



PROSPECT HOUSE
SCHOOL

RISK ASSESSMENT
(INCLUDING RISK ASSESSMENTS
FOR EDUCATIONAL VISITS)

September 2022

Policy on Risk Assessments including *inter alia* risk assessments for educational visits

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Risk assessments (RAs) form the central strand of a self-regulated safety management system. They are an important tool to help heads and teachers manage new, unusual or unfamiliar situations with inherent risks and thus RAs when applied systematically and diligently for such situations help to promote the welfare of children and staff. This policy sets out approach to the systematic management of risk via RAs.

2 Aim of a risk assessment

- 2.1 The aim of RAs is to manage to an acceptable level the hazard identified and the risks contemplated, such that it is entirely safe for the member of staff and the children to engage in the activity or, for general hazards, for the peril to be avoided.
- 2.2 The level of risk should always be managed to an acceptable level, which should be low. However, it should be noted that achieving a situation with no risk may not always be practical: for example, however well run a game of football, it is still a low risk that a player may fall and twist his or her ankle. The point therefore is at all times and taking a diligent but common sense approach to manage risk to an acceptable level.

3 Who is responsible for managing risk assessments?

- 3.1 In each school, the ultimate responsibility for welfare, and health and safety matters is the head, who reports on such matters to the governors. Areas of risk have been identified in order to manage and mitigate risk, are addressed by policies or risk assessments (RAs) or both. These policies are reviewed regularly (see Health and Safety policy no. 480 and the list shown at s. 7). Certain areas of risk are managed at group level by the managing governor, aided by the school offices: an example of this are the steps taken to avoid fire, which relies not only on an RA approach but also on a biennial audit of our fire precautions across the entire estate.
- 3.2 At the level of a school, the head will delegate the preparation of an RA. This is likely usually to pertain to an educational visit and the procedure for such an RA is described later in this policy. But other than RAs handled at a group level, all school risk assessments must ultimately be shown to and approved by the head of the school concerned.
- 3.3 Where the managing governor or head identifies a material risk that merits recognition and management by means of a risk assessment, or even through a specific school or a group policy, a draft of such an RA must be prepared promptly for review and implemented with dispatch (noting and ensuring the provision of any relevant training of staff that may be necessary). Guidance on the preparation of RAs or any policy is always available from the managing governor.

4 When are risk assessments needed?

- 4.1 The first matter to consider is when a risk assessment is *not* needed. For example, there is no need for a risk assessment for play in the playground or for normal games lessons. Risk assessments are not ordinarily required for everyday mundane activities although there are generic RAs covering regular activities in the local facilities such as the sports hall and swimming pools which are hired by a school and these will need consideration and revision from time to time (see 'Dating RAs and revisiting these' later).

- 4.2 However, an unusual risk may arise within a familiar context, and it might well be one which will require an RA. So, were the playground facilities to have changed at a school, for example through the introduction of a new apparatus (eg high monkey bars) which might pose a risk on several dimensions, then an RA of this provision will be required. Similarly, a qualified sports specialist teacher running a session of non-contact sport will not ordinarily need an RA for that sport or lesson. But were a new contact sport to be introduced, such as rugby, then the sports teacher should prepare for the head's approval an RA covering the activity and how any risks will be managed. Other PE activities where one might expect a specific RA include as examples water sports, activities at height (eg abseiling, rock climbing etc.), riding, cycling and any hiking where there might be a risk of exposure or dehydration.
- 4.3 Turning to academic activities in school and as another example, if the children in an art activity were to be dealing with chemicals or pottery glazes that might pose an unusual risk, or be involved in stacking or unloading a kiln, then it will be appropriate for the art teacher to prepare an RA to agree with the head that outlines the hazard, the level of risk for the hazard and through what precautions any risks may be mitigated. The same requirement for an RA would apply if new chemicals that are unusually reactive were to be deployed during a science lesson, or if eggs are to be hatched, or hamsters or other rodents, or tortoises, to be kept.
- 4.4 Any doubts on whether an RA should be prepared must be referred to the head, who may decide to take advice from the managing governor: a decision will then be forthcoming.

5 Regular risk assessments

- 5.1 There are certain risks that are assessed on a regular basis. These include:
- Fire – risk assessments and procedures to reduce the risk of fire, or, should it break out, to protect life, are detailed in the fire policy – staff are required to familiarise themselves with this policy on a termly basis and are invariably trained within days of the start of each academic year
 - Classrooms – In the Early Years, a specific risk assessment is made on each EY classroom on an annual basis. Other classrooms will not ordinarily require any assessment.
 - Legionella infection control – the risk has been assessed and is covered in policy no. 486, health and safety – legionella prevention, which sets out regular procedures to eliminate the possibility of legionella infection within any part of the buildings
 - Working at heights (policy no. 1230)
 - Risk assessments for educational visits (see immediately below)

6 Dating RAs and revisiting these

- 6.1 An RA might be prepared for an activity and agreed by all to be comprehensive and to list effective strategies for mitigation of risk. It is then all too easy to file the RA and to forget about it. However, all such standing RAs will nonetheless benefit from regular revisit and scrutiny. Thus such RAs should be dated and revisited on an annual, biennial or three yearly basis. No standing RA should exceed three years without being scrutinised again, revised and updated with the new date shown thereon.

7 Risk Assessments for educational visits

- 7.1 The schools take risk assessment for any educational visit extremely seriously and all staff should ask the Educational Visits coordinator for help if they are not clear why such details are important, or require assistance to complete the forms. And children will always be supervised by the school staff and not left alone with a external speaker, guide etc

- 7.2 The pro-forma RA must be completed by the leader of any activity that does not take place on a regular basis, e.g. an outing, a concert off site, a new sports activity.
- 7.3 An example of each school's RA for an educational visit is shown in the appendices to this policy.
- 7.4 Each draft RA completed as far as the trip leader is capable must be submitted to the educational visits coordinator (see appendix for each school's coordinator) at least a week in advance and, only when acceptable, will be approved and signed by the Head To the school's RA may be attached a risk assessment from the venue itself and this forms part of the RA.
- 7.5 The leader is responsible for making a copy for each adult involved with the activity; the original will be retained in the office. There will be a very short briefing amongst staff (and with parents if any should be accompanying the excursion) before each trip sets off. Staff or adults accompanying a trip must read the RA with great care and should invariably, and before the trip begins, check that the details of their mobile phones as shown in the RA are correct. Should any part of the documentation be unclear, the issue should be raised during the briefing and clarification obtained.
- 7.6 After the activity or visit has been successfully carried out, a short evaluation of the activity should be filed in the school office together with the original risk assessment. The evaluation must comment on whether staffing levels, timings, etc were adequate to the management of the risks of the hazards encountered, so that should the activity be repeated these observations can inform the preparation of the next risk assessment.

8 Methodology of preparation of a risk assessment

- 8.1 It is best to adopt a systematic approach. Thus:
- For almost all staff, the consideration of risk will relate to an educational visit. In this case, download the relevant school's risk assessment form. If however the risk pertains to another activity that is not an educational visit, then the teacher concerned will need to describe the circumstances and risks identified on a less prescriptive form.
 - The person considering the activity or excursion (usually the teacher leading the trip) should walk through all the items that will be encountered along the way and document each of these steps.
 - The risks that may be entailed in each step should be described
 - At Prospect House, the approach remains to adopt a simple but comprehensive classification: thus each risk against a particular action or activity should be classified at this stage as 'High', 'Medium', or 'Low'
 - The objective of risk management via a risk assessment is at this stage to identify and put into place such procedures that will reduce a high or a medium risk to one that is low risk, and therefore acceptable. Thus, for any high or medium risk, describe fully all the steps to be taken to mitigate this risk down to a 'low' level of hazard
 - As an audit check on the RA, show the draft to an experienced colleague. Work through the RA with him or her, noting any areas that are deficient where additional work must be done. Always pose the question: Is this form in a practical sense comprehensive and complete?
 - When the draft RA is complete as far as it may be, take the form to the head for his scrutiny and approval.

9 Training

- 9.1 For staff new to the group, there is always during the induction day known as 'boot camp' which preceded the autumn term a brief training session on the management of educational visits, given by one of the educational visits coordinators (EVC). For such new staff, training in risk evaluation will be given by the EVC in advance of the first trip the new member of staff is due to lead.

- 9.2 For other staff evaluating a risk and preparing a risk assessment, in the event of concern he or she should contact either the Head or the managing governor, from whom help and/or training will be available (see 'Help' section later).

10 Nothing is risk free

- 10.1 As mentioned at the outset in paragraph 2.2, staff should remember, please, that there is no activity that will be entirely risk free. Staff should never be frightened of risk, rather what is imperative is that risk should always be managed to an acceptable and safe level.
- 10.2 For instance, for a child playing a game in the playground, he or she may on very rare occasion slip and graze his knee, or, during a football match, fall and twist an ankle. These are known but fairly rare risks, where there is no sensible mitigation strategies to be deployed (unless the teacher were to decide after rain to avoid an unusually slippery surface until it had dried further): in normal conditions, the benefits of exercise and of letting off steam outweigh the very slight and rare risks of quite minor harm.
- 10.3 Consider then a child rock climbing on an artificial rock wall: if a child were to do this with no safety aids there would be a high risk of injury. If however, the child is required to wear a helmet, safety harness and to be making use of a belay rope handled by expert supervisors, then the risk will be managed to 'Low' and the sense of achievement when the child successfully climbs to the very top of the apparatus will outweigh the now 'low' risk. For this latter activity, it is certain that there will be an RA, either prepared by the school, or prepared by the educational centre being visited, but nonetheless approved by the Head (see below).

11 Residential visits

- 11.1 Most residential visit or specialist sports centres or, for example, children's zoos and/or farms, will offer and on request send to the school concerned a current risk assessment for all activities. Although such risk assessments have usually been prepared with great care, often by a professional risk assessor, and thus appear to be extremely comprehensive, the receipt of such an RA does not excuse the school from its own duty to consider and mitigate all risks that are likely to be encountered. It is therefore necessary for the trip leader to consider all such risk assessments with care and to indicate to the head any areas of concern.
- 11.2 There have been instances during or in advance of an educational visit where Prospect House has decided:
- For a particular activity, to require an improvement in the ratio of specialist supervisory staff
 - To modify the activity
 - To eschew and avoid an activity in its entirety
- 11.3 In short, the final responsibility for the management of risk on such excursions remains firmly with the school.
- 11.4 While the head will have examined and signed off each excursion RA, it is obvious that only rarely will he be present during an excursion. In the head's absence, the responsibility for the management of risk is that of the trip leader. If circumstances should change during a trip that alter risk, it is the trip leader's responsibility to ensure that she or he remains comfortable that the risks have been managed to a low and acceptable level. Thus the teacher in charge has to remain alert to risk and, if necessary, should intervene if it should ever appear that any risk mitigation stratagems are not being followed to his or her satisfaction.

12 Help with risk assessments and the effective management of risk

- 12.1 In addition to the help within each school that is invariably available from experienced colleagues and/or the deputy head or the head, the governor is always happy to consider risks and stratagems to manage these, to give guidance and to review documentation. Staff who remain concerned by any aspect of risk assessment should always seek assistance: it will be forthcoming and given generously.

13 Health and Safety policy

- 13.1 This policy **must** be read in conjunction with the Health and safety policy.

14 COVID-19

- 14.1 The school will continue to monitor, evaluate and update the schools COVID19 risk assessment as the health and safety of our community is paramount. All COVID19 risk assessment are stored on the schools Google Drive

EDUCATIONAL VISITS COORDINATOR: Ms Deborah Lane/Mr SI Vedat

APPENDIX PHS – Risk assessment form for an educational visit