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FIDES et OPERA

BROMLEY
HIGH SCHOOL

GDST
GIRLS' DAY SCHOOL TRUST

RISK ASSESSMENT POLICY

GDST
GIRLS' DAY SCHOOL TRUST

A. Health and Safety Risk Assessment Policy Statement

Bromley High School, as a GDST school, recognises that Risk Assessment is one of the keystones of good health and safety management; it can make a significant contribution to promoting welfare and reducing health and safety risks to employees, pupils, visitors and others who may be affected by the way in which the school operates.

Comprehensive risk assessments must be completed for all potentially hazardous activities, environments and situations, using the 'five steps to risk assessment' approach' (described in detail in the following guidance), regularly reviewing them, and implementing the controls necessary to reduce the risks to an acceptable level following the principles of prevention: eliminate the hazard at source, reduce the hazard, prevent contact with the hazard, implement safe systems of work, employ personal protective equipment.

Comprehensive training and guidance will be provided to employees on how to complete risk assessments. It is important that staff know how to identify risks and the importance of implementing reasonably practicable controls, so that risks are managed at an acceptable level.

B. H&S Risk Assessment - Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a Risk Assessment?

A risk assessment is a systematic method of looking at the school environment and activities to identify things that could happen or go wrong and cause injury or ill health, and deciding on the actions needed to prevent this. If it is not possible to remove all the risks, they should be reduced or minimised to an acceptable level. It helps to protect:

- pupils, employees, visitors, contractors and members of the public,
- the school and its reputation,
- the GDST and its reputation.

2. What are the Legal Requirements?

Risk assessments are required by the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. They must be 'suitable and sufficient', ie they should show that:

- A proper check was made;
- All the people who could be affected were considered;
- All the obvious, significant hazards and risks were considered;
- The precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is low;
- The relevant staff were included in the process.

Risk assessments must be written down if the organisation has more than 5 employees.

3. What are the Different Types of Risk Assessment?

There are three main types of risk assessment:

i) **Risk assessments required by specific legislation** such as the Fire Safety Order, the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations, or the Work at Heights Regulations.

ii) **Area/activity risk assessments** such as classrooms, laboratories or offices and sports activities, educational visits and drama productions.

iii) **Individual (personal) risk assessments** triggered by a specific event such as a member of staff announcing she is pregnant, or if an individual pupil or member of staff has special needs relating to H&S e.g. as a result of a disability or illness

4. Who is Responsible for Completing Risk Assessments?

Simply speaking, the people who 'own' the risks. This means Heads of Department are responsible for ensuring that risk assessments are completed, and regularly reviewed, for all the areas, activities and people that they are responsible for. Any person who has had risk assessment training and is knowledgeable about the specific areas, activities, relevant hazards, risks and controls are authorised to complete risk assessments.

It is good practice for all the relevant staff in the department to be involved with completing and reviewing the risk assessments as they will have useful information about how the tasks or activities happen in practice, what can (and sometimes does) go wrong, and they are the people who will implement the controls – so they need to know what they are!

5. What Training is Available on How to Complete a Risk Assessment

Training resources include:

- An e-learning module – contact your DFO or school H&S Coordinator for information on how to access this
- Detailed guidance in this section of the HUB
- Risks to Assess
- Undertaking the assessment
- The **HSE website** and guidance documents
- DVDs – available to purchase from a number of different suppliers

Many H&S training courses arranged by both schools and the GDST H&S team (see **CPD site)** include detailed information about specific hazards, risks and appropriate controls which should be included in the relevant risk assessments.

6. When Should Risk Assessments be Completed and Reviewed?

Risk assessments should be **completed** as part of the planning process:

- For any new task or activity which includes significant hazards.
- If a new hazard or risk is going to be introduced into the school environment e.g. a new piece of plant or equipment, or a new substance or material, or a new procedure.
- If a room, building or area is going to be repurposed, refurbished or newly built for use by the school / Trust Office.
- If an individual requires a new 'personal risk assessment', e.g. if they announce they are pregnant, or need special considerations due to medical conditions.
- Risk assessments need to be reviewed regularly (normally annually) to ensure they are complete and upto date.
- They should be **reviewed** and updated:
    - Regularly (normally annually) to ensure they are complete and up-to-date.
    - If an accident, incident or significant near miss occurs – indicating the controls were not sufficient or were not being followed,
    - Or there is a change in the circumstances, e.g:
        - A change in the task or activity

- New or altered equipment
- New or altered environment
  - Different people involved with the activity

If nothing has changed since the last review, and the person reviewing the risk assessment is confident that all the risks have been considered, and appropriate controls are identified and implemented, then they simply re-date and re-initial the assessment.

7. Example and Template Risk Assessments

Risk assessments need to be written down. A template for an Area / Activity Risk Assessment is available in the 'Related Documents' section of the GDST Hub.

Templates for other types of risk assessments, eg Use of Computers (DSE), Employee Pregnancy, Hazardous Chemicals (COSHH), Manual Handling and Work at Heights are available on the '**H&S Risk Assessment Templates' page**, and in the subject specific sections on the H&S Hub.

Even if it appears certain that a risk is adequately controlled, this must be documented in a risk assessment. This record will form key evidence in the event of a serious accident or injury.

When completing the risk assessment, the level of detail should be proportionate to risk. For example, a risk assessment for the use of a sewing machine will probably only need a few sentences relating to the hazards presented by stabbing injuries, broken needles, and electrocution. In contrast the risk assessment for the use of power tools in DT departments should include all hazards posed by the equipment (cuts/lacerations/amputation, electrocution, entrapment, ejected materials, dust, noise, jamming/kick back, broken blades/cutters, inadvertent starting of machine, unauthorised use, etc) and should address these risks not just when used by students, but also during cleaning, setting up/adjustment and servicing /maintenance.

8. Who should be told about any significant findings from the Risk Assessment?

If the risk assessment identifies significant risks which need specific action to control them, these must be brought to the attention of the affected people, e.g. staff, pupils or visitors. This could be in the form of a training session for staff, e.g. if a new piece of equipment is introduced; safety reminders at the beginning of a practical science lesson for pupils; or in a letter to parents prior to pupils going on a school trip or to an adventure activities centre,

9. Where should the risk assessments be stored?

The risk assessments should be easily available to the staff that they apply to. A master set should be stored on a shared computer drive, but paper copies can also be made available, eg in the staff room, departmental office, or to take off-site, eg on an educational visits.

Each department should list all their risk assessments on an index sheet. This should include the following information:

- Name of risk assessment,
- Date of completion / last review,
- Name of person who completed / last reviewed RA,
- Date RA is next due for updating,
- Where RA is stored (soft or hard copy)

Each member of staff should have easy access to a copy of the index sheet so they know where to find the risk assessments.

10. How Long Should Risk Assessments be Kept For?

There are no official requirements for the length of time records relating to risk assessments should be kept. However it is recommended that records should be kept for three years at the very least, since this is the period in which a civil claim can be made by an employee following an incident. If health risks are involved, then the length of time may have to be much longer e.g. 40 years, as claims can be made within three years of the disease or ill health being diagnosed.

C. Health and Safety Risks to Assess

Schools are complex places with many significant risks. In order to ensure that all significant risks are identified and risk assessed, schools must have a systematic method of looking at their environment and activities. This can be achieved by considering the following seven groups:

- The site
- Curricular and pupil activities including school trips and educational visits
- Employee activities
- Forseeable emergencies
- Equipment chemicals and substances
- People who need extra care
- Events

Listing all the risk assessments in a comprehensive and logically ordered **Risk Assessment Register** or Risk Assessment Index will enable the risk assessments to be easily managed. The register or index should include:

- Name of risk assessment,
- Date of completion / last review,
- Name of person who completed / last reviewed RA
- Date RA is next due for updating,
- Where RA is filed if not centrally

A list of the risk assessments that each school needs to complete is available in the 'Related Documents' section of the GDST Hub.

D. Risk How to Complete a Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is a natural process which is used all the time, at work and elsewhere. The GDST have adopted the ‘five steps to risk assessment’ approach. The following guidance breaks these steps down even further to give a fuller explanation.

Risk assessments need to be written down. A template for an Area / Activity Risk Assessment is available in the ‘Related Documents’ section of the GDST hub.

When completing the risk assessment, the level of detail should be proportionate to risk. For example, a risk assessment for the use of a sewing machine will probably only need a few sentences relating to the hazards presented by stabbing injuries, broken needles, and electrocution. In contrast

the risk assessment for the use of power tools in DT departments should include all hazards posed by the equipment (cuts/lacerations/amputation, electrocution, entrapment, ejected materials, dust, noise, jamming/kick back, broken blades/cutters, inadvertent starting of machine, unauthorised use, etc) and should address these risks not just when used by students, but also during cleaning, setting up/adjustment and servicing /maintenance.

1. Set the limits

First, set the limits of the risk assessment. What is being assessed? If it as an area, define it, e.g. 'sports hall and associated changing rooms and store rooms'. If it is a task, where does it start and finish? Take the example of putting up a display. The task starts when the teacher goes to fetch the steps and finishes when s/he has put them away again.

2. Identify the hazards

The next step is to identify the HAZARDS in the task being assessed. A hazard is something with the potential to cause harm to people, or damage property, reputation or less tangible assets such as course work. It may not be very likely to do so, but that will be revealed in step 6. If a hazard exists, and it is not trivial, it needs to be identified and recorded.

Hazards include:

- Electricity
- Gas
- Deep water
- Flammable liquids/gases, e.g. petrol or LPG
- Fire and explosions
- Extreme ambient temperature (hot or cold)
- Inadequate ventilation
- Asbestos
- Hazardous substances, e.g. chemicals or dusts
- Manual handling
- Working at height
- Slippery surfaces
- Confined spaces (where there could be inadequate air or toxic gases, or difficulties escaping in an emergency, e.g. under a stage, or in some plant rooms)
- Ionising radiation, e.g. from radioactive 'sources' in the physics dept
- Poor housekeeping or storage
- Inadequate lighting
- Falling or moving objects
- Sharp edges
- Animals / birds / insects (zoonoses / allergies / stings)
- Hot water/hot surfaces/steam
- Adverse work environment (layout)
- Noise
- Vibration
- Lone working
- Adverse weather
- Lack of supervision
- Lack of training

Where relevant hazards should be described more specificaly, so that the risk assessment is more informative to third parties looking at it. For instance, in an Art room slipping hazards could include:

- Slipping on wet floors by the external entrance door
- Slipping on wet floors by the sinks
- Slipping on spilt art materials such as paint or clay
- Slipping on wet floors after cleaning

Taking the example of a teacher putting up a display, the following hazards can be identified:

- Falls from height (using the stepladder)
- Manual handling (carrying the stepladder and items to be displayed)
- Work equipment (eg staple gun)
- Impact injury (objects, e.g. hammers / staple guns falling onto people assisting the task from below, or person climbing ladder bumping against ceiling door frames etc)

There could also be a risk of striking against something e.g. if the ladder is kept in a crowded cupboard; contact with hot surfaces if hot pipes are in proximity; electrocution if there are low light fittings with bare bulbs/tubes. This explains why risk assessments have to be done for each particular job, situation, and individuals undertaking the task – each task will have unique hazards and a generic risk assessments are therefore less useful.

3. Identify the risk

Using the example of a teacher putting up a display, the risks are:
Serious injury - broken bones, concussion - from falling from the step ladder
Serious injury - back strain from poor manual handling techniques
Serious injury - inserting staple into body if staple gun used incorrectly or malfunctions
Serious injury - if objects such as hammers or staple guns fall from a height onto people assisting the task from below

4. Identify who is at risk / will be affected by the hazard

This is simple to determine. Remember that risks may be different for different groups of people - assess them separately if this is likely to be the case. For instance, the risk from a harmful chemical used in chemistry demonstration differs depending on whether you are the teacher doing the demo, or the pupil watching it.
Always identify any group or individual likely to be particularly affected by a risk, e.g. staff and pupils suffering from asthma might be more at risk from a harmful solvent than those that do not. Do not forget to think about visitors, contractors and parents.

5. Assess the severity of the injury if the risk occurs

Refer to the Risk Rating Matrix (link below). Take each hazard in turn. Consider the most likely worst case scenario outcome that could result from the identified hazard if an incident were to occur. This is the SEVERITY, consequence or harm

Catastrophic – 5	Multiple death
Major – 4	Single death, permanent disability, life altering injury
Moderate – 3	Broken bones, several days off work
Minor – 2	Basic first aid treatment required
Insignificant – 1	Minor scratch or bruise

Example - For an electrical accident, the most likely 'worst case scenario' outcome is electrocution, which could be fatal for the individual concerned – a hazard score of 4. This will usually be the case with falls from height too. On the other hand, the most likely 'worst case scenario' outcome from use of simple equipment such as scissors, staplers, compasses etc, will probably be a cut or scratch – a score of 1 or 2.

6. Consider existing control measures

How each hazard is currently (or going to be) controlled needs to be considered in turn - list the controls in the 'Existing Control Measures' column. Examples include:

- A padlock to prevent people using a hazardous piece of equipment or accessing a dangerous area like a chemical store
- Provision of a guard
- Specific written instructions for a task
- Training staff
- Supervising pupils and new / inexperienced employees
- Provision of warning signs
- Use of personal protective equipment

In many cases adequate controls will be in place, often arrived at over years of establishing good practice, but consider:

- Are the existing controls adequate?
- Do they cover all risks to all people?
- Are they proportionate to the risks?
- Could the activity / task be done in an even safer way?

7. Assess the likelihood of the hazard occurring

Now consider how likely it is that an incident could occur (both expected outcome or worst case scenario). It will be determined by a number of factors including:

- How hazard is controlled
- Who is exposed to hazard and for how long
- Level of training and experience
- Age / maturity of those exposed to the hazard
- Understanding of the hazard by those exposed to it
- What protective measures are in place

Take the example of slips and trips in a Junior School playground. Slips and trips may be caused by uneven surfaces, steps, slippery surfaces as a result of moss, ice, objects such as bags on the ground, loose or unsuitable footwear, or just children tripping over their own feet as they play. The risks will vary depending on whether or not:

- Any uneven surfaces are cordoned off, or are only in small infrequently used areas, as opposed to main play areas/walkways
- Steps are even and in good condition and clearly marked
- Areas where moss grows are regularly treated, and play areas are salted to clear any ice if the children are to be allowed out to play
- Children are encouraged to leave unnecessary bags, coats etc inside, or in a safe place, e.g. on a bench
- Children wear sensible shoes, and if necessary adults help younger children tie up any loose shoelaces

- Pupils are well supervised during playtimes and clearly understand the playground 'rules'

Certainty – 5	Could happen at any time and on any day
Probable – 4	Could happen perhaps once a term
Likely – 3	Could happen perhaps once a year
Conceivable – 2	Might happen perhaps once in 5 years
Improbable – 1	Will probably never happen

8.Calculating the risk rating

To calculate the risk rating, multiply the severity by the likelihood.

Risk = Severity x Likelihood

9. Acceptable, tolerable, action required or activity prohibited

Sensible judgement and reference to the Risk Rating Matrix (see 'Related Documents' panel) will indicate if the risks are 'acceptable', 'tolerable', 'action required' or 'prohibitive'.

Acceptable: Risk is either no greater than everyday living or is deemed to be so minimal that management decide to accept the risk.

Tolerable: Risk has been reduced or controlled as far as is reasonably practicable given current technologies, best practices and resources. This does not negate the need to keep the risk under review and will require further action once developments allow. If Severity >Moderate, ensure contingency plans are in place.

Action Required: Risk should not be tolerated and all reasonably practicable controls should be applied to reduce risk. (Risk score is probably 9 or more)

Prohibitive: Cease this activity or isolate risk area until substantial risk reduction is achieved.

Sometimes the existing controls will give very satisfactory control of a risk. For instance, window restrictors will stop a girl or staff member from falling out of the window whilst allowing the window to be opened for ventilation, so a high risk is reduced to low by this control. In this case, although there is still a small residual risk, the overall benefit of having openable windows against the unlikely event of a girl falling out (due to the restrictors) allows the risk to be deemed 'tolerable'; this is saying that all reasonably practicable controls have been implemented given current resources and technology.

On the other hand, if the only control to prevent drowning in the swimming pool is the provision of a float and throw line, this will not have much impact on the risk, as a person could still drown. Further action is required to reduce or eliminate (if possible) the risk, e.g. the provision of lifeguards at all times when swimmers use the pool, and keeping the pool locked so no-one can gain access without a lifeguard being present. If further controls are necessary it is important to ensure that the controls you are planning to introduce will reduce the risk adequately.

10. Improvements/action required to make risk acceptable, tolerable

If the risks are not 'Acceptable' or 'Tolerable' (risk rating score of <9) then you must consider and implement further controls, and even if the risk rating is 'Acceptable' or 'Tolerable' there may be other simple steps that can be taken to reduce the risks even further. List any additional controls that need to be implemented in the 'Further Action Required' column.

For instance, if window restrictors are fitted to reduce the risk of falls from 2nd storey and above windows it would be an improvement if they were checked occasionally to ensure that nobody had

removed them or they had been broken.

When considering which controls to implement, you should prioritise group protection over individual protection and follow the 'Hierarchy of Controls'

1. Eliminate of the hazard
2. Reduce the hazard (or substitute with something less harmful)
3. Prevent contact with the hazard (isolate / contain)
4. Control of the hazard - have a 'safe system of work' or 'method statement'
5. Train people affected by the hazard
6. Provide Personal Protective Equipment and signage

11. Implement controls

Take all necessary steps to ensure all the controls identified in the risk assessment are implemented.

12. Review and Update Risk Assessments

Risk Assessments should be reviewed and updated:

- Regularly (normally annually) to ensure they are complete and up-to-date.
- If an accident, incident or significant near miss occurs – indicating the controls were not sufficient or were not being followed,
- Or there is a change in the circumstances, e.g:
- A change in the task or activity
- New or altered equipment
- New or altered environment
- Different people involved with the activity

If nothing has changed since the last review, and the person reviewing the risk assessment is confident that all the risks have been considered, and appropriate controls are identified and implemented, then they simply re-date and re-initial the assessment.

E. MONITORING AND EVALUATING EFFECTIVENESS OF RISK ASSESSMENTS

It is important that the school's Senior Leadership Team and Heads of Department have systems in place to ensure the preventive and protective measures (the controls) identified in the risk assessments are suitable and sufficient, being implemented properly, and, if necessary, action is taken to address any shortfalls.

This can be achieved in a number of ways, e.g. by:

- Spot checks
- Routine safety tours / hazard spotting tours
- Completion of monitoring checklists or reviews
- Formal audits (action points in reports will identify areas / activities where controls are not sufficient / need to be improved)
- Regular reviews of near miss, accident and incident trends (accidents, incidents and near misses commonly occur when the controls are not adequate, or are not being implemented properly)

The frequency of monitoring should be proportionate to the risk and the frequency with which the activity takes place.

A record should be made of the monitoring activities, and action taken to address any identified shortcomings.