

Uplands Junior School



Health and Safety Policy for Science

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1. Scope of this policy

This policy is concerned with health and safety when teaching science. It has been produced with the approval of the school's governing body.

This policy is not concerned with the teaching of health and safety, although that is a requirement of the Programmes of Study for Science in the National Curriculum.

2. Duties of staff

The employer, i.e., the governing body of Uplands Junior School, Wolverhampton, has the ultimate responsibility to ensure the health and safety of employees and other at this school.

The task of overseeing health and safety in this school has been delegated by the employer to the headteacher.

Within science this task has been further delegated to the science coordinator.

It is the duty of all staff (and, where relevant, non-employees such as parent helpers):

- to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others who may be affected by their acts or omissions;
- to be familiar with this policy by periodic reference to it;
- to implement the provisions of this policy; and to cooperate with the employer and with other members of staff in promoting health and safety.

3. Advice on health and safety matters in science

We have a subscription to CLEAPSS, Brunel University, Uxbridge UB8 3PH (Tel: 01895 251 496; Fax: 01895 814 372; e-mail: science@cleapss.org.uk; website: www.cleapss.org.uk) for the purpose of obtaining risk assessments and for general advice on health and safety matters in science. In an emergency, advice can be obtained by contacting CLEAPSS.

We believe science in primary schools to be a very safe activity and do not consider that the few, small risks justify excessive bureaucracy.

4. Risk Assessment

It is the duty of the employer, under the COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) Regulations to make a risk assessment before microorganisms (eg moulds) or hazardous chemicals (including some 'kitchen' chemicals) are used. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations the employer must make a risk assessment before hazardous activities are undertaken. As required by the employer, following guidance in the Management Regulations Approved Code of Practice, this school adopts the risk assessment in Appendix 1 for the activities normally undertaken in teaching, science in primary schools. All other activities would follow this model and would be carried out by the class teacher.

A model risk assessment is just that – a model, which is broadly appropriate for most classes, in most schools, most of the time. Teachers should review the advice and consider whether further modification is needed for the special circumstances of their lessons with their classes. Professional judgement is needed. For example, pupils who are early bilinguals may not fully understand the instructions and pupils with special needs may need special consideration. An activity, which is perfectly safe on a Monday morning, may be less so on a

Friday afternoon or following a wet play time! Teachers must also use common sense in organising their classroom in a healthy and safe manner, eg, by avoiding trailing electrical leads, not allowing children to use construction kits just behind the door, etc.

If the proposed activities, chemicals or equipment are NOT covered by relevant CLEAPSS guides, etc, so far as risk assessment is concerned, a Special Risk Assessment must be obtained by contacting CLEAPSS.

When drawing up schemes of work and lesson plans, staff should note down any relevant and important health and safety information. This can be very brief comments and will only be necessary for a few topics but will satisfy the requirement that the 'significant findings of risk assessment should be recorded' and demonstrate that individuals acknowledge the risk involved.

5. Close Supervision

On some occasions, some activities should be carried out 'under close adult supervision'. We interpret this as meaning that a small group of children (up to about 6) should have the undivided attention of the supervising adult. Such adults need not be teachers but, if they are parents, assistants, etc they must have been well briefed before the activity on the nature of the risk by the teacher in charge and be aware of guidance in Be safe! etc.

6. Purchasing and storing resources

When purchasing equipment or materials, and especially mains powered electrical equipment, staff must ensure that it is safe and appropriate for use by children of the relevant age. CLEAPSS (see section 3) produces guides to particular types of equipment. The guides in print may change, but a list of those currently available on its website, www.cleapss.org.uk. CLEAPSS staff members are very willing to discuss other equipment, not at present covered by guides. Copies of relevant guides can be obtained free of charge, by contacting CLEAPSS. Staff are expected to consult the relevant guide (or CLEAPSS itself) if they are considering purchasing mains-powered operated electrical equipment. Similar considerations apply when equipment, chemicals or other items are given to the school, eg, by parents, local companies, etc or brought in from home. They may not be sufficiently safe for school use. In general, our policy is not to accept such donations. Any mainselectrical equipment donated or borrowed from home must undergo a portable-appliance test before being used. Testing should be carried out in accordance with the employer's policy which in this school involves waiting until the regular check by the local authority contractor.

Equipment and materials must be stored safely. Chemicals and any other hazardous items are away from children in the Site Officer's room.

7. Living Organisms

We believe that the responsible use of suitable animals, plants and microorganisms in the classroom not only enhances the curriculum, but also helps to promote respect for living things. Classroom uses of living organisms may raise issues about the health and safety of pupils and teachers (which are dealt with the risk assessments) and ,in the case of animals, about their welfare and the need to care for them humanely. We follow advice given by CLEAPSS publications, e.g., L52 Small Mammals, L56 Housing and Keeping Animals, L124 Aquaria in Primary Schools: Electrical Safety, L181 Cold-Water Aquaria, L190 Studying Microorganisms in Primary Schools, L197 Giant African Land Snails, L201 Giant Millipedes, L206 Tadpoles, L227 Stick Insects, PS55 Bringing Pets and Other Animals into Schools.

8. Training

From time to time we devote part of a staff meeting to reminding colleagues about this policy. We review the policy and consider if changes are needed.

When new staff, especially student teachers and newly-qualified teachers, join the school, it is the duty of the science co-ordinator to inform them about this policy.

9. Monitoring

From time to time the headteacher or science co-ordinator monitors that this policy is being implemented. This will involve checking documentation and observing lessons. Minutes will be kept of staff meetings at which health and safety matters are discussed.

10. Special restrictions

There are no special restrictions in teaching science in this school. The headteacher has decided that in addition to advice in relevant CLEAPSS publications, the following special restrictions will apply when teaching science.

- Thin plastic (polystyrene) cups from drinks machines should not be used to hold hot water, because of the risk that they may be easily knocked over when pouring the water or may soften and collapse, in either case spilling hot water on those nearby.
- Glass containers should not normally be used by pupils in Years 3 to 4, but may be used in Years 5 and 6 when the nature of the work means that there is no realistic alternative.
- Rechargeable batteries should not be used for circuit work by pupils, because they may become very hot if short-circuited (but they can be used in equipment, for example, in Roamer robots, Lego motors, etc).
- Where iron filings are in use for work on magnets, these should be enclosed in clear plastic containers, sealed plastic bags or similar. Where iron filings are needed for other purposes, e.g., separation of mixtures, pupils should be warned about the dangers of rubbing eyes with their fingers and work should normally be confined to pupils at Key Stage 2.
- Scrupulous hygiene must be observed before and after cooking activities or handling animals etc. Younger pupils should be supervised to ensure that they wash their hands properly.