

# **Drumahoe Primary School**



# **Risk Assessment Guidance & Policy**

January 2020



# **Risk Assessment Guidance for Schools**

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this guidance is to assist schools' compliance with the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (NI) 2000 and those duties imposed by the Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978. The legislation places an obligation on employers to assess those health and safety risks in their area of responsibility which may cause harm to their employees or anyone else affected by their business. Other health and safety legislation also contain the requirement to carry out a risk assessment, e.g. the Fire Safety Regulations (NI) 2010. This is a more complex risk assessment that requires a more in depth knowledge of the subject matter and is therefore carried out by a specialist contractor.

## **SCOPE**

This document outlines the process of risk assessment. It refers to the two main approaches to risk assessment, quantitative and qualitative, while not being prescriptive as to the methodology.

## **OBJECTIVE**

The objective of this guidance is to inform our school of the obligations to complete written risk assessments for all significant risks and provide them with a practical knowledge framework which can be applied to their choice of approach

## **GUIDANCE**

Risk assessments are central to the management of health and safety within a school. This guidance provides information on the risk assessment process. Line Managers (Principals, Vice Principals & SMT) have a responsibility to carry out risk assessments and ensure that they are suitable and sufficient. Risk assessments must be carried out for all work activities that pose a significant risk. Trivial risks can be ignored.

Risk assessment should be approached in a series of steps. These are as follows:

- Divide your work into manageable categories;
- Identify the hazards;
- Identify who might be harmed and how;
- Evaluate the risk;
- Prepare a plan for controlling the risks;
- Review and revise the assessment.

### **Divide your work into manageable categories:**

To enable these assessments to be made, it is advisable to divide the work into manageable categories. For our school this could be:

- Separate work areas, e.g. classrooms, offices, playground etc.
- Activities, e.g. school trips, school sports, using play equipment etc.
- Defined tasks, e.g. playground supervision, provision of first aid, locking up etc.
- Individual, e.g. 'absconders', evacuation of disabled persons, assaults etc.
- Equipment, e.g. play equipment, electrical equipment/machinery, stepladders etc.
- Substances, e.g. cleaning material, science chemicals, excessive dust etc.

## **Identify the hazards**

The second stage in the process is to identify the hazards within the categories you have chosen to assess. This is not as daunting as it may first seem as you can ignore the trivial and concentrate on the significant hazards which could result in a genuine injury or ill health. A hazard is defined as '*anything which has the potential to cause harm*'. This may be any event, activity or behaviour which can cause potential harm or pose a threat to you or others. Examples of hazards within a school are:

- Slips, trips and falls;
- Collisions, pedestrian or traffic;
- Electricity;
- Falling or moving objects;
- Manual handling;
- Temperature, humidity etc.
- Unsafe systems;
- Unsuitable equipment.

This is not an exhaustive list. As work activities are similar within the school environment you may wish to consult the generic risk assessment section of the Shared Resources Area on the C2K system where there may be a suitable generic assessment available already.

## **Identify who might be harmed and how**

When completing this part of the risk assessment the assessor would normally write 'all staff' and 'all pupils' which, while correct, can cause the assessor to potentially miss other groups who may be at greater risk and may legally require a specific risk assessment, e.g. young workers and new or expectant mothers. In addition to staff and pupils, those who have to be considered in any risk assessment are:

- New employees;
- People with SEN/disabilities;
- Building Supervisors and cleaners;
- Visitors;
- Contractors/Maintenance workers.

There may be others, ask yourself can think of anyone you could have missed. This inclusive approach helps identify additional hazards previously not considered.

## **Evaluate the Risk**

Once you have completed the list of all hazards and those who may be harmed by those hazards, you must then evaluate the risk from each hazard. A risk is defined as '*the chance or likelihood that someone will be harmed to some extent by the hazard*'.

In evaluating the level of risk you will assess the likelihood, or probability, of an event actually occurring. This normally ranges from 'unlikely' to 'very likely'. When assessing the likelihood, existing control measures must be taken into account. Consideration should be given to the following factors when deciding the likelihood:

- Number of times the activity or situation occurs;
- Location of the hazard;
- Duration of the exposure;
- Environmental conditions;
- Competence or experience of the people involved;
- Condition of the equipment.

The second part of the evaluation is an assessment of the severity of the harm that will be caused if the hazard is not controlled. This can range from a minor injury to a fatality.

Taking both likelihood and severity into consideration, a 'qualitative assessment' will deem a risk **high, medium or low**, whereas a 'quantitative assessment' ascribes a numerical value to likelihood (1-4) and severity (1-4) that, when multiplied, provides a score:

**1 = Insignificant; 2-4 = Low; 6-9 = Medium; 12-16 = High – see Risk Matrix in CPD Powerpoint in the Shared Resources Area on the C2K system for further details.**

This process will allow you to prioritise the risks and give emphasis to those which require immediate attention.

Upon completion of the risk evaluation you will be able to identify whether a risk is high, medium or low. Essentially a risk assessment will determine if additional control measures are necessary to control or reduce the risk.

### **Prepare a plan for controlling the risks**

Risk assessment is not an end in itself, it is a means to an end, that 'end' being the control of risk. Starting with the most serious risks, you identify how those risks can be reduced further. Initially you should refer back to and consider if the existing control measures:

- Meet current legal requirements;
- Comply with best practice, approved codes of practice, manufacturer's instructions etc.
- Avail of any technological developments.

If you are happy with the existing precautions, you should then decide what additional precautions, if any, are necessary to reduce the level of risk. These measures should be implemented using the following hierarchy of control, with the preferred options starting at the top:

- Elimination – is it possible to avoid the risk completely? E.g. buying ready cut material rather than using a circular saw;
- Substitution - can you change to something less hazardous? E.g. using cleaning materials not requiring COSHH assessment;
- Enclosure, e.g. sound absorbing material in music practice rooms, fencing etc.
- Guarding or segregation - guarding dangerous parts of machinery, e.g. pedestal drill in Technology;
- Safe systems of work, e.g. implementation of access control system;
- Written procedures, e.g. school rules, evacuation procedure etc.
- Adequate supervision, e.g. playground, classroom or educational visit supervision;
- Training, e.g. Building Supervisor/Cleaner training;
- Information and Instruction, e.g. signage and written guidance;
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) should only be used as a temporary solution or as a last resort.

It may be necessary to implement one or more of the control measures from the hierarchy of controls.

This assessment must be recorded either on paper or electronically – see generic Risk Assessment templates in Shared Resources Area on the C2K system. You should at this stage identify who is responsible for the implementation of each additional control measure. Is it the school, or someone specifically within that school, or is it EA that is responsible? Or is it a mixture of both? When identified, the responsible person/organisation should be informed of their responsibility and a reasonable time frame agreed for remedial action.

## **Review and revise the assessment**

Nothing stays the same for ever, things change, including the circumstances around which the risk assessment was originally made. Risk assessment is a continuous process and review of those assessments is important in ensuring they are kept up to date. In any review you should take account of:

- New activities and hazards;
- New employees;
- New equipment;
- New work practices;
- Accidents or incidents.

Additionally, the adequacy of existing control measures need to be reviewed periodically and revised if necessary. As far as risk assessment is concerned, you should always seek to learn from your experience, improve existing assessments and develop new ones if necessary. The objective should always be to control or mitigate risk. It is beneficial to have a review date for assessments of no more than one year from the assessment is made. For a school the optimum time for review is the week just prior to the new academic year.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The school Governors are responsible for ensuring this guidance is adopted and its implementation monitored as part of the overarching Health & Safety policy. They should ensure that suitable and sufficient risk assessments are carried out on all significant risks throughout their school.

EA Health and Safety staff will provide training on risk assessment as appropriate and monitor the implementation of the risk assessment programme within schools. All staff will co-operate and partake in the risk assessment process. They will apply this guidance and abide by it to the best of their ability. If you have any questions in relation to risk assessment or require any advice, please contact your EA Health and Safety Advisor or at: Tel: 028-82411377.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT POLICY**

The Principal is responsible for implementing this guidance and ensuring that risk assessments are carried out and the outcome communicated to all staff for whom they are responsible.

The Principal is responsible for making sure that risk assessments are completed, logged and effectively monitored. Reviews are conducted when there is any change to equipment or resources, any change to the school's premises, or when particular needs of a child or other visitor necessitate this.

The Principal is further responsible for conducting any necessary reviews or making changes to the school's policies or procedures in the light of any potential risks that they or other members of staff discover.

A visual inspection of both the equipment and the entire premises – both indoor and outdoor – will be carried out daily. This will, ordinarily, be carried out the Site Supervisor (Caretaker) on arrival at the school and will be completed before any children arrive.

During the school day, all staff will be vigilant and continuously aware of any potential risks to health and safety arising from:

- the school's environment, both indoors and outdoors;
- all surfaces, both indoors and outdoors;
- all equipment used by children or staff.

On discovering a hazard, staff will take all steps necessary to making themselves and any other people potentially affected safe. They will then notify the Principal and the Site Supervisor and ensure that a record is made in the '**Maintenance Book**' (Staff Room). The Principal is then responsible for ensuring that any necessary action is taken.

As already stated, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (NI) 2000 require that suitable and sufficient assessments of the risk arising out of work are carried out.

**Put simply, a risk assessment is finding out what could cause harm to people and deciding if you have done enough or need to do more to protect them.**

## **The Process of Risk Assessment**

### **What can be risk assessed?**

A risk assessment can be undertaken on an object or substance, a process, a location, an activity, or a person. It is a five step process:

- Step 1: Identify the hazards
- Step 2: Decide who might be harmed and how
- Step 3: Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions
- Step 4: Record your findings and implement them
- Step 5: Review your assessment and update if necessary

### **What is a hazard?**

A hazard is anything which can cause harm e.g. electricity, chemicals, etc

### **What is risk?**

Risk is the chance, high or low, that somebody could be harmed by these and other hazards, together with an indication of how serious the harm could be.

### **Evaluating the risk**

Having spotted the hazards, you then have to decide what to do about them. The law requires you to do everything 'reasonably practicable' to protect people from harm. You can work this out for yourself, but the easiest way is to compare what you are doing with good practice. There are many sources of good practice, for example HSENI's website ([www.hseni.gov.uk](http://www.hseni.gov.uk)) etc.

So first, look at what you're 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's more you should be doing to bring yourself up to standard.

In asking yourself this, consider:

Can I get rid of the hazard altogether?

If not, how can I control the risks so that harm is unlikely?

When controlling risks, apply the principles below, if possible in the following order:

- try a less risky option (e.g. switch to using a less hazardous chemical);
- prevent access to the hazard (e.g. by guarding);
- organise work to reduce exposure to the hazard (e.g. put barriers between pedestrians and traffic);
- issue personal protective equipment (e.g. clothing, footwear, goggles etc); and
- provide welfare facilities (e.g. first aid and washing facilities for removal of contamination).

## **What is a Risk Assessment?**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines a risk assessment as “a careful examination of what in your work could cause harm to people so that you can weigh up whether or not you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm”. As mentioned in the guidance, the assessment will help you to identify the likelihood of harm and whether you can reduce the risk to a reasonable level, through the introduction of control measures.

### **The five step process is as follows:**

#### **Step 1: Identify the hazards**

Divide your work into manageable categories considering:

- Location
- Activities
- Equipment
- People

Identify the Hazards:

- Chemical – paint solvents/exhaust fumes
- Biological – bacteria
- Physical – noise/vibration
- Psychological – occupational stress

#### **Step 2: Decide who might be harmed and how**

For each hazard you need to be clear about who might be harmed, identify the groups of people – such as staff members or members of the public/pupils.

Identify how they might be harmed i.e. what type of injury or ill health might occur.

#### **Step 3: Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions**

Consider how likely it is that each hazard will occur and what control measures you already have in place. Have the control measures in place got rid of the hazard altogether or reduced the risk so that harm is unlikely? If the task has not been adequately controlled, what further actions are required? If any further actions are required, the person responsible for actioning the task should be recorded along with the projected completion date with the actual completion recorded in the completed column.

#### **Step 4: Record your findings and implement them**

Putting the results of your risk assessment into practice will make a difference when looking after our staff.

Writing down the results of your risk assessment, and sharing them with the staff, encourages you to do this.

#### **Step 5: Review your assessment and update if necessary**

Risk assessments need to be reviewed and if necessary updated every year. However, a review will be required sooner if an incident or accident occurs, or there are significant changes to the premises, staff or procedures.

## **DEFINITION OF A HAZARD AND A RISK**

**Hazard:** A hazard is anything that may cause harm such as chemicals, electricity, working from ladders, an open drawer, etc.

**Risk:** The risk is the chance, high or low, that somebody could be harmed by these and other hazards, together with an indication of how serious the harm could be.

## **TYPES OF RISK ASSESSMENTS**

There are three different types of risk assessments. These are generic, specific and dynamic.

**Generic** activities are those which although they are carried out at different times and locations, the hazards and risks are largely the same and do not change. For this type of activity generic risk assessments can be produced as a model for guidance only.

A **specific** risk assessment may be applicable where the hazards and risks are only applicable to a certain activity and also where there is a requirement in legislation to undertake a specific assessment for example COSHH, new and expectant mothers.

A **dynamic** risk assessment is a continuous process of identifying the hazards that occur in for example an emergency situation, assessing the risks and taking immediate action to eliminate or reduce these to an acceptable level.

## **GENERIC RISK ASSESSMENTS**

This policy contains two generic risk assessment templates (Qualitative – see Appendix 1 & Quantitative – see Appendix 2) which has been produced to assist our school with the risk assessment process and should form a good foundation for identifying hazards, assessing risks and implementing controls. However, we must also pay attention to our own school environment. The template should list the hazards identified in the school environment and their associated risks and also a range of control measures that should be in place to eliminate or reduce the risks. The form needs to be adapted by a competent person from our school, who can complete the rest of the form having considered the generic hazards, risks and control measures listed on the form and adding any site specific items identified.

## **HOW TO ADAPT A GENERIC RISK ASSESSMENT**

1. The person carrying out the assessment identifies which template is applicable to their particular activity. They would take the following steps:
2. Review the list of hazards within the “Hazard(s)” column and decide if these are applicable to the task/activity.
3. Review the list of people and the consequences of the identified hazards in the “Persons Exposed & How” column and amend to suit individual school circumstances.
4. Review the list of “Controls Required” and adjust the list to reflect those procedures, safe working practices that have been implemented within the school.
5. A decision should then be made to determine whether the task/activity is adequately controlled. If additional control measures are identified these should also be listed in the “Additional Controls Required” column.
6. When the “Additional Controls Required” column is completed the name of the person assigned responsibility for ensuring that the control is put in place should be inserted in the “Action by Whom” column with a projected completion date added to the “Action by When” column.

When actions/controls have been completed, the assessment form will need to be signed off by the person completing the assessment and forwarded to the Principal for signing off. Any action that cannot be closed off by the person carrying out the assessment should be brought to the attention of the appropriate person/s, e.g. building supervisor, Principal and a plan put in place to close out such actions. Some actions may be on-going and this should be indicated in the "Action by When" column. It would be good practice that any Action Plan arising out of the Risk Assessment process is presented to the Board of Governors for their information, approval and action if required. The risk assessments will then need to be reviewed and if necessary updated, every year. A review will be required sooner if an incident or accident occurs, or there are significant changes to the premises, staff or procedures.

## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS**

- **Hazard** - is anything which has the potential to cause any harm.
- **Hierarchy of Control** – a selection of control measures listed in descending order of merit, i.e. if picking a control measure you should strive to select one as near the top of the list as is possible.
- **Likelihood** – The chance or probability of something occurring.
- **Risk** – Is the chance or likelihood that someone will be harmed to some extent by the hazard.
- **Severity**-The degree or extent of harm or damage.

## **ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS**

Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1978/1039>

Management of Health and Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2000/388/contents/made>  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/fivesteps.htm>

**Health and safety checklist for classrooms**  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/classroom-checklist.htm>

## **FURTHER GUIDANCE**

If you require any further assistance with completing these generic risk assessments contact the Health and Safety Section.



## DRUMAHOE PRIMARY SCHOOL RISK ASSESSMENT (Qualitative)

Activity	Lunchtime Supervision	Location	Dining Hall	Review Date:	September 2017
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Assessment completed by:					
Name:	Principal & Supervisory Staff	Date:	10.02.17	Duration	12.20-1.00 p.m.

Activity	Hazard (s)	Persons Exposed & How	Controls & Additional Controls Required	Risk Rating (Low/Med/High)	Action by Whom & When
Lunchtime Supervision	Defective flooring	Pupils	➤ Inspection of flooring prior to use;	(Low)	Name of person responsible to be added here  Realistic time frame to be added
	Slips, trips, falls	Staff	➤ Prompt reporting and repair of defects;		
	Spilt food and liquids	SMK Staff	➤ Regular cleaning of floors in line with cleaning guidelines;	(Med)	
	Slips, falls		➤ Prompt clearing of spillages;		
	Broken Glass		➤ Adequate signage;	(Low)	
	Cuts		➤ Use of plastic items if possible;		
Obstacles		➤ Breakages cleared up promptly;	(Med)		
Trips, falls		➤ Chipped or damaged items discarded;	(Low)		
Defective furniture		➤ Walkways to be kept clear of bags etc.			
Injury		➤ Adequate space; allowed between; tables for access.	(Med)		
Hot food and liquid		➤ Regular inspection routine with prompt remedial action	(Low)		
Scalds, burns		➤ Staff trained	(Med)		
Electrical equipment & sockets		➤ Trays provided			
Electrocution		➤ Adequate supervision in relation to age of children	(Low)		
		➤ Portable appliance testing and regular visual inspection			
		➤ Children informed of good code of behaviour, no running, reporting all spills and no horseplay.			

Signed: J.R.M. Maitte (Principal)

Signed: ..... (Teacher)



## DRUMAHOE PRIMARY SCHOOL RISK ASSESSMENT (Quantitative)

Activity	Lunchtime Supervision	Location	Dining Hall	Review Date:	September 2017
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Assessment completed by:					
Name:	Principal & Supervisory Staff	Date:	10.02.17	Duration	12.20-1.00 p.m.

Activity	Hazard (s)	Likelihood (1-4)	Severity (1-4)	Risk Rating (1-16)	Persons Exposed & How	Controls & Additional Controls Required	Action by Whom & When	
Lunchtime Supervision	Defective flooring	2	2	4 (Low)	Pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Inspection of flooring prior to use;</li> <li>➤ Prompt reporting and repair of defects;</li> <li>➤ Regular cleaning of floors in line with cleaning guidelines;</li> <li>➤ Prompt clearing of spillages;</li> <li>➤ Adequate signage;</li> <li>➤ Use of plastic items if possible;</li> <li>➤ Breakages cleared up promptly;</li> <li>➤ Chipped or damaged items discarded;</li> <li>➤ Walkways to be kept clear of bags etc.</li> <li>➤ Adequate space; allowed between; tables for access.</li> <li>➤ Regular inspection routine with prompt remedial action</li> <li>➤ Staff trained</li> <li>➤ Trays provided</li> <li>➤ Adequate supervision in relation to age of children</li> <li>➤ Portable appliance testing and regular visual inspection</li> <li>➤ Children informed of good code of behaviour, no running, reporting all spills and no horseplay.</li> </ul>	Name of person responsible to be added here	
	Slips, trips, falls				Staff			
	Spilt food and liquids	3	2	6 (Med)	SMK Staff			Realistic time frame to be added
	Slips, falls							
	Broken Glass							
	Cuts							
	Obstacles	1	3	3 (Low)				
Trips, falls								
Defective furniture	2	2	6 (Med)					
Injury								
Hot food and liquid	1	2	2 (Low)					
Scalds, burns	2	2	6 (Med)					
Electrical equipment & sockets								
Electrocution	1	3	3 (Low)					

Signed: T.R. McMaister (Principal)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Teacher)

