



**CHILDREN AND YOUNG
PEOPLE'S DEPARTMENT**

**HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY &
GUIDANCE FOR SCIENCE IN
PRIMARY EDUCATION**

HS/ECS/048

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**THIS DOCUMENT REPLACES
H007/94**

**Children and Young
People's Department**



2002-2003
Community Legal Services
2003-2004
Transforming Secondary Education
Child and Adolescent Mental Health
Services
2006-2007
Positive Youth Engagement

WIRRAL LA

HS/ECS/048

**HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY & GUIDANCE FOR
SCIENCE IN PRIMARY EDUCATION**

INDEX

The following headings are covered in this publication:

1. Intended audience for this policy and guidance
2. Scope of this policy and guidance
3. Advice on health and safety matters
4. *Be safe!* Booklet
5. Risk assessment
6. Close supervision
7. Purchasing and storing resources
8. Living organisms
9. Health and safety policies
10. Training
11. Monitoring

Headteachers should ensure that all members of staff concerned with the delivery of science, whether teaching or non-teaching staff, have read and agree to observe these regulations.

1. Intended audience for this policy and guidance

This policy and guidance dated September 2004, is concerned with health and safety when teaching science in primary schools, including nursery, infant and junior schools and special schools with primary age pupils (or with secondary age pupils where the type of work is more comparable to that carried out in primary schools). A characteristic of the schools covered by this policy is that science is generally taught in ordinary classrooms, largely by non-specialist staff.

This policy replaces document H007-94 "Health and Safety Policy and Guidance for Science Education".

2. Scope of this policy and guidance

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Wirral Education Authority Health and Safety Policy H003/2000 (issued May 2000), the school's own Health and Safety Policy and any other relevant guidance that the Authority may issue from time to time, see Appendix A for details of current policy and guidance documents.

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

3. Advice on health and safety matters

The Director of Children's Services designated representatives for giving advice on health and safety in teaching science in primary schools is the General Inspector Science, Primary Advisory Science Teacher and LA Health and Safety Officer.

In addition, the education authority maintains a subscription to the CLEAPSS School Science Service, Brunel University, Uxbridge UB8 3PH (tel: 01895 251496, fax: 01895 814372, e-mail: science@cleapss.org.uk for the purpose of obtaining model (general) and special risk assessments under the COSHH Regulations and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations and general advice on health and safety matters in science. **In an emergency, advice can be obtained by contacting the Health & Safety Section on 0151 666 5602/3.**

About 3 or 4 weeks after the start of each term the CLEAPSS *Primary Science and Technology Newsletter* is despatched to Primary and Primary Special Schools from the Authority's mail room. If you are not receiving the *Newsletter* regularly contact the General Inspector Science. Headteachers should ensure that copies are passed on to their science co-ordinators, who should in turn circulate them amongst staff and discuss any pertinent information.

4. Be safe! Booklet

This education authority's health and safety policy for teaching science in primary schools is largely contained within *Be safe! Some aspects of safety in school science for Key Stages 1 and 2* (3rd edition, 2001), Association for Science Education (ISBN 0 86357 324 X).

All schools should have at least one copy of *Be safe!* (and larger schools will need several copies) and all teachers must be made aware of its existence and reminded of it from time to time. It should be kept in a readily accessible place so that teachers may easily use it in planning their science activities. Where relevant guidance cannot be found in *Be safe!* staff should either consult CLEAPSS (see Section 3), the General Inspector Science, the Primary Advisory Teacher or the LEA Health & Safety Officer.

5. Risk assessment

Under the COSHH Regulations (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations) the employer must carry out a risk assessment before micro-organisms (e.g. moulds) or hazardous chemicals (including some “kitchen” chemicals) are used.

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations the employer must carry out a risk assessment before hazardous activities are undertaken. This Education Authority had adopted *Be safe!* as containing safe working practices for the activities normally undertaken in teaching science in primary schools. Where schools have identified risks associated with the lesson, have established safe practices and these are reflected in the schemes of work, then a risk assessment will satisfy the requirements of the above Regulations.

Additional information can be found in *HS/ECS/006 “Risk Assessment”*

For the purposes of model risk assessments this Education Authority also recognises a range of CLEAPS guides which give information on a more extensive range of activities than is covered in *Be safe!* Examples include *L5p The Safe Use of Household and Other Chemicals* (in course of revision 1998), *L86p Electrical Safety*, *L164a Heating in Primary Science* (to be revised 1999) and *L190 Studying Micro-organisms in Primary Schools*. In specialist areas, other guides may also be useful.

If the proposed activities, chemicals or equipment are NOT covered by *Be safe!* (or relevant CLEAPSS guides) so far as risk assessment is concerned, then a Special Risk Assessment must be obtained by contacting the Primary Science Advisory Teacher or the Health & Safety Officer. CLEAPSS also offer this advice.

When drawing up schemes of work and lesson plans, any relevant and important health and safety information extracted from *Be safe!* or elsewhere should be noted down (or attached). 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.

6. Close supervision

On some occasions, *Be safe!* states that an activity should be carried out “under close adult supervision”. This could mean that a small group of children should have the undivided attention of the supervising adult however, this number will depend on the nature of the lesson and the pupils involved. Such adults need not be teachers, but if they are parents, welfare assistants, etc, they must have been well briefed by the teacher in charge on the nature of the risk before the activity and be aware of guidance in *Be safe!* etc, the teacher in charge must be satisfied that the lesson is safe and without risk to pupils, staff or helpers.

7. Purchasing and storing resources

When purchasing equipment or materials, and especially mains-powered electrical equipment, schools must ensure that it is safe and appropriate for use by children of the relevant age. The CLEAPSS School Science Service (see Section 3) produces a number of guides to particular types of equipment. The guides in print change frequently, but a list of those currently available appears on the back page of its termly Newsletter.

Copies of relevant guides can be obtained, free of charge, by contacting CLEAPSS. A complete reference set of guides is also kept in the Authority by the Health & Safety Section. Schools should always consult the relevant guide (or CLEAPSS itself) if they are considering purchasing mains-operated electrical equipment for use in science, and are advised to do so before purchasing any expensive item.

Similar considerations apply when equipment is given to schools, e.g. by parents, local companies, etc or brought in from home. It may not be sufficiently safe for school use. Schools must check before accepting such donations and are generally advised to refuse them (Technical Support Services are able to offer advice). Any mains electrical equipment donated or borrowed from home must undergo a portable appliance test before being used via Technical Support Services.

Equipment and materials must be stored safely. Chemicals and any other hazardous items must be locked away from children.

8. Living organisms

Schools will often wish to keep animals, plant and micro-organisms in the classroom. They may sometimes consider having animals as visitors, either through personal contacts or through more formal "Visiting Animal Schemes". All users of living organisms in classrooms raise issues about the health and safety of pupils and teachers (which are dealt with in *Be safe!* and other model risk assessments) and, in the case of animals, about their welfare. Schools should seek advice from CLEAPSS or consult any relevant guides.

9. Health and safety policies

Wirral Education Authority insists that Primary Schools have a School Health and Safety Policy. Within this policy there should be an indication as to how Science Safety is managed. In most schools this information will be dealt with via the schemes of work which should include information on risk assessment, supervision, hazards etc.

10. Training

From time to time staff will need reminding of all health and safety policies, including LA's, the school's own Health and Safety Policy and, information on good, healthy and safe practice in primary science. The headteacher and/or science co-ordinator should ensure such training takes place. The LA regularly provides training courses to address health and safety training requirements.

11. Monitoring

The headteacher and/or science co-ordinator is expected to monitor that policy and guidance is being followed. This may involve checking documentation, observing lessons, disseminating information and participating in planning meetings. Suitable records should be kept relating to health and safety, e.g. in the minutes of staff meetings, in notes of lesson plans and schemes of work or of lesson observations.

The Education Authority, as the employer, has a responsibility to monitor that its health and safety policies are being implemented. This will be carried out by the General Inspector Science, school link inspector and health and safety officer, during routine visits to schools. A more formal safety audit will be carried out by the LA Health & Safety Section every 3 years for Primary Schools and 2 years for Primary Special Schools.