

## The Fourth 'R' - Risk Management in Schools

Health and safety in schools should be driven by practical risk management, and although paperwork can be seen as a burden by some, the right paperwork is very much a necessary part that provides a useful record of good practice and compliance by a school.

These days schools are utilised for many different functions within the local community, and for that reason those that manage a school's health and safety system should ensure a safe and healthy environment for all who use them.

There are three key areas of managing risk in a school environment:

- Identifying and managing key risks
- Dynamic risk identification and management at a more local level
- The competence of those responsible

While many schools manage health and safety effectively and sensibly, some have adopted over cautious approaches. This means that pupils are missing out on challenging and exciting activities and learning opportunities, and the chance to develop new skills.

Sensible health and safety management should be straightforward, it's just part of good school leadership.

Source: HSE

### School-Wide Identification and Management

School-wide measures to assess and manage larger risks should be in place, so they do not need to be reassessed in an ordinary classroom.

School-wide risks might include:

- Fire and other foreseeable emergency situations
- Legionella
- Asbestos
- Access to high risk areas (roofs; electrical cupboards; chemical storage; plant and equipment)
- Manual handling
- Violence
- Vehicle and pedestrian movement
- Refurbishment and construction work
- On site school-based activities

The responsible person(s) must identify the significant hazards and implement control measures at an appropriate level. These are the key risks faced by the school. Some will be generic for all schools, violence for example, but others will be very specific and require comprehensive local controls to manage the associated risk.

So, this is where the competence of those undertaking the hazard identification and risk assessment is critical.

### Ordinary Classroom

In an ordinary classroom, written risk assessments are not required for every activity unless new activities lead to additional risks. To aid a sensible review of a classroom, the HSE have produced a checklist that covers the following:

- Movement around the classroom (slips and trips)
- Work at height (falls)
- Furniture and fixtures
- Manual handling
- Computers and similar equipment
- Electrical equipment and services
- Asbestos
- Fire
- Workplace (ventilation and heating)

The checklist does not cover drama and sports facilities or specialist classrooms, including laboratories, art, IT, design and technology facilities or pupil referral rooms.

It is recommended that the checklist be used at regular intervals such as at the start of each term, or if circumstances change significantly. This will help users identify any areas of concern or risks to those using or working in the classroom.

To enable a good learning environment, a school should engage in a practical health and safety management system that ensures the following is delivered:

- Leadership commitment to the school's safety policy
- Key staff have established roles and responsibilities defined
- Real risks and significant hazards are identified and adequately controlled
- School leaders consult with staff to identify practical solutions to health and safety issues
- Paperwork is kept to a minimum

If you require any further information or advice please contact 4see on 01327 811166, enquiry@4see.co.uk, www.4see.co.uk

