**Schools Handbook**

**Risk Management Guidance**

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Risk Management Guidance

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# About this Guide

Introduction

Risks are unavoidable for all schools and the rest of the public sector are in no way exempt from this. Every action an individual takes carries some sort of risk, and it is vital that people feel comfortable taking risks when it is appropriate to do so.

There is some evidence that the reverse of this is taking place – the increasing talk of a ‘compensation culture’ and working environments where blame is only too forthcoming mean that for some, risk is something to be avoided at all costs. Examples of such action include some schools refusing to undertake school trips, the banning of children from playing conkers and the removal of certain items of play equipment.

Instead of banning activities, a framework for the management of risks is required which ensures that all risks are analysed against the same standard, and to ensure that they are appropriately managed to reduce the extent to which the school is exposed to them. By taking a measured approach to risk, those things that were once considered impossible may become achievable.

One of the key themes, therefore, is that risk management is not a negative process. In fact, if risks are managed well, the result should be that more is possible in terms of activities and achievements. Risk management is not risk avoidance – it is the creation of a culture where calculated risks can be taken and where innovation can flourish.

Within schools, to whom parents entrust their children and young people, this is especially vital.

Who is this Guide for?

Risk management is the responsibility of everyone within a school. However, in order for it to become embedded within the school’s activities, strategic leadership should be provided. This guide aims to offer those in this position with the knowledge and tools they will need to meet this obligation. They include:

* Headteachers
* Governors
* Teachers
* Business Managers/Bursars
* Site Managers/Caretakers
* Extended Schools Managers
* Sports Centre Managers
* Any other staff given specific risk management responsibility.

The aims of this Guide

This guide aims to provide all the information and guidance a school might need to assess its risks effectively.

Issues covered in the guidance include:

* What risk management is
* The benefits of risk management
* Getting the balance right
* A risk management methodology for schools
* Business Continuity arrangements for schools.

A Risk Register template is provided which you can use to manage the risks within your school.

Also provided is guidance on how to complete this document. Electronic copies of this guide and the templates are available for download from Shropshire Learning Gateway on the Risk Management Team’s pages.

# Introducing Risk Management

What is a Risk?

There are many definitions of what constitutes a risk, which taken together can produce a rather confusing picture.

A risk, though, can be simply defined as:

*Something that might happen that affects the work we do.*

A risk does not have to be a bad thing. This is one of the misconceptions that leads to risk management being considered a negative process. This definition allows us to combine both the proactive taking advantage of opportunities and the reactive treatment of risk in one.

What is Risk Management?

As with the definitions of risk, matters can quickly become complicated when a definition of risk management is sought. For example:

Risk management is the process, structure and culture put in place to manage potential effects which could impact on the achievements of the school’s objectives and strategies.

It doesn’t need to be that difficult. Put simply, Risk management is making sure good things happen and bad things don’t!

Of course, the deeper you dig into the processes and systems that can be used to create good risk management, things can start getting complicated again. But by remembering the core duty of risk management, making sure good things happen while bad things don’t, you need not get lost amongst the jargon.

It is important that the emphasis is on the positive impact that risk management can have. Risk management is all about helping you to do things, and not stopping you from doing them.

What Risk Management is not

There are a number of myths and misunderstandings surrounding risk management.

Risk Management is not:

* Just a Health and Safety issue;
* A new responsibility;
* Just for finance and insurance to worry about;
* Another layer of unnecessary bureaucracy
* A matter of a yearly review;
* About ticking a box for compliance purposes.

How does Risk Management differ from Health and Safety?

In effect, health and safety is a form of risk management. However, it is so specialised, with its own legislation and detailed procedures, that it should be considered a separate discipline.

Health and safety focuses on operational matters, very much at the point of service delivery. Risk management, on the other hand, is concerned principally with what can be described as business risks – those risks which could affect the way the school is able to conduct its business, and as such should form part of the school’s ethos when developing its School Improvement/Development plan at a strategic level.

Here are some examples of health and safety and risk management risks to illustrate the point. They are by no means exhaustive.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Health and Safety | Risk Management |
| Slips and Trips | Failure of a key supplier / service |
| Fire Hazards | Inability to provide sufficient qualified staff |
| Accidents when operating equipment or machinery | Sustained IT failure |
| Unacceptable working conditions | Inability to access school buildings |

There are times, however, where health and safety and risk management cross. This could be where an issue is considered sufficiently major or high profile to warrant a full risk management approach. This can often be the case when the risk is an insurable one, which provides further crossovers and linkages.

The benefits of Risk Management

Effective risk management can bring many benefits to a school:

* Increased focus on what must be done to meet objectives within the school development plan
* Assurances to stakeholders increasing satisfaction/staff morale
* Better management of change programmes
* Calculated risk taking leading to a culture of innovation
* Fewer complaints
* Better value for money

The fundamental benefit of risk management, however, is the positive influence it can provide. By identifying, analysing, and documenting the risks associated with any activity, a school can have confidence in any action it takes.

**The right balance**

The benefits of risk management can only come to fruition if a sensible approach is taken. This can be described as a school’s appetite for risk. If the school is too risk-averse, the resulting opportunities are few. If, instead, the school exposes itself to too much risk, it faces likely failure. The key is to get the balance right, as the following graph demonstrates:



Within the schools context, an example of the stifling impact of risk aversity could be the cancellation of all school trips because of the risks they present. In this example, a risk averse school might run many school trips without giving adequate consideration to what could go wrong, leaving itself exposed. But by managing risks, knowing what they are and what can be done to make them either less likely to occur or lessen the impact should they happen, a school can undertake school trips in confidence, thus realising the positive benefits such trips can have for their students.

What are the Risks that Schools Face?

The risks that are included in the school’s generic Risk Register template include:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| •Recruitment/retention of suitably qualified staff | •Pandemic |
| •Employee vetting procedures | •Severe weather |
| •Loss of data/confidential information | •Ineffective financial controls |
| •Inadequacy of risk assessments | •Poor Ofsted result |
| •Low staff morale | •Adequacy of security arrangements |
| •Bullying | •Ineffective maintenance procedures |
| •Failure to meet legislation | •Falling numbers on roll |
| •Sustained IT failure | •Emergency/ business continuity arrangements |
| •Contractors | •Damaged reputation |
| •Meeting the needs of pupils with specific needs | •Injury or death of member of school community |
| •Asbestos | •Legionella |
| •Failure of single contractor to deliver service |  |

# A Risk Management Methodology for Schools

Introduction

Shropshire Council has in place a well-developed and embedded risk management approach, which is documented in the Opportunity Risk Management Strategy. What is presented in this chapter is a scaled down, tailored version of this approach which is proportionate to the levels of risk that an individual school might encounter.

The Department for Education (DfE) also provides information relating to school risk management and insurance. All this information can be found at [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk).

The methodology set out here is separated into the various stages of risk management, as illustrated by the risk management cycle.

The Risk Management Cycle

The risk management process is a circular one which never ends – existing risks should be constantly reviewed and new risks identified as and when they emerge. This cycle is best illustrated by the diagram below:



Each stage of the cycle will be discussed in detail.

**Identification**

Risk identification is an important process to get right. There are several factors that have to be considered when identifying risks:

* Focus on aims and objectives
* Be precise in your definitions
* Current controls
* Prioritise your risks
* Categorise your risks
* Consider opportunities

As discussed earlier, risk management is focused on ensuring success – not merely avoiding failure. As such, an important thing to consider when identifying risks is what it is that your school wants to achieve. You can then note the threats to achieving those aims.

The advantages of this method include taking actions to mitigate risks and actions to ensure the achievement of an objective. This positive approach makes it easier to embed the management of risk into day-to-day planning and work.

**Be precise in your definitions**

When identifying a risk, it is vital to be precise about what the risk actually is. For example, it is common to list hazards rather than risks. The table below shows the difference between these two things.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Hazard** | **Risk** |
| Dangerous ladder | Employee injuring themselves on ladder, leaving the school open to a claim |
| Stress amongst staff | Staff absence due to stress leading to a reduction in quality of teaching |

As well as differentiating between hazards and risks, it is also important to ensure a risk is written down in a way that is clear. A good method to follow when defining a risk is to include the following words in a description:

* Failure
* Leading
* Resulting

To apply this to the two examples above, we get:

* Failure to maintain ladders to an acceptable standard, leading to injury to a member of staff, resulting in a claim against the school.
* Failure to manage levels of stress amongst staff, leading to increased absences, resulting in a reduction in teaching quality.

This formula helps to ensure that the risk definition contains all the necessary information about it, which will help in the analysis and control stages.

**Current controls**

As discussed earlier, everyone has been managing risks for many years. It may not have had that particular title, and it may not have been documented, but it was going on. This means that the risks you identify are likely to have controls already in place to help mitigate them. It is a good idea to consider this at the identification stage, and make a note of them – it will help when assessing the risks, as well as in the control stage.

**Consider Opportunities**

If we consider the opportunities available to us we can manage the risks which would stop us achieving the opportunities we have identified.

Key aspects of opportunities:

* Perceived benefits of actions and decisions
* Risks considered in a positive way in order to maximise opportunities
* Proactive decision making from a risk basis
* Opportunity takers rather than risk takers
* Innovative rather than reactive
* Long term benefits from dealing with short term risk
* Focused on achieving value

Opportunities do not present themselves - they need to be sought.

It is important to record opportunities within the risk management documentation. This acts as a reminder of the positive impact of risk management and as another driver towards the embedding of the process within day-to-day routine. It also provides assurances to stakeholders.

**Analysis**

The assessment of risks is extremely important in terms of prioritising which risks are dealt with first, and to what level of resource, in time and financial terms, should be allocated to the mitigation of the risks.

Risks are assessed by giving them a rating between one and five for likelihood and impact. Each rating has some criteria associated with it, which are outlined below.

What is important to note is that, unless a risk can be calculated in numerical terms, assessing risks is generally a subjective process. Therefore, it is advisable to do it as part of a group, where all those with specialist knowledge in the area can be present and make their views known.

It is important to ensure that assessments are realistic. Whilst it may at first seem prudent to over score risks, it is detrimental to the risk management process and creates an atmosphere of over-control which stifles innovation and development. It potentially becomes more complex as a greater number of controls and actions are required.

**Likelihood**

|  | **Score** | **Definition** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Rare | 1 | It is unlikely that the event will occur. |
| Possible | 2 | It is likely that this event will occur but not within the next academic year. |
| Likely | 3 | There is a fair chance (50:50) that this event will occur within the next academic year. |
| Almost Certain | 4 | The event will almost certainly occur within the next six months. |
| Certain | 5 | The event has occurred or will almost certainly occur within the next three months. |

**Impact**

|  | **Score** | **Definition** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Negligible  | 1 | * Day to day operational problems.
* No financial loss.
 |
| Minor | 2 | * Manageable disruption to School.
* Noticeable internal impact, but the School would remain on course to achieve priorities.
* Budgetary issues that can be resolved within Senior Management Team.
* Localised reputational damage.
* Isolated complaints.
* Minor Injury to those in the School’s care.
 |
| Significant | 3 | * Significant loss, delay or interruption to School for more than 48 hours.
* Non-delivery of school development/improvement plan objectives.
* Significant stakeholder concern.
* Attracting short term media attention and potential for litigation/ prosecution from legislative or regulatory bodies.
* Long term regional damage to reputation.
* Budgetary issues that can be resolved at Senior Management Team level with input from Local Authority.
* Serious Injury to those in the School’s care.
* Significant complaints.
 |
| Major | 4 | * Widespread medium to long term impact on operational efficiency, performance and reputation.
* Major disruption to School’s critical services for more than 48hrs (e.g. major ICT failure)
* Breach of legal or contractual obligation attracting medium-term attention of legislative or regulatory bodies.
* Adverse coverage in National Press/Front page news locally.
* Budgetary issues that can only be resolved by Local Authority.
* Serious Injury to those in the School’s care.
 |
| Critical | 5 | * Death of those in the School’s care.
* Inability to function effectively.
* Extensive adverse media interest.
* School delivery has to be taken over by Local Authority/ DfE.
 |

Calculating the Risk Rating

Once the scores for Likelihood and Impact have been decided upon, the risk rating can be calculated by simply multiplying the likelihood by the impact. This then produces a single number that can be used as a guide to prioritising risks. The higher the rating, the higher the priority of mitigating the risk.

Mapping risks

The prioritisation of risks is best achieved by plotting them onto a matrix. Many schools have differing matrices to suit their own risk appetite, and Shropshire Council’s risk appetite is represented in the following matrix:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **I****M****P****A****C****T** | 5 | L | M | H | H | H |
| 4 | L | M | M | H | H |
| 3 | VL | L  | M | M | H |
| 2 | VL | L | L | M | M |
| 1 | VL | VL | VL | L | L |
|  |  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|  |  | **LIKELIHOOD** |

**KEY:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| VL | Very Low | L | Low | M | Medium | H | High |

Using this matrix, it is possible to clearly see where a particular risk sits within the overall risk profile of the school. Theoretically, as controls are put in place and actions taken to mitigate risks, the number should move from the red and orange areas into the blue and green areas.

Addressing risks

Once risks have been identified and assessed, they have to be addressed. One thing that must be decided upon at the outset is the prioritisation of the risks. This can come from the risk rating or the position of the risk on the risk matrix. The prioritisation is for both timeliness and resources.

Risks can be addressed in four ways:



**Tolerate**

It is perfectly legitimate for a school to decide that certain risks should be accepted as existing,and tolerated. What is important is that these tolerated risks have been fully analysed and controls put in place to reduce the likelihood and impact on the school.

**Transfer**

This is a specialist form of risk reduction in which the management of the risk is passed to a third party e.g., insurance. This means that the impact of the risk is no longer an issue for the school. Not all risks can be dealt with in this way, and it may be prudent to consider treating the risk as well.

**Treat**

Risks are treated using controls and actions. Controls are systems and procedures put in place to either reduce the likelihood of the risk occurring or reduce the impact on the school if it does occur. The following points should be noted when drawing up controls and action plans:

* Consideration of opportunities
* That any new controls or actions do not replicate work already being done;
* The actions assigned to mitigate risks should always be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) to ensure that they can be completed satisfactorily and have the necessary effect on the appropriate risk;
* Is the cost of the action, in terms of funding or time, proportionate to the likelihood and impact of the risk?

All risks should be treated in some way, for it is very rare for a risk to exist and not have any controls already in place to mitigate it.

**Terminate**

On occasion, it simply isn’t feasible for a school to tolerate, transfer, or treat a risk. In such circumstances, it is necessary to terminate the risk. This is usually done by either:

* Not undertaking an activity
* Doing the activity in a different way, therefore being able to treat the risk.

The first option should be considered very much the last resort. As mentioned previously, it is considered an important facet of the risk management process at the Council that it is a positive one which seeks to find new ways of providing a service, being innovative and taking advantage of opportunities.

Should a school decide to immediately cancel what is perceived as a risky activity, this would result in the school not reaching its objectives and failing to provide opportunities and experiences to enrich the students’ education.

Addressing risks: Example

The table below show the four different approaches to an example of a risk that a school might face. The risk in question is of hot working being carried out by contractors.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Tolerate** | **Transfer** |
| Accept the current level of risk | Have buildings and contents insurance in case of fire damage |
| **Treat** | **Terminate** |
| Put in place hot working procedures and permits | Ban hot working on school premises |

Clearly, just one of these options alone isn’t sufficient, except in the case of termination, which may not be a realistic solution. As is often the case, the best solution in this example would be a combination of transferring and treating the risk.

Monitoring and reviewing risks

Risk management cannot just be seen as a one-off process, or even one that can be reviewed annually, but instead must be continuously re-examined and reassessed.

It is suggested that risk management features regularly on the senior management team agenda. This allows new risks to be identified, current controls to be reviewed and additional controls to be identified.

The Risk Register should also be reviewed, in its entirety, at the Termly Full Governors’ meeting.

# Risk Register

The Risk Register is the central holding point for a school’s risks. Having the risks and associated data available electronically has obvious benefits – not least in terms of reporting – and keeping a hardcopy for backup and demonstration purposes is also sensible.

Shropshire Council has developed an electronic generic Risk Register for schools to adopt and develop. The generic Risk Register can be found at Section 8 of this Handbook. An electronic version for updating can be downloaded from the Risk Management Team’s pages on SchoolsNet and Shropshire Learning Gateway.

Introduction

The generic Risk Register provided is a spreadsheet on which you can record details of all your school’s risks, enabling better analysis of the data you have collated.

Completing the spreadsheet

The spreadsheet has been designed so that all the information about the risks can be captured and links can be made to the School Development/Improvement Plan.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ID No. | This should be the unique reference you gave your risk on the Register. |
| Risk | What could happen?  |
| Current Controls in place | Provide details of the current controls in place. |
| Likelihood | The likelihood rating of the risk (1-5) with current controls in place |
| Impact | The impact rating of the risk (1-5) with current controls in place |
| Risk Rating | This is automatically calculated (likelihood x impact) |
| Risk Status | Is the risk High, Medium, Low or Very Low (plot the score on the matrix) |
| Additional Controls/ Actions Required | Provide details of any additional controls or actions that are required to manage the risk. |
| Timescale for implementation of Additional Controls/ Actions Required | A realistic timescale should be agreed to implement any additional controls or actions required. |
| Member of Staff Responsible | All risks should be allocated to an appropriate member of staff with the necessary experience and knowledge to take responsibility for the management of each individual risk. |

# Risk Management Initiatives

Introduction

The Risk Management Team at Shropshire Council are proactive in their attempts to spread positive risk management practice, reduce the various areas of the Council’s exposure to risk and seek to take advantage of opportunities. This chapter examines some of those initiatives, which could be of use to schools.

Emergency Response & Business Recovery Plan

Risk Management and Emergency Planning joined together and have produced an Emergency Response & Business Recovery Plan which has been provided to all schools. This has also been followed up with training on its completion which will be on-going on a termly basis. The plan is a comprehensive document, many elements of which have been prepopulated and contains checklists as an aide memoire and supports the whole school community during an incident and in the recovery stages of an incident.

Events Safety Guidance

A common risk, identified through telephone queries to both the Health and Safety and Risk Management Teams and claims history, are the issues around safety at public events held on Council property. It was clear that a common approach would have significant benefits for those organising the events.

An Events Guidance document has been developed by the Health and Safety team. The Guidance Handbook can be requested if required by the Health and Safety Team.

Should you consider running an event, whether a fete or sports event, at your school please:

* Complete the various forms provided with the Events Guidance document
* Return any documentation as required
* Feel free to contact the Health and Safety Team for advice and support

Schools’ Travel Insurance Scheme

Shropshire Council launched a school annual travel insurance policy in October 2005 which provides worldwide cover for all off-site activities which also now covers personal accident cover on all on-site activities as well.

Full details of the scheme can be found in Section 4 of this Handbook.

Document Retention

The importance of retaining documents for risk management purposes cannot be overstated. The major impact it can have is when insurance claims are received, where relevant documentation can play a vital part of a successful defence in court.

Such documentation includes accident reports, risk assessments, inspection records and repair documentation – as well as all pupil records.

This is especially the case in schools, where the limitation period is extended. **Normally a claim can be submitted up to three years after an incident. However, in the case of minors, the period extends to three years after the claimant reaches the age of 18. For example, a pupil has until their 21st birthday to make a claim against a school for an incident which may have occurred when they were five.**

It is therefore an extremely important risk management action that the documentation connected to any accident or near-miss be retained and kept accessible so that an audit trail can be presented in court if necessary. Please refer to the Corporate Retention Schedule which can be obtained from Records Management (01743) 252855.

Safer Schools Initiative

The “Safer School” initiative is a creation of West Mercia Police.

Together with West Mercia Police, Shropshire Council are jointly working to promote and support Shropshire schools through the initiative.

The initiative is a holistic, practical and realistic approach to school security and personal safety. The initiative has two separate roles:

* The primary role is to address the security and safety issues of the school environment i.e. school staff, pupils, property and the premises.
* The second and significant role is to deter/reduce future crime, not only on the school site but in local communities and into the future. Commencing with good citizenship at nursery age, by year 11 the curriculum element of the initiative will give pupils a better understanding of crime and its consequences.

This initiative is appropriate for all schools, irrespective of school size, location or crime. It sets a minimum standard for school security and addresses any specific issues, problems or nuisances that are a concern at individual schools.

If you would like to find out more about the scheme, please get in touch with Shropshire Council’s Occupational Health & Safety Team.

Keep Your School in Business (KYSIB)

Following the implementation of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 it is now a legal requirement for all premises to have a fire risk assessment in place. All Shropshire Council schools have been provided with the Keep Your School in Business (KYSIB) folder.

KYSIB is a comprehensive fire safety information pack and guide to completing fire risk assessments. It has been produced by the West Midlands Arson Task Force (a partnership between the West Midlands Fire Service and West Midlands Police) and is designed to provide arson and fire prevention advice tailored specifically towards schools. The guide is easy to read, straightforward to use and covers all relevant areas of fire safety. It explains the requirements of the legislation, contains guidance on best practice and includes questionnaires which enable the responsible person to complete a “suitable and sufficient” fire risk assessment for their school and to identify the general fire precautions that should be taken.

If you would like further information or support regarding Keep Your School in Business, please get in touch with Shropshire Council’s Building Surveyor (Fire Safety).

# Further Resources

Introduction

Risk management is a process which cannot be covered in its entirety in one document, and this guide has been written to be as succinct as possible. There are, however, plenty of further resources available to learn more about this important and developing discipline.

Risk Management and Insurance Training

The Risk Management Team regularly provide training for schools. Additional tailored or specific training can be provided by arrangement by contacting the Risk Management Team.

Further Reading

There is a large amount of material freely available on various websites on risk management:

Shropshire Learning Gateway

On these sites, you can find further guidance and information about risk management and insurance, including:

* The Shropshire Council Risk Management and Insurance Handbook
* Managing Public Events Guidance
* Templates and forms to download

Department for Education

The DfE website provides a good deal of resources on risk management. Visit [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk) to see what they have to offer.

The Institute of Risk Management

The Institute of Risk Management is risk management's professional education body. From their website, you can download the Risk Management Standard, which “represents best practice against which schools can measure themselves”. Visit [www.theirm.org](http://www.theirm.org).