

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Health, Safety & Wellbeing Guidance – Schools

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Workplace Safety

Introduction

Schools / educational establishments must ensure that the building, and any equipment or devices within the building are as safe as reasonably practicable, and are maintained in an efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair.

This is necessary to protect the health and safety of staff, pupils and visitors.

Scope of this Guidance

This guidance applies to a specific selection of equipment or devices, examples of which are listed below, and the fabric of the building itself.

It is complemented by more specific requirements contained in health and safety regulations, which may also require that the equipment and devices are safe and maintained in a way which ensures their continued safety.

Maintenance of Equipment and Devices

Continued safe operation can be achieved by a planned system of maintenance for equipment and devices throughout the school / educational establishment.

Examples of equipment and devices which require a system of maintenance include;

- emergency lighting.
- firefighting equipment.
- Fencing.
- fixed equipment used for window cleaning.
- anchorage points for safety harnesses fixed to the building.
- devices to limit the opening of windows.
- security cameras / alarm system.

The frequency of regular maintenance, and precisely what it involves, will depend on the equipment or device concerned the likelihood of defects developing, and the foreseeable consequences of the defect. The age and condition of equipment, how it is used and how often it is used should also be considered.

In general terms a suitable system of maintenance includes;

- Inspection, testing, adjustment, lubrication and cleaning, as necessary, carried out at suitable intervals, by a competent person.
- The remedy of any dangerous defects, and the prevention of access to defective equipment in the meantime.
- regular maintenance and remedial work being carried out properly by competent persons.
- a suitable record being kept ensuring that the system is properly implemented and to assist in validating maintenance programmes.

Equipment, Devices and Conditions Covered by this Guidance.

Specifically this guidance deals with the provision of elements likely to be present in every school / educational establishment.

Lighting	Ventilation
Workstations and seating	Heat
Windows, skylights and ventilators	Space
Doors and gates	Drinking water
Sanitary Conveniences	Cleanliness of rooms

Lighting

Lighting should be sufficient to enable people to; work without experiencing eyestrain, to use facilities and to move from place to place safely. So far as reasonably practicable, the lighting should be natural light.

Particular places will need particular levels and types of lighting, for example.

- stairs should be well lit in such a way that shadows are not cast over the main part of the treads.
- Computer workstations will need to be lit in such a way that reflections on the screen do not obscure the screen from being viewed easily.

The Education (School Premises) Regulations detail specific requirements for lighting in school buildings which schools would be advised to make reference to during building / room alterations.

Work Areas / Desks and Seating

The school / education establishment must ensure that every work-area is suitable both for any person who is likely to work in the area, and for any work which is likely to be done there. This should ensure that each task can be carried out safely and comfortably.

Windows, Skylights etc

The school / educational establishment should have a glazing survey to identify glass which poses a hazard. It should then ensure that this glass is replaced with safety glass, an appropriate safety material or measures taken to make the area safe.

A physical means of preventing pupils from falling through open windows must be used. Such a means could be a restrictor which allows the window to open for ventilation, but not far enough for a pupil to fall through the opening created. Windows at ground floor level should not open in such a way as to create a hazard to pedestrians walking around the site.

Doors and Gates

Both manually and automatically operated doors can trap hands or fingers and can strike a person, causing injury.

The school / educational establishment must ensure that.

- any sliding door or gate has a device to prevent it coming off its track during use.
- any powered door or gate has features fitted which prevent it trapping a person. For example, a sensor and linked device to stop the motion of the door. A touch sensitive leading door edge would fulfil this requirement.
- any powered door or gate can be operated manually unless it opens automatically in the event of a power failure.
- any door or gate which is pushed from either side is constructed to provide a clear view of the space close to both sides. Normally a glass panel will be fitted to allow this.
- Doors with self-closing devices should have these devices properly adjusted to prevent the door closing too fast.
- Doors in primary schools should be risk assessed and fingersafe type devices fitted.

Fingersafe Devices – Primary Schools

The Local Authority would advise that these devices should be fitted to all doors which pupils use as soon as possible. However, as there is a cost to purchasing and fitting these devices, then it may not be reasonably practicable to fit them to all doors in one go. Where this is the case, schools should prioritise the doors to which they intend to fit the devices and establish a rolling programme for fitting, which starts with the highest risk doors first and continues until the finger trapping risk has been eliminated.

We would normally advise that high risk doors are those that the pupils are most likely to use unsupervised, such as toilet doors, doors to cloakrooms, corridor doors and main entrance doors. These would then normally be followed by doors which are frequently used but normally under supervision, e.g. classroom doors. Finally would be doors that are less often used by pupils and always under supervision, e.g. staff room, office and heads office. These would be normally classed as the lowest risk doors. When deciding on risk levels another factor to consider is the age of the pupils. In general, the younger the pupils, the higher the risk. Therefore doors used unsupervised by younger pupils would be considered the highest risk doors.

In the case of new build projects for primary schools, these devices should be fitted as a matter of course on all doors as part of the project and should be considered part of the overall cost of the project at the planning stage as an essential item. If you are having new buildings provided through Derbyshire County Council and doors do not have these fitted, then you should immediately notify your contact in the Education Development Section.

Sanitary Conveniences and Washing Facilities

The school / educational establishment must ensure that a suitable number of clean, well lit, adequately ventilated sanitary conveniences are provided at readily accessible places.

Washing facilities should exist close to sanitary conveniences; these should include a supply of clean hot and cold, or warm, water, including soap or other suitable means of cleaning and including towels or other suitable means of drying.

Separate provision should be made for male and female staff (except where the facilities are provided in a lockable room intended to be used by one person at a time) and staff provision must be separate from that made for pupils.

The minimum provisions of “washrooms” for pupils is specified in detail in The Education (School Premises) Regulations which schools would be advised to consult if considering change of use / alteration of the premises. Washrooms are defined as rooms having wash basins and sanitary fittings.

Ventilation

The school / educational establishment should ensure that every enclosed workplace is ventilated by a sufficient quantity of fresh or purified air. Fresh air normally means air taken from outside.

In many cases, windows or other openings will provide sufficient ventilation in some or all parts of the workplace.

If windows cannot be used, then a mechanical means to ventilate the workplace should be used.

Temperature

Until October 2012, legal requirements which specified the minimum temperatures which had to be maintained in school classrooms were set out in the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999.

These were replaced in 2012 by the School Premises (England) Regulations 2012 which do not specify minimum temperatures for any parts of a school.

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, which apply to all workplaces, including schools, set out minimum temperature requirements. They require that temperatures shall be “reasonable”, defined as “normally at least 16°C” (60°F). This applies to non-teaching areas as well as classrooms and applies outside school session times.

Radiators and exposed parts of heating systems (i.e. pipe work) should not exceed a maximum surface temperature of 43°C. Where this is the case then these areas should be suitably guarded to prevent contact or trapping accidents. Where pipes are to be guarded e.g. boxed in and the pipes form an integral part of the building heating system, they should be boxed in such a way as to prevent contact but not impair heat gain.

There are no legally specified maximum temperatures for school premises or other workplaces. However, all reasonable steps should be taken to achieve a reasonably comfortable temperature by, where necessary, special ventilation measures including provision for fans.

Room Dimensions and Workspace

There should be sufficient clear and unobstructed space in each work area to enable the work to be done safely. This should allow for the manoeuvring and positioning of materials, for example lengths of timber in a Design and Technology workshop.

The minimum provisions of “washrooms” for pupils is specified in detail in The Education (School Premises) Regulations which schools would be advised to consult if considering.

Drinking Water

An adequate supply of drinking water shall be provided and be located at readily accessible places. This should not be in toilets. If drinking fountains are to be used, they should be located in areas where spillages will not create a slipping hazard and users are not likely to be bumped into by anyone passing. Drinking fountains which incorporate measures to prevent / reduce injury to faces / teeth (e.g. flexiguard bubbler) if the user is accidentally bumped into should be used. Drinking fountains should be subject to a regime of suitable cleaning/disinfecting in line with manufacturers guidelines. Drinking water should be clearly signed as such.

Cleanliness of rooms / areas

The school/educational establishment must ensure that the building and its contents are clean.

In particular the furniture, furnishings and fittings shall be kept sufficiently clean. The surfaces of the floors, walls and ceilings of all buildings shall be capable of being kept sufficiently clean. So far as is reasonably practicable, waste materials shall not be allowed to accumulate except in suitable receptacles.

