

PE/Sport in Schools

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Issued by Occupational Safety Team

Health and safety legislation require schools to manage the risks from sports activities sensibly to protect the health and safety of staff and pupils. Management are required to undertake 'suitable and sufficient' risk assessments and put appropriate controls in place to reduce the risks, as far as reasonably practicable. This does not have to be an onerous, difficult task. In most cases this will involve

- making sure the equipment is suitable for the pupils and staff involved
- the grounds and indoor facilities are properly maintained
- adequate and appropriate level of pupil supervision is in place.

Managing the risks sensibly requires school management and relevant teaching staff keeping up to date with guidance and standards applicable to the sports that are taught. Many of the sports national governing bodies provide guidance to help teachers introduce pupils to their particular sport, and to help them develop skills progressively and safely. Safe practice in physical education and sport is required and it is strongly recommended, and expected, that school management and teachers have access to the guidance and information from the [Association for Physical Education \(afPE\)](#). The afPE guidance '*Safe Practice: in Physical Education, School Sport and Physical Activity*' outlines current best practice, activity specific hazards, undertaking risk assessment, practical examples of risk control and specific guidance on safe practice across the range of activities normally included in school PE/sport programmes.

Following a prosecution (March 2015), where a 14-year-old boy was hit on the head by a shot put and severely injured during a multi sport PE lesson, it is worth noting that the HSE (Health & Safety Executive) expect school management to risk assess all PE/Sports activities, and take into account industry best practice. During the HSE's accident investigation the afPE guidance was referred to as a 'source of good practice'.

Risk assessment.

Refer to afPE guidance for details of specific sport hazards and also consider the following when undertaking risk assessments:

Remember -

- the risk assessment should reflect what **actually** happens in lessons and not be based on assumptions. The assessor should involve the teaching staff.

PE/Sport in Schools

- completed risk assessments must be shared with all relevant staff and be included in procedures/lesson plans. Ensure the risk assessments take into account the needs of staff and pupils (SEN; disabilities; medical conditions; language etc.), activity, location, emergency arrangements.
- in addition to risk assessing the formal PE lessons, also assess the hazards & risks for after school sport activities; use of equipment/facilities outside school hours (including hiring out facilities to others); travelling to sport facilities off site.

The following table shows some examples of the hazards in school sport/PE, with possible control measures. The list is by no means exhaustive and other solutions may be appropriate. More detailed information can be found in the afPE guidance.

| Hazard | Controls |
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| spilled body fluids | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• clear procedures in place, and appropriate equipment, to effectively and safely clean up after accidents, injuries, or illness. |
| poor supervision | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• suitable, well informed staff in appropriate numbers, depending on the activity and type of pupils taking part. Documented procedures to cover staff absences. |
| pupils not following instructions | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• whether through disability, personality or attitude, pupils who do not follow instructions can be a hazard and may risk the safety of others. Additional supervising staff may be required to reduce the risks. |
| unsuitable footwear | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• staff & pupils must wear footwear suitable for the activity. Establish clear documented procedures for staff to follow when pupils have unsuitable footwear for the sport activity. |
| damaged equipment | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• sport equipment can be damaged during use and when not appropriately stored.• a significant amount of equipment is used in sports activities and arrangements should be in place to check/inspect all PE equipment at appropriate intervals. These inspections must be recorded.• in addition to the 'in house' examinations and checks, specific PE/sports equipment require examination by an independent competent contractor e.g. a formal annual inspection of fixed gymnasium equipment by contractors such as GEMS, SportsSafe, ROSPA. |
| inexperienced PE/Sports staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• staff must be appropriately qualified and competent – additional training and qualifications may be required for teaching specific sporting activities e.g. climbing wall |

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| | <p>activities. Training records must be kept.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• if staff drive a minibus, the school/Council driving procedures must be followed to check driving licences, insurance, assess drivers etc.• appropriately trained first aid staff must be available at all times.• swimming pool management and operation requires the relevant staff to have specific training, particularly on operation of the pool plant and water quality testing.• grounds staff must be appropriately trained (e.g. dealing with hazardous chemicals) and qualifications may be required for specific activities (e.g. using a chain saw). Training records must be kept. |
| risk of injury from lifting & handling equipment | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• manual handling tasks, for staff and pupils, must be included in risk assessments e.g. staff putting up goal posts; erecting trampolines. |
| different sport activities in the same area | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• activities need to be suitably spaced to prevent them causing problems to participants. |
| poor management and lack of procedures | <p>The PE/sports policy/arrangements should define -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the rules about removing all jewellery prior to PE lesson/sport activities. If jewellery cannot be reasonably removed, detail how the risks will be made safe e.g. taped up or the pupil sits out of the lesson.• the arrangements in place for pupils unable to participate in PE/sports lessons and activities (suitable location and adequate supervision).• outline the emergency communication arrangements, particularly for facilities in remote locations.• informing pupils and parents what personal protective equipment is required for particular sports activities, including what will be provided by the school and what parents must provide.• how to inform parents/guardians of PE/sports injuries to their child, including head injury/concussion.• consider having a designated location for all sport/PE policies; procedures; risk assessments; training records; students' |

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| | <p>medical information; inspection, test and maintenance reports etc. so all staff can find important information quickly and easily.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the school must have adequate communication arrangements in place to ensure PE/sport staff are aware when grounds staff/contractors arrive to cut grass on the playing fields etc. so they are not in use at the time. specific safety requirements and information should be included in hire/letting agreements where other user groups use the premises/sport facilities. |
| bad weather | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the risk assessments must outline action to deal with inclement weather such as snow, ice, heavy rain or very hot conditions. |
| <p>Premises - employers have a legal duty to provide a safe place of work & working environment for their staff and 'others' who use the premises.</p> | |
| grounds staff using hazardous substances | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> using chemicals (e.g. weed killer on grass pitches; storing petrol for mowers) – complete COSHH risk assessments for hazardous substances. |
| falling PE equipment in stores | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> storage areas must be adequate & organised so staff & pupils are not injured through poor housekeeping e.g. when not in use, freestanding goalposts must be secured safely in their storage position. |
| badly maintained PE/sports areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all areas to be kept clean and maintained in good order. Procedures must be in place for sport fields, courts etc. to be checked daily for potholes, rubbish, faeces, stones, broken glass etc. precede all games/activities with a visual sweep of the area during which time all hazards should be removed or made safe. the PE/sports areas and fixed equipment/structures, inside & out, require a thorough, periodic examination to check for physical damage, stability, condition (e.g. paintwork, security of nuts and bolts) and this should be recorded. check lighting levels are suitable for the sports activities undertaken in the area and the lights are protected from damage, particularly in ball game areas and PE stores. halls and gymnasiums should be free from hazardous projections e.g. radiator valve |

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| | <p>spindles; awkward corners. Where hazards cannot be removed, suitable protection will be required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• remove accumulations of mud, water and moss/algal growth.• car parking areas should be separate from sport and play areas. The presence of oil can cause slipping and early disintegration of play surfaces. |
| slip/trip/fall hazards in sports fields & playing fields | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• maintain playing surface to a satisfactory standard for safe play.• broken glass, cans, rubbish etc. create serious risks. Precede all games/activities with a visual sweep of the playing area during which time all hazardous objects should be removed or made safe.• assess play area in relation to weather conditions. Where there is a real risk of injury, games should not be played.• mark out pitches safely so the surface remains level. No corrosive substances should be used. |
| slip/trip/fall hazards in sports halls | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• keep floors clean – dust affects the foot/floor purchase.• cleaning or polishing should not leave a slippery finish.• ensure suitable footwear is worn.• maintain floor mats in good condition and ensure they remain flat.• keep floors completely free of wet patches (e.g. condensation, sweat). In school halls consider the cleaning method after mealtime.• floor inspection should be a part of daily checks/monitoring. |
| breaking glass | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• glazed areas in critical locations/high risk areas must meet appropriate glazing standards and be protected from breakage. |
| slip/trip hazards in changing rooms / swimming pools | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• avoid contamination of the floor surface with mud/water by providing shoe-cleaning brushes/scrapers and suitable entrance mats to clean and dry feet on. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• provide non-slip flooring on floor surfaces. Ensure specialist anti-slip flooring is sourced and specified correctly and the correct cleaning substances are used.• provide non-slip mats or grids in shower areas.• provide handholds for people with disabilities.• broken floor tiles should be replaced as a matter of urgency. |
| legionella risks | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• showers must be maintained in good working order, cleaned regularly and effectively. There must be a formal system in place to control legionella risks. |

Even when school sport is well managed, accidents/injuries do occur and the *Accident Reporting and Recording Procedure* must be followed. The accident investigation may reveal the incident was due to the physical challenge and competitive nature of the sport where no further action is required, but, where the incident occurred because the risks were not well managed, teachers and management must take action to prevent similar accidents, including a review of the relevant risk assessment(s).

Further information on Health & Safety can be found on the Occupational Safety Website www.bradford.gov.uk/hands/ e.g. Risk Assessment Procedure & form; Goalpost Safety; First Aid Guidance for Managers; Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH); Manual Handling Guidance; Schools Swimming Pool Audit.

For further support or guidance please contact the Occupational Safety Team.