (Installation & Use) Regulations.

In addition, gas boilers require an annual service by a "Gas Safe Register" registered contractor under the same regulations.

Training

Walsall Council recommends that those undertaking combined inspection and testing should hold a City & Guilds 2377/002 Portable Appliance Testing certificate or equivalent.

Further information

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on electricity or gas safety.

Further information on electricity and gas safety is also available on HSE's website:

- [Electrical safety - HSE](#)
- [Gas - HSE](#)

Fire

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (RRO) requires the responsible person (head teacher in schools) to carry out a Fire Risk Assessment; take general fire precautions; implement protective measures; and maintain a fire emergency plan.

Fire risk assessment

The assessment must be carried out by a competent person. Given that, assessments cover many “technical” aspects of the building and fire protection system (e.g., fire breaks in roof voids, standard of fire doors, type of alarm system), you are unlikely to have the expertise in-house and will probably need the assistance of a contractor to carry out the assessment.

The fire risk assessment may identify actions that you need to take; the responsible person should ensure these are completed in the timescales stipulated.

Assessment must be reviewed regularly (the initial assessment should state how often; for schools it is usually a formal review, by a fire safety advisor, every two years; with the school reviewing the assessment annually) and when there are significant changes to the building, occupancy levels, working practices, etc.

Fire emergency plans and PEEPs

Each school must have a fire emergency plan in place that considers how all persons can safely evacuate the building. The plan should also consider action to be taken if you are unable to return to the premises. Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) will be required for persons who require assistance to evacuate the building (see PEEPs guide).

Fire drills

Fire drills must be carried out at regular intervals. Best practice is to carry out drills once per term (including one in September to cover the new intake). Pupils, and all those who work or volunteer in the school (including kitchen staff, cleaners, lunchtime supervisors, etc.) should all have the opportunity to participate in a fire drill; consequently, they should take place at different times, on different days to ensure everyone can take an active part.

Equipment & signage

Firefighting and other plant/equipment for fire protection/prevention purposes requires regular maintenance, inspection, and servicing. The following table gives examples of the frequency of various checks:

| Frequency | Action required |
|-----------|---|
| Daily | Check availability of escape routes (e.g., exit routes are clear and final doors are not locked or blocked) |
| Weekly | Test fire alarm system using manual call point(s), also check that doors on hold open devices have closed, and the electronic door locks on escape routes have unlocked. Check extinguishers are in place, the seals are intact, and units are charged |
| Monthly | Check condition of fire doors, self-closers, fire signs, Test green break glass points etc. Test emergency lighting and maintain as required |
| Annually | Full check and test of fire alarm system by engineer (or 25% every three months) Full inspection and test of fire extinguishers Duration test of emergency lighting – one hour |

Schools must display “fire action” notices that tell people what they must and must not do in case of fire. There must also be pictorial signs that show people the direction they need to go to leave the building in a fire. All signs should be in the approved format (standard colours, fonts, and pictograms).

Fire wardens

In some schools, trained fire wardens may be required to assist in the evacuation procedure. This will usually be the case if the signing in and out procedures are not fully robust and always up to date - when employees and visitors leave the site do they always sign out?

The role of the fire warden is to carry out a visual sweep of an area or “zone” on their way out of the building and to report if the zone is clear, or if people are still inside. They report this to the school’s main fire warden who liaises with the emergency services when they arrive. Note: fire warden duties do not include tackling fires, or putting themselves at any risk by arguing with, or trying to physically move people who refuse to leave the building.

Training

All staff members (teaching and non-teaching) must receive fire awareness training and refresher training at regular intervals.

The health & safety team can deliver fire awareness training and fire warden training courses, please contact the team for further details – see page 1 for contact details.

Further information

Voluntary Controlled and Community schools should contact the council’s fire safety advisers in the first instance for guidance and advice or to carry out a fire risk assessment (see page 4 for contact details). Other schools are also encouraged to use this service.

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on fire and evacuation requirements.

Further information on fire is also available on HSE’s website:

[Work process fire safety - Fire and explosion \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/work-process-fire-safety-fire-and-explosion).

Specific guidance on the RRO for education establishments and for evacuating persons with disabilities is available at:

[Fire safety: guidance for those with legal duties - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/fire-safety-guidance-for-those-with-legal-duties).

First aid

The Health & Safety (First Aid) Regulations require employers to provide adequate and appropriate equipment, facilities, and personnel to enable first aid to be given to employees who are injured or become ill at work. The Regulations do not cover the public, however HSE strongly encourages employers to consider non-employees and to make provision for them. In addition, Ofsted may also ask about first aid in school.

Risk assessment

To determine your first aid requirements, you should carry out a risk assessment that considers the following:

- numbers of first aiders/paediatric first aiders/appointed persons required
- numbers and locations of first-aid containers
- arrangements for off-site activities/trips
- out of school hours arrangements e.g., lettings, parent's evenings

Schools are generally low risk environments; however, you may need to consider:

- Number of people – how many staff and pupils are on site?
- Early years – do you have paediatric first aid cover?
- Multi-site environment – is first aid adequate at each site?
- Disabilities or special needs – are pupils or staff at higher risk?
- Specific risks – is there dangerous machinery or chemicals in school?
- Out of hours working – is cover available out of hours?

The minimum first aid provision in any workplace is a suitably stocked first aid box and an appointed person to take charge of first aid arrangements. However, most schools will require additional provision – first aiders and first aid kits. This should be determined by a First Aid risk assessment. The first aid provision and equipment should also be checked on a regular basis.

First aid at work/emergency first aid/paediatric first aid/appointed person

A **first aider** is someone with an appropriate first-aid qualification – typically a certificate of competence in either **first aid at work** (FAW) or **emergency first aid at work** (EFAW).

Paediatric first aid (PFA) training is specific for younger children. It can be used for other primary age children, but not older pupils or adults.

The FAW course takes three days, the PFA two, and the EFAW one; all certificates last three years, but yearly refreshers are recommended. The FAW course can be updated with a two-day requalification course (if taken before the certificate expires); however, the other courses require full renewal after three years.

Note: EFAW can be more cost effective than FAW and can allow you to provide additional cover, e.g., in PE or on school trips. It is also a requirement that all staff trained in “**Team Teach**” receive EFAW training.

An **appointed person** is someone who can take charge (e.g., phone an ambulance) if someone is injured or falls ill. They may also look after first aid equipment. Most schools should not need one since they will have trained first aiders.

How many first aiders/paediatric first aiders or appointed persons do we need?

Schools are relatively low risk, so suggested numbers are usually one trained first aider per 100 pupils/staff (see table below).

Schools will probably have a mix of first aid provision – if they have early years pupils, they will need some paediatric first aiders (who can also deal with other primary age children) but will also need some FAW/EFAW for adults. If there are no early years' considerations, the school will just need a mix of FAW/EFAW – depending on risk.

| Risk category | No.'s at site | Suggested number of first aid personnel |
|---------------|---------------|---|
| Low risk | Fewer than 25 | At least 1 appointed person |
| | 25 - 50 | At least 1 trained first aider (FAW or EFAW) |
| | More than 50 | At least 1 trained first aider for every 100 (or part thereof)* |

*In small schools, with few first aiders, cover could be compromised by staff absence due to illness, off-site visits, etc., hence, 1:50 may be a more suitable ratio.

Paediatric first aid in early years

The [EYFS Statutory Framework](#) states that level 2 and level 3 staff who qualified after 30 June 2016 and work directly with children in early years will need PFA training to be included in the supervision ratios – this would appear to override the suggested numbers of first aiders applicable elsewhere in school.

What should a first-aid box contain?

There is no standard list; however, HSE suggest the following:

- a leaflet giving general guidance on first aid
- 20 individually wrapped sterile plasters (assorted sizes)
- two sterile eye pads
- four individually wrapped triangular bandages, preferably sterile
- six safety pins
- two large, individually wrapped, sterile, unmedicated wound dressings
- six medium-sized, individually wrapped, sterile, unmedicated wound dressings
- a pair of disposable gloves

First aid room

Every school should have a suitable room that can be used for medical/dental treatment (see School Facilities, etc. guide); schools should consider using this room for first aid.

Training

The health & safety team run regular [first aid](#) courses. Please contact the team for further details – see page 1 for contact details.

Further information

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on first aid.

Further information on first aid is also available from the HSE: [First aid - HSE](#).

Halls - occupancy numbers and related fire issues

This guide should assist you in determining how many people can safely use your school hall and get out in an emergency. The calculations should form part of the school's fire risk assessment.

Occupancy should be based both the physical capacity of the hall and the availability of exits:

To calculate physical capacity of the hall

This is determined by calculating the usable floor area in m² and dividing that by 0.5; hence a 20m by 10m hall could hold 400 standing people – $(20 \times 10)/0.5 = 400$.

However, this is not the final figure for the room, as you still need to calculate the available exit capacity.

To calculate the available exit capacity

The capacity of an escape route is measured by the number of persons per minute that can pass through it, so to establish the capacity it is necessary to measure the width of the route at the narrowest point.

The following guide can be used to determine the general capacities of escape routes (see also **BB100** below). Note the Fire Authority tend to class schools as high-risk buildings:

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>A width of at least 750mm can accommodate up to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80 people in higher risk premises; or • 100 people in normal risk premises | <p>A width of at least 1050mm can accommodate up to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 160 people in higher risk premises; or • 200 people in normal risk premises |
|--|--|

An additional 75mm should be allowed for each additional 15 persons (or part of 15).

The total width of the escape routes should not be less than that required to accommodate the maximum numbers of people likely to use them. Note: The minimum width of an escape route should not be less than 750mm and, where wheelchair users are likely to use it, not less than 900mm.

There are also minimum numbers of escape routes:

- Up to 60 people – minimum 1 escape route
- 61 to 600 people – minimum 2 escape routes
- More than 600 people – minimum 3 escape routes

When calculating the overall escape route capacity for premises that have more than one way out, you should normally assume that the widest exit is not available because it has been compromised by fire. If doors or other exits leading to escape routes are, too close to one another you should consider whether the fire could affect both at the same time. If that is the case, it may be necessary to discount them both from your calculation.

To return to the previous example, if your 20x10 hall with a physical capacity of 400 has only two exit routes, then the smallest of the exits must be a minimum of 2100mm wide to accommodate all 400; if the exit is narrower, the capacity of the hall would be reduced accordingly.

If the hall has three exit routes, each 1050mm wide, then discounting one (compromised by fire) still leaves 2100mm width of exit route, hence the hall could accommodate all 400.

Use of halls with chairs in rows or chairs and tables

Use of chairs and other furniture will reduce the physical capacity of the hall.

Where rows of chairs are used, you should leave a 1m wide corridor around the edge, and if you have more than 14 chairs in a row, we would advise you have a 1m centre aisle.

Where tables and chairs are used, you should ensure that the layout does not impede egress to the final exits.

BB100 considerations

The capacities of escape routes quoted above are from the Fire Safety Risk Assessment for Educational Premises guide (produced to support the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order). Figures in that guide differ slightly from those in Building Bulletin 100 used by Building Control when assessing building plans. If you are planning new school buildings, you should contact Building Control or an architect familiar with BB100 for clarification.

Other factors to consider

- Exits doors should open in the direction of escape and must not be locked when the hall is in use
- Appropriate signs identifying escape routes should be in place; if exits are no longer in use (either permanently or temporarily), signs must be amended accordingly
- Exit routes should be visible from all parts of the room and must not be blocked by furniture, etc.
- Where evening activities take place, appropriate emergency lighting should be installed. In addition, you must ensure that all appropriate exit routes are still available and have not been locked for security purposes
- Curtains/drapes should be of fire-retardant material or treated with a suitable fire-retardant product – the Fire Authority may ask you to prove that any curtains/drapes you use are suitable and that when cleaned, are suitably retreated
- Curtains/drapes should not be used on ceilings or escape routes/circulation areas and should not cover emergency lighting, fire alarm call points, detectors, and sounders, escape doors and fire signs/notices

Further information

Voluntary Controlled and Community schools should contact the council's fire safety adviser in the first instance for further information on hall occupancy or fire safety issues (see page 4 for contact details). Other schools are also encouraged to use this service. The health & safety team can also be contacted for advice.

Additional information on fire safety can be found in the fire section of these guides.

Specific guidance on fire safety in education premises is available:

[Fire safety risk assessment: educational premises - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/fire-safety-risk-assessment-educational-premises)

Legionella and water safety

Legionnaires' disease - overview

Legionnaires' disease is a potentially fatal form of pneumonia, which can affect anybody, but principally those who are susceptible because of age, illness, immunosuppression, smoking, etc.

Legionnaires' disease is caused by a bacterium called *Legionella pneumophila* and people catch it by inhaling small droplets of water suspended in the air, which contain the bacteria.

What do I do to manage it?

Health & safety law requires employers to consider the risks from Legionella that may affect staff or members of the public and take suitable precautions. Employers must:

- identify and assess sources of risk
- prepare a scheme (or course of action) for preventing or controlling the risk
- implement and manage the scheme – appointing a person to be managerially responsible (e.g., head teacher), sometimes referred to as the 'responsible person'
- keep records and check that what has been done is effective

The risk assessment must be carried out by a competent person, which usually means using a consultant. The assessment involves assessing if the water systems (including associated equipment) are likely to create a risk and asking:

- Are conditions present, which will encourage bacteria to multiply? For example, is the water temperature between 20-45°C?
- Is it possible that water droplets will be produced and, if so, could they be dispersed over a wide area?
- Is it likely that anyone particularly susceptible will be exposed to the contaminated water droplets?

If a risk is identified which cannot be prevented, you must introduce controls. The starting point is to prepare a written scheme, which sets out how you intend to control the risk from Legionella; the scheme should describe:

- your system – an up-to-date plan or schematic diagrams are sufficient
- who is responsible for carrying out the assessment and managing its implementation
- the safe and correct operation of your system
- what control methods and other precautions you will be using; and
- what checks will be carried out on the control scheme and how often

You should:

- ensure that the release of water spray is properly controlled
- avoid water temperatures and conditions that favour the growth of Legionella and other micro-organisms
- ensure water cannot stagnate anywhere in the system by keeping pipe lengths as short as possible or by removing redundant pipework

- avoid materials that encourage the growth of Legionella
- keep the system and the water in it clean; and
- treat water to either kill Legionella (and other microorganisms) or limit their ability to grow

Any alterations or adaptations to the water system must be carefully planned so as not to encourage the production of Legionella bacteria, and must be recorded within the “Legionella log book”/written scheme.

Tests on hot and cold-water systems including air conditioning plant, showerheads and drip trays to chillers need to be carried out in accordance with HSE publication L8 - “The Control of Legionella Bacteria in Water Systems. Approved Code of Practice and Guidance”.

Tests/controls typically include:

- Weekly flushing of little used outlets
- Monthly temperature checks
- Quarterly de-scaling of shower heads
- Water sampling (usually annually)
- Annual service of any thermostatic mixer valves (TMVs) fitted to control scald risk

In addition, as part of the risk control strategy, where premises/parts of premises have been closed for more than a week, prior to re-opening both hot and cold-water systems should be purged by site staff. The purging should take place only when the system is up to full operating temperature and involves running sentinel taps for 5 minutes - at 50-60°C for hot taps, and at less than 20°C for cold water systems. Sentinel taps means the first and last water outlet within a circuit – there may be more than one circuit in your hot water system therefore specific outlets should be identified for you by the contractor undertaking the main Legionella testing.

Training

Key staff such as caretakers/site managers should receive Legionella awareness training and should receive specific training if they undertake temperature checks on the water system. Other staff who manage the premises may also benefit from awareness training.

Further information

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on Legionella or water safety.

Further information on Legionella is also available on HSE’s website:

[Legionella and legionnaires' disease - HSE](#)

Lifts and lifting equipment

You need to ensure that any lifts or lifting equipment (including hoists, slings, etc.) in school are inspected periodically to ensure they remain safe to use. This guide outlines the checks that should take place.

LOLER

The Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations (LOLER) require that all lifting equipment provided for use at work (whether it be in the building, attached to a vehicle, manually or electrically powered), is **thoroughly examined by a competent person** at regular intervals. This applies to lifts and hoists used to lift people or loads.

The law requires that all lifts when in use should be thoroughly examined:

- After substantial and significant changes have been made
- At least every six months if the lift is used at any time to carry people, every 12 months if it only carries loads, or in accordance with an examination scheme; and
- Following 'exceptional circumstances' such as damage to, or failure of, the lift, long periods out of use or a major change in operating conditions which is likely to affect the integrity of the equipment

Thorough examination should not be confused with preventive maintenance, although they have some elements in common. Preventive maintenance usually involves replacing worn or damaged parts, topping up fluid levels and making routine adjustments to ensure risks are avoided. Thorough examination may act as a check that maintenance is being carried out properly but is not intended to replace it.

Note: installation, maintenance and inspection of lifts and lifting equipment is specialist work and should only be undertaken by competent persons – i.e., someone who has sufficient technical and practical knowledge of the lift to be able to detect any defects and assess how significant they are. It is also important that the competent person is sufficiently independent and impartial to allow them to make an objective assessment of the lift – it is unlikely that you will have these skills in-house, and you will probably have to use a specialist contractor. Walsall Council has its own in-house specialist engineer (see **Further information**) who manages a lift maintenance contract for the council and can advise you further if you buy into that service.

Note: when new lifting equipment is installed (either in the building or on a vehicle) you must advise your competent person so that arrangements can be made to include it on the inspection/examination schedule.

In addition to any thorough examination required, lifting equipment should also be serviced in line with manufacturer/supplier recommendations (see equipment handbooks). The equipment may also have approved attachments, e.g., slings, hooks, eyebolts, and ropes, and these should be individually marked for identification purposes and thoroughly examined by a competent person at six monthly intervals (or in accordance with an examination scheme).

Passenger lifts

Passenger lifts require a thorough examination (sometimes referred to as an insurance inspection) at six monthly intervals, or in accordance with an examination scheme. In addition, they should have a monthly planned maintenance inspection and, if the competent person deems it necessary, "supplementary tests" as appropriate.

Non-passenger carrying lifts

Other, non-passenger carrying, lifts require a thorough examination at 12 monthly intervals, or in accordance with an examination scheme. In addition, they should have a quarterly planned maintenance inspection and, if the competent person deems it necessary, "supplementary tests" as appropriate.

Other LOLER considerations

In addition to the inspections outlined above, you should also:

- Ensure that lifting equipment is safe and installed to minimise any risks
- Ensure it carries information to indicate safe working limits (SWL)
- Ensure that lifting operations are properly planned, supervised, and performed by competent people
- Ensure that defective equipment is not used, that access to that equipment is prevented, and any potentially dangerous defects are remedied.
- Keep installation, maintenance, and inspection records

Further information

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on lifts or lifting equipment safety.

Schools covered by Walsall council's insurance can arrange 'thorough examinations' via the council's insurer. Contact Insurance & Loss Control Services (Risk and Insurance) for further information (see page 4 for details).

The council's in-house engineer can be contacted via **the Corporate Landlord team** (see page 4 for contact details).

Further information on lifts or lifting equipment is also available on HSE's website:

www.hse.gov.uk/ (general link no topic specific link available).

Lone working

Employers have responsibility for the health, safety, and welfare at work of all of their employees. These responsibilities cannot be transferred to any other person, including those people who work alone. It is the employer's duty to assess risks to lone workers and take steps to avoid or control risks where necessary.

Employees have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work activities and to co-operate with their employers in meeting their legal obligations.

Definition

Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. They are found in a wide range of situations; some examples are given below.

- People in fixed establishments where only one person works on the premises
- People who work separately from others (e.g., caretaker working in the pool plant or boiler room, swimming teacher working in the swimming pool, PE teacher on the sports field, etc.)
- People who work outside normal hours (e.g., caretakers, cleaners)
- Mobile workers working away from their fixed base (e.g., education welfare officers)

What do I need to do?

You will first need to identify all your employees who are lone workers. A risk assessment will then need to be carried out identifying who is at risk from lone working, what the dangers are and what control measures you are putting in place to reduce the risk of lone working. You will also need to ensure that they are medically fit enough to undertake their work activities. Other things you will need to consider are:

- Ensuring there are adequate arrangements in place for any lone workers to raise the alarm, including if:
 - they become ill
 - they have an accident
 - there is another type of emergency (fire, violent attack, etc.)
- Ensuring there is a procedure for lone workers to report any accidents, incidents, or near-misses in a timely manner
- Providing adequate supervision for the lone worker
- Developing and implementing a robust lone working procedure

Lone working procedure

The school's lone working procedure will need to cover several aspects. It will need to have an appropriate "tracing" or monitoring system (e.g., shared diary, signing in and out board/book, regular contact at agreed times, etc.) that allows you to know the whereabouts of lone workers and what the expected times are to start and finish the lone working task.

Note: the tracing or monitoring procedure is not a "big brother" tool to monitor an employee's performance; rather, it is a tool that will help identify if a lone worker is in difficulties or requires assistance (e.g., when they have not made contact or returned by an agreed time).

The other aspect of the procedure is what actions need to be taken, and by whom, if contact has not been made at the agreed times – e.g., an identified person will try to contact the lone worker, trace the places they were working, or possibly call the family/police after an agreed period without any contact.

Training

Lone workers need to be sufficiently experienced and fully understand the risks and precautions. Employers should set the limits to what can and cannot be done while working alone. They should ensure employees are competent to deal with circumstances that are new, unusual or beyond the scope of training, for example when to stop work and seek advice from a supervisor or how to handle aggression.

Further information

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on lone working.

Further information on lone working is also available on HSE's website:

[Lone workers: how employers should protect them - Overview - HSE.](#)

Manual handling

Background

Manual handling is the single biggest cause of reportable injuries in the workplace. It accounts for over a third of all workplace accidents reported to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE). This guide gives a simple overview of manual handling and the assessments required.

Definitions

- **Manual handling** - is the transporting or supporting of a load by hand or bodily force. This includes the lifting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying, or moving of loads.
- **Load** - means any object, person (see **moving and handling** below), or animal.

What do I need to do about it?

Schools must consider the risk of manual handling to its employees. If there are risks, then the Manual Handling Operation Regulations (MHOR) applies. The regulations require employers to:

- **Avoid** the need for hazardous manual handling, so far as is reasonably practicable
- **Assess** the risk of injury from any hazardous manual handling that cannot be avoided; and
- **Reduce** the risk of injury from hazardous manual handling, so far as is reasonably practicable

How can I avoid manual handling?

There are several practical things a school can do to avoid the need for hazardous manual handling. These can include:

- Requesting that deliveries of resources are delivered directly to stores rather than be dropped off in reception
- Only ordering the actual number of items required
- Using mechanical aids such as pallet trucks, electric or hand powered hoists, etc.

Risk assessment

The MHOR require a specific risk assessment to be carried out and recorded where there is a significant risk of injury. The stages of the risk assessment are:

- Identify the elements of significant risk (see TILE below)
- Decide who might be harmed and how
- Evaluate risks and decide on precautions
- Record your findings
- Review/revise assessments regularly; especially if there are any changes to the task, individual, load or environment

When carrying out a manual handling assessment there are four key areas to consider, often referred to by the acronym **TILE**:

- **Task** – is the task repetitive, does it involve awkward movements, etc.
- **Individual** – is the person carrying out the task in good health, trained, etc.
- **Load** – is it heavy, sharp, cold/hot, bulky, unstable, etc.
- **Environment** – is it hot/cold, confined, windy, on different levels/uneven surfaces etc.

Reducing the risk of injury

If manual handling cannot be avoided, and the assessment has identified that there is still a risk of injury to the employee, then measures should be taken to reduce the risk. Examples of how to reduce the risk include:

- Breaking down the load into smaller pieces (e.g., rather than carry boxes of paper, just carry two or three reams at a time)
- Using a trolley or sack truck to transport loads
- Using hoists and slings (e.g., to raise and lower loads)
- Training staff in good handling techniques and back care (e.g., kinetic lifting)

Moving & handling (of people)

The manual handling of people, commonly referred to as 'moving & handling' involves additional considerations. Separate guidance on moving and handling is available on [Walsall Link](#). Schools that practice moving & handling of pupils should make themselves familiar with the guidance.

Training

Any staff who carry out manual handling tasks as part of their job role should receive awareness training. Moving & handling of people will require specialist training.

Further information

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on manual handling or moving & handling.

Additional information on risk assessment can be found in the risk assessment section of these guides.

Further information on manual handling is also available on HSE's website:

[Musculoskeletal disorders - HSE](#)

New and expectant mothers

The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations require employers to assess risks in the workplace. In addition, there is a specific duty to assess the risk to new and expectant mothers and put suitable controls in place to control those risks.

Definitions

- **A new or expectant mother** is someone who is pregnant or given birth within the last six months or who is breastfeeding.
- **Given birth** is defined as having delivered a living child or after 24 weeks of pregnancy a stillborn child.

Generic risk assessment

Hazards in the workplace that pose a health & safety risk to new and expectant mothers must be identified by employers, who must take action to remove or reduce the risk. If a risk is identified, all female employees of childbearing age should be informed of the potential risk even if they are not pregnant, as it is possible that they could be in the early stages of pregnancy - during the first 4-6 weeks, pregnancy can go undetected.

Specific risk assessment

After the employee has given notification of pregnancy or has given birth in the last six months or if she is breastfeeding a specific risk assessment must be carried out for the employee based on your initial assessment and any medical advice that has been provided by a doctor. This assessment must be recorded and then regularly monitored and reviewed.

Note: the pregnant or nursing mother should be involved in producing and reviewing her specific risk assessment.

Where significant risk is found, you must take all reasonably practicable measures to remove the risk or prevent exposure to it; for example, by altering the working conditions or hours of work.

If the risk cannot be avoided, then you should consider offering suitable alternative work. If alternative work is not an option, then you may need to consider **suspension on maternity grounds** - contact HR for further advice before making this decision.

Factors to consider when carrying out a risk assessment

The risk assessment should not only identify hazards but how serious the hazard is likely to be and how it will affect the individual.

Factors that may be an issue in schools include:

Physical hazards

- Manual handling, tight awkward spaces, and workstations
- Excessive noise
- Radiation (covered by specific legislation)

Biological agents

- Infections

Chemical hazards

- For example, chemical handling in laboratory or by cleaners

Working conditions

- Inadequate facilities
- Excessive working hours
- Unusually stressful work
- Temperature (high/low)
- Cigarette smoke
- Lone working
- Work at heights
- Travelling
- Exposure to violence

Rest facilities

You should provide suitable rest facilities for any worker who is pregnant or breastfeeding; this is not a legal requirement but encouraged as good practice to provide a healthy and safe environment for nursing mothers when expressing and storing their milk.

Note: toilets are not suitable for this purpose so should not be used.

What does the new or expectant mother need to do?

To allow her employer to fulfil their duties, a new or expectant mother must inform her employer in writing of her pregnancy; the employer can ask for written medical evidence.

The employer must consider any medical advice from the GP or midwife about the new or expectant mother's health and adjust her working conditions accordingly.

When a new or expectant mother wishes to claim statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance a MAT B1 certificate should be provided by the doctor or registered midwife.

The new or expectant mother has certain maternity rights, these include:

- Time off work for antenatal care
- Maternity leave
- Protection against unfair treatment or dismissal

Further information

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on new and expectant mothers. For advice on maternity leave, please contact HR.

Outdoor play equipment

What is outdoor play equipment?

Outdoor play equipment is any fixed equipment children play on or interact with; examples include trim trails, swings, slides, roundabouts, climbing frames, rope nets, "pencils" (e.g., wooden posts) and rope swings.

Are there any recognised standards?

The recognised standard for playground equipment is BS EN 1176 (Playground Equipment and Surfacing). These standards have been adopted by the play industry as best practice and you should ensure that new equipment you purchase is compliant with them.

Planning and installation

If you are considering installing outdoor play equipment, you should ensure the following:

- The equipment and installation should be compliant with the BS EN 1176 standard
- The equipment should have a post-installation inspection **and** risk assessment carried out by an independent (i.e., not the supplier/manufacturer) competent person (e.g., a member of the Register of Play Inspectors International [RPII]) **before** the equipment is brought into use

In addition, you should establish a regular maintenance and formal inspection regime to ensure the equipment remains safe to use.

Maintenance of equipment

When the equipment is installed, the installer/manufacturer should supply you with information on what regular maintenance it requires. Typically, this will include:

- Regular forking/filling of any loose-fill materials (e.g., bark, woodchip, sand, gravel)
- Treating and filling of any large cracks in wooden equipment
- Making good (e.g., rubbing down) and painting/staining of surfaces
- Lubrication of moving parts
- Cleaning schedule
- Security of fittings (i.e., ensuring screws, bolts, etc., are secure)

Inspection regime

There is no specific legal requirement to provide an inspection and maintenance programme, but the British Standards Institute, Health & Safety Executive, Insurers, and the major safety organisations recommend inspections as "best practice". In addition, schools have a moral responsibility and a duty of care to children using the equipment – an inspection regime helps address these.

A regular series of inspections is recommended for children's playgrounds, which include:

- **Routine inspection (visual)**
This looks at the equipment's basic condition, especially faults due to recent vandalism, breakages, and cleanliness of the playground. Inspections may be carried out locally by a manager or his/her staff and should be recorded on a simple sheet or book. Frequency of inspection should be daily when the school is open.

- **Operational inspection (termly)**

A more detailed inspection of the equipment; provides a quality control check on the routine inspections and identifies certain types of minor wear and tear. These inspections should be carried out by a competent person and should be recorded.

- **Annual inspection**

Essentially this looks at vandalism, minor and major wear, long-term structural problems, changes in the Standards compliance and design practices, risk assessment, etc. This should be carried out by a specialist (e.g., RPII member) not connected with the playground operator or manager giving an independent written report of the site.

Risk assessment

Given the foreseeable risk of injury associated with outdoor play equipment, schools should carry out a simple risk assessment on its use. Issues covered in the assessment should include the installation, maintenance and inspection arrangements outlined above, and issues such as supervision, pupil ability, unauthorised use, and inclement weather considerations.

Further information

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on outdoor play equipment.

Further information is also available on RoSPA's website: [Play safety - RoSPA](#).

A list of competent contractors who can carry out Operational and/or Annual inspections is available on the RPII website: [Outdoor Annual - Register of Play Inspectors International](#).

Permit to work

This guide should be read in conjunction with the **Contractors – selection & control** and **Risk Assessment** guides.

What is a permit to work?

The PTW is a formal documented procedure that authorises certain people to carry out specific work within a specified time frame. It sets out the precautions required to complete the work safely, based on a risk assessment. It describes what work will be done and how it will be done.

The PTW requires declarations from the people authorising the work and carrying out the work. Where necessary it requires a declaration from those involved in shift handover procedures or extensions to the work. Finally, before the area, equipment or machinery is put back into service, it will require a declaration from the permit originator that it is ready for normal use.

Authorised Person

Each school should have an “Authorised Person” (appointed by the head teacher) who will issue the necessary PTW. The Authorised Person must have appropriate knowledge and experience of the PTW jobs undertaken, the hazards involved, and the necessary precautions required. This will ensure a safe system of work is identified to eliminate, so far as reasonably practicable, the risks in a particular job.

Examples of when PTW are issued

PTW should be issued when there are potentially hazardous works taking place at the school. These would include:

- **Electrical work** – where there is the potential for contact with any live parts that may cause shock and burns, and/or potential fatality
- **Roof access** – a roof access permit is required when access to any kind of roof is required. The principal problems are falls through fragile roofing materials, roof lights, gaps, or holes, and falls from unprotected roof edges
- **Work at height** – whenever there is a risk of a person falling from a height that may foreseeably cause injury
- **Gas works** – where there is the risk of leaks, explosion or gas has to be purged through gas fittings. All gas works must be carried out by a competent person e.g., Gas Safe Registered
- **Excavations** – whenever any digging, excavation or boring is done. To help ensure that no underground services or pipe work will be damaged and lead to accidents; to help prevent excavation collapse; and, to ensure the safety of personnel within the area
- **Demolition works** – when buildings are demolished/taken down
- **Hot work** – the use of open fires, flames and work involving the application of heat by means of tools, equipment, or work that involves temperatures that could give rise to risks of fire and ignition of flammable substances and combustible materials

- **Confined Spaces** - “confined space” means a place which is substantially enclosed (though not always entirely), and where serious injury can occur from hazardous substances or conditions within the space or nearby (e.g., lack of oxygen)

How does the PTW system work?

The first step in the PTW system is to carry out a risk assessment for the activity being undertaken. Any contractor carrying out work should give you a copy of their method statement that covers the way the work will be carried out, including a description of the control measures that are to be used. The Contractors Job Registration Form (a council form but recommended for use by all schools) should also be completed for any works carried out by a contractor. Following on from this:

- **Issuing the PTW** – the head teacher will identify the PTW requirement for the activity to be undertaken and the PTW shall be issued by the competent appointed Authorised Person only. The PTW will be issued for daily working shift duration, but it can be renewed daily or extended for an extra period
- **Completing the PTW** – the Authorised Person will ensure that all hazards, risks, and precautions have been identified and that personnel in charge of the work are aware of the precautions under the PTW
- **Authorisation and acceptance of the PTW** – the Authorised Person will complete and sign the PTW after they have inspected the work area to ensure all precautions are being followed. The person conducting the work will sign the PTW to state they understand the conditions and will ensure compliance. A copy of the PTW should be displayed within the work area wherever possible
- **Auditing & monitoring of the PTW** – the Authorised Person(s) will monitor the work at regular intervals to ensure the safe systems of work are adhered to; failure to comply should result in the work being stopped
- **Completion/hand back of the PTW** – on completion, the person conducting the work should ensure that all the precautionary measures taken during the work are removed, or terminated, safely. The Authorised Person will ensure that plant, equipment, and the work area are returned to service in a clean, tidy, and safe manner. The PTW can then be signed off by the relevant persons

Further information

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on PTW systems.

Personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs)

This guide should be read in conjunction with the **Fire** guide.

If you have staff, pupils, or visitors with a disability on site, you need to make sure they can be safely evacuated in case of fire or another emergency.

What do I need to do?

Fire legislation requires the responsible person (head teacher) to have plans in place to safely evacuate people in case of fire. Disability legislation reinforces this duty to include responsibility for ensuring that all people, including disabled people, can leave the building safely in the event of a fire.

Note - it is the responsible person's duty to ensure this can be done and not the responsibility of the emergency services.

Who will need a PEEP?

Not all disabilities are obvious or easily recognised; therefore, the responsible person should determine who requires assistance in the event of an emergency (a simple questionnaire may help); for new employees, this should be done during the induction process.

You should also identify any pupil or regular visitor who requires a PEEP.

A PEEP will be required for any person (staff, pupil, regular visitor, etc.) who requires assistance in an emergency. These could include:

- Permanently disabled persons, e.g., those with:
 - hearing impairments
 - sight impairments
 - mobility problems (e.g., wheelchair users)
 - learning disabilities
 - mental health issues
- Temporarily disabled persons, e.g., those:
 - with broken limbs and sports injuries (e.g., persons using crutches or a wheelchair)
 - recovering from medical procedures
- Expectant mothers, i.e., those who are heavily pregnant and/or near full term

What about occasional visitors?

It would be impractical to prepare a PEEP for infrequent visitors to the school and those who might visit on one-off occasions (although you may wish to include "accessibility" questions in any event booking materials); therefore, a "standard plan" that can be used for any occasional visitor requiring assistance should also be developed and recorded - this plan should cater for a range of potential disabilities. A copy of the standard plan should be held in reception points within the school and offered to people as part of the entry/reception process.

Aids/equipment

If you have identified that there is a need for aids and equipment to be used to assist a person's safe evacuation, then there are several issues that will have to be considered:

- Does it require a regular servicing or maintenance programme?
 - Does a contractor have to carry this out or can it be done "in-house"
- Does it require those who use it to have specific training?
 - What type and frequency of training is required?
- Does it raise other hazards/risks that will require addressing?
 - E.g., manual handling issues

Training

Any staff members identified to assist persons as part of the PEEP, or who use aids/equipment provided as part of the PEEP should receive specific training in their role/use of the equipment. This training can be provided through the council's fire safety advisers.

Further information

Voluntary Controlled and Community schools should contact the council's fire safety advisers in the first instance for guidance and advice (see page 4 for contact details). Other schools are also encouraged to use this service.

For advice and guidance on moving and handling persons as part of a PEEP contact Outreach@Lindens via e-mail: outreach@lindens.walsall.sch.uk or by telephone 0121 580 7757.

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on fire and evacuation requirements.

Further guidance on evacuating disabled persons is available:

[Fire safety risk assessment: means of escape for disabled people - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/fire-safety-risk-assessment-means-of-escape-for-disabled-people)

Walsall Council has guidance on the preparation of evacuation plans for disabled employees and visitors that Voluntary Controlled and Community Schools must adhere to; This guidance is available via the health & safety team.

Risk assessment

Health & safety regulations require employers to assess risks in the workplace. This guide gives a simple overview of risk assessment.

What is risk assessment?

A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what hazards, in your work, could cause harm to people, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm.

Definitions

- a **hazard** is anything that may cause harm, such as chemicals, electricity, working from ladders, an open drawer, etc.
- the **risk** is the likelihood that somebody could be harmed by these and other hazards, together with an indication of how serious the resultant harm could be.

The Law

The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations is the main legislation on risk assessment and requires employers to undertake a 'suitable and sufficient' risk assessment of the risks to employees and others who may be affected by work activities. The regulations also set out a hierarchy of measures to control risk, starting with elimination of the hazard wherever possible.

Stages of risk assessment

- **Identify the hazards** – i.e., work out how people could be harmed; but remember to concentrate on significant hazard and ignore the trivial.
- **Decide who might be harmed and how** – e.g., pupils, school staff, contractors, and members of the public. How could they be harmed? Remember some people have particular requirements, e.g., young workers, new or expectant mothers and people with disabilities.
- **Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions** – having spotted the hazards, you then must decide what to do about them. The law requires you to do everything 'reasonably practicable' to protect people from harm. So first, look at what you are already doing; think about what controls you have in place and how the work is organised. Then compare this with the good practice and see if there is more you should be doing to bring yourself up to standard. In considering this, ask yourself:
 - Can I get rid of the hazard altogether?
 - If not, how can I control the risks so that harm is unlikely, and the outcome of the harm is reduced?
- **Record your findings and implement them** – record your findings using a risk assessment form and share them with relevant staff. Make sure that you put the findings of the assessments into practice.
- **Review your risk assessment and update if necessary** – assessments should be reviewed regularly; we recommend reviews take place annually or when activities change or new equipment, etc., is acquired. You should also review relevant assessments following accidents.

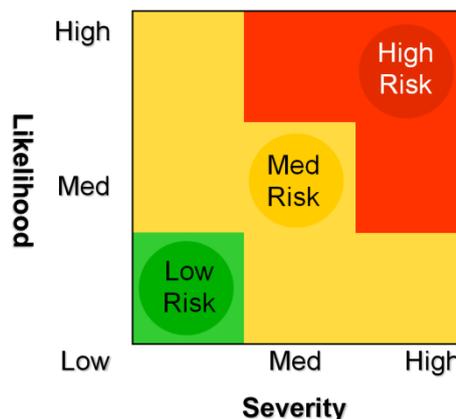
Walsall's risk assessment procedure

Walsall Council has produced a Risk Assessment form that should be used by Walsall's voluntary controlled and community schools; other schools can use the form or produce their own.

Walsall's form no longer includes a numerical risk rating; there is a column to record a simple Low/Medium/High risk rating, but this is optional – some may find it useful to help prioritise risk when dealing with activities that are more hazardous.

Rating the risk – optional

If schools want to “rate” the risk, for prioritisation purposes, or to highlight the higher risk areas of their work, they are free to do so. This can be done using any method that suits, experience will tell you what your higher risk areas are (remember, it's a qualitative, rather than quantitative measure); alternatively, they may find the simple grid (opposite) that compares **likelihood** of harm with the **severity** of injury/loss a useful tool to determine if the risk is low, medium, or high.



Training

The health & safety team run regular Risk Assessment training courses; please contact the team for further details – see page 1 for contact details.

Further information

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on risk assessment.

A selection of generic risk assessments is available on [Walsall Link](#). These can be downloaded but should then be adapted to suit the circumstances in your school.

Further information on risk assessment is also available on HSE's website: [Managing risks and risk assessment at work – Overview -HSE](#).

School facilities, etc.

There are two sets of school premises regulations in place in England (one for maintained schools and the other for independent schools, including academies and free school); however, their requirements are identical, and all schools must meet the same standards. The main health & safety related requirements are set out below.

Toilet and washing facilities

- Suitable toilet and washing facilities must be provided for the sole use of pupils
- Separate toilet facilities for boys and girls aged 8 years or over must be provided except where the toilet facility is provided in a room that can be secured from the inside and that is intended for use by one pupil at a time.
- Where separate facilities are provided for pupils who are disabled, they may also be used by other pupils, teachers and others employed at the school, and visitors, whether or not they are disabled.
- Suitable changing accommodation and showers must be provided for pupils aged 11 years or over at the start of the school year who receive physical education.

The regulations do not set the minimum number of fittings to be provided in relation to the ages and numbers of pupils. Generally, the needs of younger pupils are likely to be greater than those of older pupils; so, for example, a provision of one toilet and washbasin for every ten pupils under 5 years old would be adequate¹, while that ratio could be doubled for pupils aged 5-11 to one toilet and washbasin for every 20 pupils. For pupils over 11 one toilet per 20 pupils would be sufficient, but there is scope to reduce the number of washbasins where the washing facilities are shared.

Toilet facilities need to be planned and designed so that:

- hand washing facilities are provided within or in the immediate vicinity of every toilet
- the rooms containing them are adequately ventilated and lit
- they are in areas around the school that provide easy access for pupils and allow for informal supervision by staff, without compromising pupils' privacy

Where there is unisex provision, the privacy of the occupant needs to be ensured and this will be achieved by, for example, having a full height door.

Facilities for disabled pupils

Each toilet for disabled pupils needs to contain one toilet and one washbasin (and possibly a shower or other wash down fitting) and have a door opening directly onto a circulation space that is not a staircase and which can be secured from the inside. Where possible, the number and location of accessible toilets will be sufficient to ensure a reasonable travel distance for users that does not involve changing floor levels.

¹ This would satisfy the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation stage, which says that an adequate provision is usually one toilet and one washbasin for every ten children over the age of two.

Changing accommodation and showers for pupils

It is preferable for showers to be in areas separated from toilets and they need to provide adequate privacy. Consideration may also be given to providing changing rooms, with or without showers, at primary schools for pupils who need to wear sports kit for physical education, but this is not required under the regulations.

Toilets and washing facilities for staff

Toilets and washing facilities for staff may also be used by visitors. They should be separate from those provided for pupils, except where they are designed for use by those who are disabled.

Medical accommodation

Schools should have a non-teaching room that can be used for the medical examination and treatment of pupils and the short-term care of sick and injured pupils. The room should include a washbasin and be near to a toilet.

General health & safety

Earlier versions of school premises regulations included sections on several welfare related issues – heating, ventilation, etc. This is now covered by general health & safety legislation including the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations - [The Workplace \(Health, Safety and Welfare\) Regulations 1992 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1992/273/contents/matter)

Acoustics

The acoustic conditions and sound insulation of each room should be suitable so that people can hear clearly/concentrate and there should be minimal disturbance from adjacent areas.

Lighting

The lighting in each room/internal space must be suitable for activities that normally take place there. External lighting must be provided so people can safely enter/leave the school.

Water supplies

Drinking water facilities need to be maintained in good working order and kept clean and the outlets need to be clearly marked 'drinking water'. Tanked supplies can be difficult to maintain in good condition, and so it is generally preferable if drinking water supplies in schools can be connected directly to the cold water main.

To avoid the risk of scalding, 43°C is generally the maximum temperature for hot water in baths and showers, and for nursery and primary school washbasins. Note: distribution temperatures and Legionella controls need to comply with HSE guidance on managing Legionella in hot and cold-water systems.

Although not part of the regulations, the surface temperature of child accessible radiators and exposed pipework in special schools, nursery schools/classes should not exceed 43°C.

Further information

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on school facilities.

Department for Education advice on, and a link to, the school premises regulations can be found at: [Standards for school premises - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/standards/school-premises).

Slips & trips

Slips & trips are the most common workplace hazard and make up over a third of all major injuries; a simple slip can even lead to death. In one accident, a school meals employee slipped on custard spilt on the wooden floor of the dining room. She broke her leg and died later from a blood clot. This illustrates the potential severity of incidents and the importance of immediate action to prevent them.

Risk Assessment

Schools are often complex sites. Measures to control risks will vary according to the different areas of the site and the activities undertaken. Each needs to be assessed separately and a range of practical measures adopted to control the risk. The risk factors to consider include:

- environmental (floor, steps, slopes, etc.)
- contamination (water, food, litter, etc.)
- organisational (task, safety culture, etc.)
- footwear (for example, footwear worn for evening events may not always be in line with a daytime 'sensible shoe' policy)
- individual factors (e.g., information and training, supervision, pedestrian behaviour, individual health, and ability, etc.)

Schools should consider these factors to determine how to manage slips & trips.

Catering and cleaning

Many slip incidents occur in kitchens and serving areas. Kitchen equipment and work surfaces should be suitable and adequately maintained to avoid contamination of the floor. The floor surface should be nonslip and appropriate for use in kitchens.

Schools should decide what they need to do to manage and supervise the work of any catering and cleaning contractors effectively. They should agree with the contractor how the work will be done and the precautions that will be taken to reduce the risk of slip & trip incidents occurring. Relevant issues include:

- what equipment should, or should not, be used
- personal protective equipment to be used and who will provide it
- working procedures
- the number of people needed to do the job
- reporting of incidents and keeping records
- training of employees

Cleaning and slip & trip accidents are closely linked, so for slips & trips to be tackled successfully, safe cleaning must be considered. This is not just a concern of cleaning staff; everyone has a job to do - keeping their workspace tidy and dealing with their own spillages.

The process of cleaning can create slip & trip hazards, especially for those entering the area being cleaned. For example, smooth floors left damp by a mop are likely to be extremely slippery, and trailing wires from a vacuum or buffing machine can present a trip hazard.

People often slip on floors that have been left wet after cleaning. On a smooth surface, even a tiny amount of water can present a real slip problem, e.g., when left wet after mopping.

Cones and signs do not keep people out of an area and, if used incorrectly, are often ignored.

Footwear

Footwear plays an important role in preventing slips. Establishing a 'sensible shoe' policy (e.g., flat shoes that enclose the whole foot, not sandals or sling backs), for all staff and pupils, has been shown to make a significant impact on reducing slips & trips.

Common control measures

| Area | Practical measures for slips risk control |
|---|--|
| External steps, paths, and parking areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable lighting – replace, repair or clean lights before levels become too low • Ensure steps and paths are suitable for the volume of pedestrian traffic • Ensure paving slabs are secure and tarmac paths in good condition to give a flat, even surface • Maintain parking area so that it is free of potholes • Mark the nosing of steps using anti-slip (not gloss) coating • Provide handrails where appropriate and maintain in good condition • Discourage short cuts across grassed/muddy areas • Clean leaves, mud, etc. from surfaces • Remove algal growth |
| Playgrounds and all-weather sports surfaces | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure surface is flat and well maintained to avoid surface water • Remove accumulations of mud/water/fallen leaves/algal growth, etc. • Ensure users wear the appropriate footwear for the surface |
| Building entrances/exits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Properly positioned door canopies of good size can prevent rain and dirty water from entering the building and getting onto the floor, so preventing slip risks • Provide nonslip, water absorbing mats (large enough to dry shoes) at entrances • Maintain mats in good condition and change when saturated • Ensure that temporary matting does not curl and so pose a trip hazard • Display signs warning of hidden steps/changes of level • Display signs warning of risk of slipping when appropriate • Site door catches and door stops safely |
| Sports halls | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure suitable footwear is worn • Maintain floor mats in good condition and ensure they remain flat • Keep smooth floors clean and completely free of wet or dust contamination • Don't make smooth sports hall floors even smoother by polishing and buffing |
| Changing rooms/swimming pools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid contamination of the floor surface with mud/water from pupils entering by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing shoe cleaning brushes/scrapers or a location to remove footwear • providing suitable entrance mats for pupils to clean and dry feet on • Provide nonslip flooring on floor surfaces. Ensure specialist anti-slip flooring is sourced and specified correctly • Provide nonslip mats or grids in shower areas • Provide handholds for people with disabilities • Display 'no running' signs |

Further information

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on slips & trips in the workplace.

Further information on slips & trips in education is also available on HSE's website: [Education: health and safety in schools, further and higher education \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/education).

Stress

The law requires employers to assess the risk of stress-related ill health that has or is likely to arise from work related activities and control that risk.

What is stress?

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) define stress as *“the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other demand placed on them”*

There is a clear distinction between pressure, which can create a ‘buzz’ and be a motivating factor, and stress, which can occur when this pressure becomes excessive.

Anyone can experience work-related stress; no one is ‘immune’. Work-related stress exists where people perceive they cannot cope with what is being asked of them at work.

How do we tackle stress?

Gaining, and maintaining, senior management commitment is an essential pre-requisite in tackling the causes of work-related stress. It is also essential, as without this commitment it will be very difficult to make a real difference to employees work and well-being.

Whilst an open-door policy and regular staff appraisals, etc., can help with stress, they are unlikely to identify the underlying causes and manage stress effectively.

To tackle stress effectively, employers should carry out a risk assessment to identify risk factors, and those at risk, and to put in place controls to minimise the risk.

HSE's Management Standards for work related stress

The Management Standards approach has been developed by HSE to help reduce the levels of work-related stress. The overall aim is to bring about a reduction in the number of employees who go off sick, or who cannot perform well at work because of stress.

The Management Standards approach gives managers the help they need to achieve these aims. It demonstrates good practice through risk assessment, allows evaluation of the current situation using surveys and other techniques, and promotes active discussion with employees to help decide upon practical improvements.

The Management Standards define the characteristics, or culture, of an organisation where the risks from work-related stress are being effectively managed and controlled.

They cover six key areas of work design that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health and well-being, lower productivity, and increased sickness absence. In other words, the six Management Standards cover the primary sources of stress at work. These are:

- **Demands** – this includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment.
- **Control** – how much say the person has in the way they do their work.
- **Support** – this includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.

- **Relationships** – this includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.
- **Role** – whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures they do not have conflicting roles.
- **Change** – how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

The Management Standards approach:

- helps simplify risk assessment for work-related stress by:
 - identifying the main risk factors
 - helping employers focus on the underlying causes and their prevention
 - providing a step-by-step approach to carrying out a risk assessment
- encourages employers, employees, and their representatives to work in partnership to address potential sources of work-related stress throughout the organisation
- provides a yardstick by which organisations can gauge their performance in managing the key causes of stress

In each of the Standards, the '**What should be happening/States to be achieved**' section of HSE's guidance defines a desirable set of conditions for organisations to work towards.

Further information on the Management Standards along with survey and analysis tools and other resources is available from HSE (see link below).

Employee assistance

Voluntary Controlled and Community Schools staff have access to the council's Employment Assistance Programme and occupational health service – see useful contacts page 4. Managers should ensure that staff are aware of the programme.

Further information

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on Stress.

Further information on Stress is also available on HSE's website: [Stress and mental health at work - HSE](#).

Swimming lessons

Introduction

This guide provides a simple overview of safety issues inherent in swimming lessons. It should be read in conjunction with the **swimming pool management** guide.

Pupil-teacher ratios for swimming lessons

The following table summarises the minimum ratios for swimming lessons.

| Level of competence | MS | RA | Notes |
|--|----|-----|---|
| Beginners/non-swimmers | 12 | 1-2 | Should be confined to areas of the pool where pupils are not out of their depth |
| Improving swimmers - can swim at least 10m on front & back without buoyancy aids | 20 | 1-2 | Should be confined to areas of the pool where pupils are not out of their depth |
| Mixed ability groups - mixture of improving & competent swimmers | 20 | 1-2 | Less able/confident swimmers should be confined to areas of the pool where pupils are not out of their depth |
| Competent swimmers - can swim at least 25m on front & back and tread water for 2 minutes | 20 | 1-2 | |
| Competitive swimmers - very competent swimmers training only | 30 | 1-2 | |
| Swimmers with disabilities | 8 | 1-2 | Supervision requirements dependent entirely on risk assessment of group & individual needs. In some cases, helpers may be required in the water in a 1:1 ratio for those needing constant support |

MS - indicates the maximum number of swimmers in the water

RA - indicates the recommended number of adults – note one teacher only if risk assessment adequately addresses lone working issues.

When implementing the ratios, the following factors must be considered:

- The ratios reflect the maximum number of swimmers **in the water** at any one time - i.e., the class size itself may be larger.
- A qualified swimming instructor or schoolteacher holding an appropriate swimming teaching qualification (see next section) should always be present when children are in the water.
- The instructor/teacher has the overall responsibility for the swimming activity. At no time should they become distracted.
- The swimming instructor and other responsible adult should ensure that between them they can see all pupils and all areas of the pool clearly.
- If activities other than swimming lessons take place, these will need a separate risk assessment.
- Where possible the qualified teacher should be accompanied by another responsible adult who can assist to raise the alarm/clear the pool in an emergency and supervise any children who are not taking part in the swimming activity. Ideally, this person should hold a suitable qualification (see next section); however, as a minimum they should be aware of the pool's Emergency Action Plan (EAP) and their role in the event of an emergency.

Qualifications

- **A - Swimming Instructor**

The designated swimming teacher should hold an appropriate level 2/full **swimming teaching qualification** from either the Swim England (Institute of swimming) or Swimming Teachers' Association (STA).

In addition, they must hold an up-to-date lifeguarding qualification, specifically one of the following:

- RLSS National Pool Lifeguard Qualification
- National Rescue Award for Swimming Teachers & Coaches
- Rescue Test for Teachers & Coaches
- NaRS Poolside Helper
- NaRS Safety Award for Teachers
- NaRS Pool Lifeguard Award

- **B - School teachers**

If undertaking role of the swimming instructor we recommend they hold a level 2 swimming teaching qualification, qualified PE teacher, or the appropriate primary/secondary specific qualification from the ASA/STA. In addition, if they are undertaking the role of the swimming instructor, they must hold one of the lifesaving qualifications listed above.

- **C - Adults accompanying children (not A or B)**

Ideally, they should hold one of the lifesaving qualifications outlined above or the STA Poolside Helper Qualification – this is essential if they are to undertake supervision duties. If they are not undertaking supervision, they should still understand the pool's EAP and their role in the event of an emergency.

The Poolside Helper/Safety Award for Teachers and Pool Lifeguard Qualifications can be organised through Walsall Leisure Services – 01922 655863. Qualifications should be refreshed every two or three years depending on the qualification.

Whilst Walsall Leisure Services will offer support & guidance, it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that their qualifications remain current through attendance of training and CPD sessions as appropriate.

Further information

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on swimming and swimming pools.

Further information is also available from:

- [Swim England | Welcome to the home of Swim England \(swimming.org\)](https://www.swimming.org)
- [The Swimming Teachers' Association](https://www.sta.org.uk)
- [Association for Physical Education \(afpe.org.uk\)](https://www.afpe.org.uk)
- The Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA) [CIMSPA - chartered professional body | CIMSPA](https://www.cimspa.org.uk)

Swimming pool management

This guide relates to the management of swimming pools (including spas and hydro pools). For information relating to use of such pools, please refer to the **Swimming lessons** guide.

Health & safety legislation places responsibilities on pool owners, managers (including head teachers and school staff) and users to ensure that swimming related activities are safe. These responsibilities include the provision of a safe environment, appropriate equipment, adequately trained staff, checks on water quality, and normal and emergency operating procedures.

What do I have to do?

The head teacher at the school is responsible for ensuring that: there are trained and competent persons to manage the pool and water safety on a day-to-day basis (including a deputy to cover for any absence), Pool Safety Operating Procedures (PSOP) are in place, and that a suitable and sufficient risk assessment has been carried out. The assessment should consider the Lifeguard Zone Visibility Test as detailed in HSE's HSG 179.

The site's nominated person is responsible for testing and monitoring the water safety (pH and chlorine levels, water temperature, etc.) and the pool plant daily. In the absence of the above, another trained person must be able to take on these duties and responsibilities or the pool must be closed. Pool water quality standards should follow best practice published by the Pool Water Treatment Advisory Group (PWTAG).

What equipment is needed in the pool?

Each swimming pool must have appropriate safety equipment in place. This will include lifesaving equipment, signage, and emergency first aid materials. The box below can be used as a checklist to ensure you have everything in place that is required. These checks should be carried out each time before the pool is used.

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| Lifesaving rope or safety throw bags | "Shallow end" clearly signed | Foil blankets – suitable for all those within the pool area and those in the changing rooms |
| Bodily fluids spills kit | "Deep end" clearly signed | Easy access to a telephone (with external line) |
| Reach poles | "No diving" clearly signed below 1.5m | Alarm systems – e.g., fire, pool alarm, chemical/gas leak etc. |
| Depth markings clearly displayed for deep end, shallow end & depth changes | Specialist equipment identified within the risk assessment e.g., pool extraction boards | A dedicated first aid provision |

Depending on the type of pool, you may also have other equipment within the pool area such as hoists and slings to assist disabled bathers in and out, as well as pool covers and pool vacuums. This equipment will require inspection/servicing at regular intervals by a competent contractor.

Normal Operating Procedure (NOP) and Emergency Action Plan (EAP)

As part of your pool safety operating procedures, the school will be required to have a Normal Operating Procedure (NOP) and an Emergency Action Plan (EAP). These

documents should be shared with any persons that use the pool (including any hirers). Like all emergency plans, the emergency situations within the EAP should be practiced at regular intervals to ensure it works and to ensure that all persons are aware of what actions they are required to take. Details of any information shared should be recorded.

Pool Technical Operating Procedures (PTOP)

The school should document procedures for the general operation of pool water treatment. This is called the pool technical operating procedures (PTOP). The PTO forms a part of the risk assessment and the subsequent formulation of pool safety operating procedures. It should take the form of a stand-alone document detailing a swimming pool's technical operation. It will set out how the plant should function and be operated safely. This document should also include details of the chemical operational parameters, as well as the action to be taken should the pool chemistry not be within the ideal parameters.

Detailed procedures should be developed to include the process for faecal fouling, and blood and vomiting – guidance on how to manage this is available from PWTAG (Pool Water Treatment Advisory Group).

Training

The person with day-to-day responsibility for the pool management must have attended the PWTAG approved Certificate in Pool Plant Operation. The person who carries out this role in their absence (e.g., their deputy) must have attended a PWTAG approved Foundation Certificate in Pool Water Treatment or the National Pool Plant Foundation Certificate. Both certificates are valid for fixed terms, after which, refresher training is required.

This training can be provided through the council's Leisure Services.

Additional courses that should also have been attended by the responsible person include COSHH awareness and manual handling training.

If the pool is used for un-programmed swimming sessions (non-instructor lead) the risk assessment should consider the requirements for qualified and competent lifeguards as detailed in HSE's HSG179.

Additional considerations for Hydrotherapy pools and Spas

The controls in relation to the operation of Hydrotherapy pool and spas differ from the normal swimming pool operation and these should be considered as part of the risk assessment process. Guidance on the operation of these pool can be obtained from PWTAG.

Further information and resources

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on swimming pool management.

In addition, we recommended that schools with swimming pools have a copy of the following documents on site:

- Managing Health & Safety in Swimming Pools (HSG179) – produced by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE). Free download available at: [hsg179.pdf \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/hsg179.pdf)
- Swimming Pool Water – available from the Pool Water Treatment Advisory Group (PWTAG) [PWTAG | The home of the Pool Water Treatment Advisory Group](https://www.pwtag.org.uk/)

Violence and aggression

Note: this guide relates to violence and aggression aimed at staff, rather than pupils. It should be read in conjunction with the Accident & Incident Reporting guide.

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) defines work-related violence as *“Any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work”*

Within a school setting, this can include physical assault, threatening behaviour, and verbal abuse. It can also include written and electronic threats/abuse (including cyber bullying).

Statistics on aggression in schools are difficult to obtain – the HSE only collects data on violent incidents that are reportable under RIDDOR, and those regulations only cover serious incidents. Fortunately, serious incidents of violence and aggression are a relatively rare in schools; however, lower-level incidents can also have a serious impact and so should not be ignored.

Risk assessment

Schools can influence the likelihood of violence and aggression by ensuring that suitable risk assessments are undertaken, and appropriate controls are in place.

Risk assessment should be used to identify any employees who may be at risk of violence and aggression; these could include:

- Teachers/TAs who work closely with pupils who have recognised behavioural issues
- Receptionists (who may be the first point of contact for aggressive visitors)
- Lone workers (e.g., caretakers who must attend call outs)

Suitable control measures should be put in place to minimise the risk of violence and aggression; these could include:

- Training for appropriate staff
- Violence poster (displayed prominently in reception to warn visitors that violence & aggression will not be tolerated)
- Alarm call system

Reporting of violent and aggressive incidents

When an employee is subject to violence or aggression at work, an incident form should be completed. You should also record incidents that occur out of school but relate to work (e.g., staff being threatened or abused by a parent/pupil whilst shopping because of a perceived issue in school).

Note Walsall Council requires **all** aggressive incidents to school staff to be reported to the health & safety team (see Accident and Incident Reporting guide). Non-council schools do not have to follow Walsall's procedures but are encouraged to do so.

Any serious incidents of violence or aggression should also be reported to the police as a matter of course. Head teachers can do this on the employee's behalf whether or not the employee consents.

What about racially motivated incidents?

It is not a statutory requirement to record and report racist incidents. However, recording and reporting are widely considered good practice, and their importance and value are reinforced by the Equality Act 2010, and by the current Ofsted framework.

Further guidance and a suggested reporting form are available on [Walsall Link](#).

What actions can the school take against the perpetrator?

Schools have some powers to act against any persons who are violent or aggressive to staff whilst on the school site – these include the power to bar abusive parents. It is also an offence under section 547 of the Education Act 1996 (as amended) for any person to cause a nuisance or disturbance on school premises – staff can be authorised to remove them, and the police may be called to assist.

A Walsall Council booklet on Managing Parental Challenging Behaviour on School Premises, which includes model letters withdrawing or reinstating permission to be on school premises, is available; please contact Legal Services for further information or for advice on barring abusive parents or visitors.

After the incident

Any incident of violence or aggression can be traumatic for the person on the receiving end. It is important that the school does not lose sight of this and has measures in place to give support to the victim of such incidents. The support needed may range from “time out” (for the victim to collect their thoughts and process what has happened) through to long-term counselling or occupational therapy.

Further information

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on Violence and Aggression.

Further information on violence is also available on HSE's website: [Violence and aggression at work - HSE](#)

Work experience

Introduction

Much of this section is taken directly from the Health & Safety Executive's (HSE's) guidance on [Work Experience](#), which seeks to simplify the process of arranging work experience and dispel some of the myths that may act as barriers to placements.

“Work placement arrangements are too often seen as over-bureaucratic and burdensome, putting off potential employers...

The effectiveness of the employer's risk management arrangements is what matters. Employers should already be managing the risks in their workplaces and are best placed to assess whether they need to do anything additional for a new young person joining them.

Schools and colleges, or those organising placements, should simply ask sensible questions, in proportion to the level of risk, to satisfy themselves that those arrangements are in place.

They should not be second-guessing employers' risk assessments or requiring additional paperwork”.

Work experience organisers

Organisers include schools, colleges or those arranging placements for them, for example Education Business Partners (EBPs) or third-party independent organisations/businesses.

If you are advised that a particular placement is not possible due to health and safety, the person giving you that advice may well be wrong – there are very few work activities a student cannot do due to health and safety law.

How to keep a sense of proportion

Do:

- Remember that the placement provider (employer) has primary responsibility for the health and safety of the student and should be managing any significant risks
- Take reasonable steps to satisfy yourself that they are doing this. For employers who are new to taking students on work experience, talk through what the student will do and any relevant precautions. It might be helpful to make a note of your conversation
- Rely on experience, or pooled experience, for example within the local authority area. You do not need to do it all again for a new student where an employer is known to you and has a good track record, and the student's needs are no different to those on past placements
- Work with parents to ensure employers know in advance about students who might be at greater risk, for example due to health conditions or learning difficulties, so they can take these properly into account
- Keep checks in proportion to the environment:
 - For a low-risk environment, such as an office or shop, **with everyday risks** that will mostly be familiar to the student, simply speaking with any new employer to confirm this should be enough. This can be part of the wider conversation on placement arrangements

- For **environments with less familiar risks** (e.g., in light assembly or packing facilities), talk to the employer and confirm they have arrangements for managing risks. This will need to include induction, supervision, site familiarisation, and any protective equipment that might be needed
- For a placement in a **higher-risk environment** such as construction, agriculture, and manufacturing:
 - Discuss with the employer what work the student will be doing or observing, the risks involved and how these are managed. Remember that although the placement might be in a higher-risk environment, the work the student is doing and the surroundings they are working in may not be, for example it could be in a separate office area
 - Satisfy yourself that the instruction, training, and supervisory arrangements have been properly thought through
- Check that the employer understands about the specific factors relevant to employing young people (such as the young person's inexperience, lack of awareness of risks and potential immaturity, both physically and mentally)
- Check that the employer understands about the specific factors (as detailed by the HSE, [Young workers – Advice for schools and colleges \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/youngworkers/)) relevant to employing young people
- Check that students know how to raise any health and safety concerns

Don't

- Repeat the process for a new student, or visit unnecessarily, where an employer is known to you and has a good track record, and the student's needs are no different to those on past placements
- Seek additional paperwork for assurance purposes, or seek to second-guess the employer's risk assessment or their risk control measures:
 - You are unlikely to have the knowledge to evaluate the assessment
 - This could give the false impression that you have 'approved' it
 - Employers with fewer than five employees are not required to have a written assessment
- Duplicate checks on employers. Schools and colleges using a third party to arrange placements should work with them to make sure employers are not requested to do things twice

Further information

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on Work Experience. There is additional guidance on Work Experience & Young Apprenticeships available on [Walsall Link](#) (note this is due to be reviewed to reflect HSE's guidance).

Further information on young people and work experience is also available on HSE's website: [Young workers – Advice for work experience organisers \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/youngworkers/)

Working at height

Introduction

Falls from height are one of the major causes of workplace fatalities. In a recent six-year period, there were five deaths and over three thousand major injuries in the education sector due to falls from height (source HSE). Some of these injuries were caused by falls from ladders (e.g., whilst carrying out maintenance or putting up stage lighting); however, many were caused by “low” falls (i.e., below two meters) and involved other activities such as putting up displays or standing on stools to close windows.

This guide provides a simple overview of working at height and outlines some of the safety issues you should be aware of.

Do you need to work at height?

The key to safe working at height is risk assessment and appropriate controls; however, before going down that route you should ask the question “do I need to work at height”?

Many activities, if well planned, can be done safely without the need for staff to work at height; for instance, you could use lightly weighted strings to pull displays up over beams and thus avoid the need for staff to work at height. Other examples include providing poles for staff to open high level windows and ensuring that regularly used resources are stored appropriately (i.e., not at height).

You may not be able to avoid some work at height, but you may still be able to minimise the risk to staff e.g., by preparing displays as much as possible prior to putting them up – that way work at height is kept to a minimum.

Equipment

If work at height cannot be avoided, then suitable access equipment should be provided. Typical equipment found in school includes kick stools (sometimes referred to as “elephants’ feet”) and low-level stepladders; in addition, the caretaker or premises manager may have sets of ladders and taller stepladders for tasks at greater height.

Any equipment provided must be appropriate for the workplace – domestic grade is not up to the job and should be avoided. In the case of ladders and stepladders, these should be Class I (industrial) or Class EN131 (commercial); Class III are for domestic use only and must not be used at work.

All equipment should be checked regularly, and those checks should be recorded. It is particularly important that all ladders and stepladders can be uniquely identified and that checks on them are recorded; a ladder register is ideal for this purpose.

Risk Assessment

Where work at height cannot be avoided, a risk assessment should be carried out and appropriate controls should be put in place to help reduce the risk. A model risk assessment for Working at Height is available, for schools to adapt, on [Walsall Link](#).

Training

Any staff involved in work at height should receive appropriate training; even low-level work off a stepladder can be dangerous unless a few simple safety measures are followed.

Training is particularly important for those using sets of ladders or taller stepladders, where you need to ensure that staff are competent.

The health & safety team can provide working at height training & stepladder “toolbox talk” sessions; please contact the team for further details.

Further information

Please contact the health & safety team if you require additional information on working at height.

Additional information on risk assessment can be found in the risk assessment section of these guides.

Further information on working at height is available on HSE's website: [Work at height - HSE](#)

Information relating to the safe use of ladders and stepladders can also be found on the HSE website: [Safe use of ladders and stepladders: overview - HSE](#)