



LEIGHSWOOD

SCHOOL

Risk Assessment Guidance

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Date Completed:	Autumn 2022
Agreed by Staff:	Autumn 2022
Agreed by Governors:	Spring 2023 (Pending)
To be reviewed:	Autumn 2024

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 have to 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'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 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?
- **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.

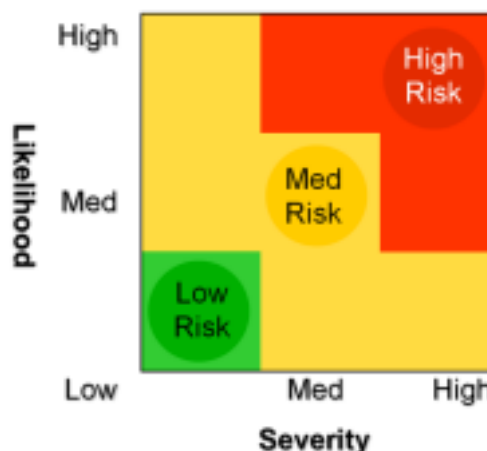
Walsall's risk assessment procedure

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 more hazardous activities.

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 particular circumstances in your school.

Further information on risk assessment is also available on HSE's website:

www.hse.gov.uk/risk/index.htm

Walsall Council has a Safety Management Standard (SMS) on risk assessment that Voluntary Controlled and Community Schools must adhere to. SMSs are available on the council's intranet site – see link on page 4.