Schools Health and Safety Newsletter

Autumn 2026

Welcome back!

We hope you have all had a restful half-term break.

Please find in this term's newsletter some information which we would like to bring to your attention.

Prosecutions

Academy Trust site supervisor left wondering if he would survive after fall from height



Romero Catholic Academy Trust, which is responsible for 16 schools across the Northwest of England, has been fined £32,000 after an employee fell from the roof of a school in Burnley.

The site supervisor was working at St Mary's Catholic Primary School during an inset day when the incident occurred on 2 September 2024. He had climbed up to the roof on an unsecured ladder to collect footballs when he fell from the roof and onto the concrete playground.

A short time later he was found on the ground by a member of the public. As a result of the fall the employee has suffered traumatic injuries including bleeding on the brain and fractures to his face, hand and foot. Since the incident he continues to experience memory problems, difficulties with speech, and challenges carrying out every day cognitive tasks, such as using the washing machine or microwave.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (**HSE**) found that the roof had no edge protection or other means to prevent or mitigate a fall from height.

The Trust **did not** have a standalone work at height risk assessment or safe

system of work, outlining how this sort of task should be done safely.

The law on working at height requires that you take account of the risk assessment in organising and planning work and identifying the precautions required. The objective is to make sure work at height is properly planned, supervised and carried out in a safe manner.

The Schools Health & Safety Team have a variation of working at height template risk assessments available and also provide working at height training.

We would also encourage schools to use a register and/or ladder tagging system for inspection of ladders kept at the school.

Fire Safety Reminder – Toasters in Schools

Rupert Funk (Corporate & Schools Fire Safety Advisor) has advised of a recent incident at a school where a build-up of crumbs in a toaster ignited, causing a fire.

Fortunately, the fire was contained, and a member of staff was able to extinguish it safely using a fire extinguisher.

To help prevent similar incidents, please ensure that:

- Toaster crumb trays are emptied regularly.
- Toasters are never left unattended while in use.
- Toasters are positioned away from combustible materials, particularly Class A combustibles such as wood, paper, cardboard, plastics, textiles/clothing, and general waste.

Please also ensure this advice is shared with any breakfast clubs, after-school clubs, or other school-based activities that use toasters.

Auditing/ Inspections in Design & Technology, Food, Art and Science

Please ensure that heads of departments in secondary schools are carrying out audits in their respective faculties, ensuring equipment is appropriately installed and that it, and the rooms it is in, are appropriately used, maintained in good condition and, where relevant, comply with legislation.

This will help the department ensure that all relevant health and safety records are kept up

to date, including equipment inspection and maintenance records, together with training records for teachers, support staff (i.e., technicians etc).

Guidance, documentation and relevant checklists are available on the CLEAPSS Home Page

Leaking Bunsen Burners

CLEAPSS have provided an update in their latest Bulletin. They came across a potential near-miss situation where the rubber tubing was very old and degraded in a school they visited, this could have led to a gas leak and possible fire.

Bunsens should be checked at least every year, (along with benches, as these can also damage the gas supply). CLEAPSS has a complete list of things which should be checked during the school year "**Running a prep room**" which contains useful checklist information to be adapted.

School Health & Safety Audits and Fire Safety Audits

Are you a VA, Academy, Independent or Foundation School that has not had an audit in the last two years?

The legal principle, expressed in the Latin maxim "***ignorantia juris non excusat***", means that ignorance of the law is not a defence. Individuals cannot avoid legal responsibility by claiming they were unaware of their duties or obligations.

To help ensure compliance and understanding of these requirements, we are here to provide advice, guidance, and support.

To help ensure your site remains compliant, we encourage you to contact us to arrange an audit. As part of your Service Level Agreement with our team, this service is offered at no additional cost.

The health and safety audit and fire safety audit are an assessment of a school's health and safety policies, systems, and procedures.

The audit aims to identify areas for improvement, ensure compliance with regulations, and enhance overall safety performance. Both Julia and Rupert can fully support schools where needed.

If you are a community school, you will be contacted by either Julia Moulton or

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Rupert Funk to arrange this.

School Policy/Briefing Updates

The Schools Health & Safety Team have been busy updating policy, guidance and briefings on The Hub. Schools are notified when we have uploaded any new or amended documents.

Here are some examples of the recent updates:-

- Manual Handling Arrangements and Guidance
- Hot Weather and High Temperatures
- Health and Safety Policy
- Fire Safety Policy
- Powered Gate template risk assessment

Please note we are also updating the Responsible Persons Premises Logbook. We will send the updated version which will be renamed Premises Service Lead Logbook to schools when this is available.

Reporting violence and abuse incidents

The Health and 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.'

It is important to remember that this can include: verbal abuse or threats, including face to face, online and via telephone and physical attacks.

It is acknowledged that because of the nature of the school's work there is a threat of violence and abuse to employees, and this is recognised as a real hazard.
If you are a community school, please ensure that all incidents of violence and abuse to staff are reported on the section for violence and abuse on the SMARTAA system.

If you are an academy, VA, Foundation or Independent School the SMARTAA system is available as part of your Service Level Agreement for you to use.

Training

As always, please feel free to get in touch if you would like to book training.

shst@enfield.gov.uk or telephone the team telephone number 020 8379 3223

Many thanks.

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