



# AUTUMN TERM 2022 NEWSLETTER







## **WELCOME TO THE SCHOOLSHARE NEWSLETTER FOR THE AUTUMN TERM.**

We hope your school year has got off to a great start, and we're pleased to present the latest issue of your SchoolSHARE newsletter.

Our first article explores the important subject of mental health and the impact of the pandemic on pupils as they get to grips with a new normality. We go on to cover the seasonal topic of snow and ice with a reminder of how to help protect your pupils and staff as the winter weather approaches. We also recap some key advice on fire safety and asbestos—two of the common health and safety topics schools ask us about.

In our regular 'Learning by Example' feature, we highlight three recent cases of injuries where schools were held accountable, and we end with details of our forthcoming IOSH Managing Safely courses, which are ideal for those managing health and safety in most schools.

We wish all of our customers, their families, pupils and friends all the best for the Christmas break.





## PANDEMIC RECOVERY AND MENTAL HEALTH

The National Education Union (NEU) has warned of a mental health crisis in schools, following the results of their State of Education survey.

The survey of 1,788 NEU members found 90% of teachers in English state schools believe pupils' poor mental health has become more prevalent in their school, compared to before the pandemic. Issues include speech and language delay, socialisation issues, and poor mental health in general. Many schools have acted to increase their staff's ability to recognise and support the needs of young people, through training and CPD, however, some survey respondents reflected that the quality of the training fell below their expectations.

The survey identified a gap between what teachers think they need to do to meet the challenge and what is available at their school or in their local authority. For example, 89% of respondents said support from local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and NHS mental

health teams was important, but only 15% were receiving it. Similarly, demand outstripped supply in on-site mental health support, with 82% of respondents said they were seeking this service, but only 21% were receiving it.

NEU joint general secretary, Dr Mary Bousted, said: "Schools, staff, parents and pupils are crying out for help as we face a mental health challenge on a scale our education system has never experienced." She added: "Nothing is normal in schools now. Pupils in every year group are finding it difficult to make the adjustment back to school life. Many are highly anxious, and some find it extremely difficult to re-enter school society. This is a challenge which teachers, support staff and leaders are up to, but Government is not".

To view the survey report click here.



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## WINTER WEATHER SAFETY

With the colder weather on its way, schools should be reviewing their arrangements for minimising the risks that come with snow and ice. When preparing for adverse weather conditions, there are multiple factors to take into account, such as the safety of the premises and whether sufficient staff are able to attend school.

### Clearing snow and ice

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 state that arrangements should be made to minimise risks from snow and ice. This may involve gritting, snow clearing and closure of some routes, and doing what is reasonable in the circumstances. The priority should be to clear safe routes for access to and egress from the school, followed by paths between school blocks. Gritting the night

before snow or ice is expected should be considered. Ensuring that weather alerts are monitored is vital to this approach.

Whilst it is not true that the school or academy trust will automatically become liable for an injury if snow and ice are cleared and somebody slips, it is important to ensure that clearance procedures do not create more of a hazard—for example, by creating 'black ice' that can be difficult to see.

### Minimising indoor hazards

Schools should also take into account that people entering the buildings are likely to bring in slush on their shoes. It is important to ensure there are suitable doormats and cleaning/drying regimes in place to minimise the presence of water, as well as sufficient wet floor warning signs.

### If you need to close the school

If conditions are so bad that despite all efforts, safe access/egress is not possible, the decision to close the school should be made as soon as possible and effectively communicated to reduce the risk to pupils, parents and staff travelling to the school. Text alert systems, social media pages, websites, radio stations and answerphone messages can all be used to great effect, depending on what is available to you.

For further information, please see [Risk Advice Note 9—Ice & Snow Clearance](#), which can be downloaded from [SHAREzone](#).





# MANAGING **ASBESTOS** RISK IN SCHOOLS

Many schools built before the year 2000 will contain some form of asbestos.

The materials of greatest concern are those that can readily release asbestos fibres such as asbestos lagging, sprayed asbestos, asbestos insulating board (AIB) and ceiling tiles.

In some cases, asbestos will be present in locations that are vulnerable to damage by children, such as walls/partitions, and window and door surrounds, but the most likely way for asbestos to be disturbed or damaged is through maintenance, repair or renovation activities.

School caretakers are at particular risk because even simple tasks such as cleaning a light fitting attached to a ceiling that contains asbestos can be hazardous and therefore should be performed in controlled conditions.

## WHO IS **RESPONSIBLE** FOR MANAGING ASBESTOS?

Regulation 4 of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 states that the 'dutyholder', or in other words, anyone who has responsibility for the maintenance and/or repair of a nondomestic building, is responsible for the management of asbestos. For the majority of schools, the dutyholder will be the employer. This will vary according to the school—for some, it will be the local authority, for others, it will be the school governors, proprietors or trustees.

Where there is asbestos, presumed asbestos, or the presence of asbestos cannot be ruled out, a management plan must be put in place. This should include

the monitoring, safe treatment (sealing/ encapsulating), and safe removal and disposal of asbestos materials.

The key thing to remember is protection from asbestos is not the sole responsibility of the building contractors or maintenance staff a school employs to carry out work—you have a duty to protect them by assessing and managing the risks posed to them. In our article on page 9, you'll find an example of a school and their maintenance contractor both receiving a substantial fine after asbestos was disturbed.

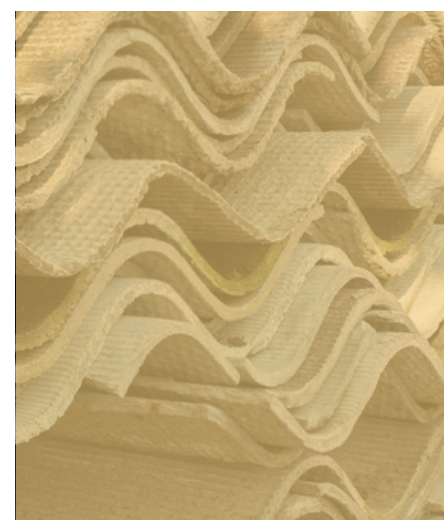
HSE offers some [useful resources on asbestos for schools](#) and you can also find further information and guidance in the following documents, downloadable from SHAREzone.

Safety Guidance Document 36—Control of Asbestos ▶

Managing asbestos in your school ▶

Asbestos in your school: Where it may be located ▶

Management of Premises and Facilities Toolkit ▶



### HALF-DAY ASBESTOS AWARENESS COURSE

Gallagher is able to provide the UKATA (United Kingdom Asbestos Training Association) Asbestos Awareness course. This half-day session can be provided for your staff at your premises—please contact us if you would like further details.

# FIRE SAFETY AND YOUR SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Research by insurer, Zurich, has shown that schools pose a significantly higher fire risk than other types of commercial buildings. The insurer analysed the fire risks of 26,866 primary and secondary schools in England, and found the average schools posed a fire risk 1.7 times greater than other non-residential buildings. Causes of fires in schools range from arson (60%) to neglect of electrical equipment and accidents in high-risk areas such as science labs and kitchens.

## Meeting your obligations

Every school's fire safety risk assessment will be different, but there are some things they should all have in common, including an evacuation plan, regular fire drills and clarity on the nominated fire wardens. They should also be reviewed on a regular basis—ideally every year.

Schools should take passive fire protection seriously—for example, fire-rated doors that help to delay the spread of fire and smoke, and the separation of high-risk areas, such as kitchens, from the rest of the premises by specialist fire doors. Active precautions, such as fire extinguishers, smoke detectors and sprinklers, should be in place and regularly maintained.

General maintenance, repairs and upgrades of facilities should also be carried out with fire safety considered a priority, and any contractors vetted to ensure they are competent and appropriately qualified.

With arson being a prevalent cause of fires in UK schools, it is important to ensure the security of all school buildings, maintain an effective intruder alarm system, install appropriate lighting and CCTV, and promptly remove graffiti as it could identify the school as a target to vandals.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Every year, approximately **90,000** UK school pupils have their learning disrupted because of a fire.

Out of over **32,000** schools in the UK, only **400** are fitted with sprinkler systems.

On average, **3** school fires a day are reported in the UK.

Source: [Fire Safety In Schools | Legislation, Management, Measures & Assessment \(cpdonline.co.uk\)](https://www.cpdonline.co.uk/resources/fire-safety-in-schools-legislation-management-measures-assessment/)

**Fire safety risk assessments for schools are mandatory, as dictated by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, which states that a fire risk assessment must be completed by a competent person. If there's a fire on your premises and you have not met your legal duties to keep people safe, you could face prosecution.**

[Fire risk in schools 'alarmingly' higher than other buildings \(pbctoday.co.uk\)](https://www.pbctoday.co.uk/news/fire-risk-in-schools-alarmingly-higher-than-other-buildings/)

[Fire Safety in Schools: A Comprehensive Guide - Fire Training Company](#)



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The Department for Education also requires all schools to have an up-to-date fire risk assessment and to conduct regular fire drills, as well as insisting that all new school buildings are signed off by an inspector to certify that they meet the requirements of building regulations.

#### **How Gallagher can help**

Gallagher can carry out fire safety risk assessments for our SchoolSHARE customers, thanks to our team of highly qualified consultants with fire safety risk assessment qualifications. Please let us know if you would like to book an assessment for your school.



# LEARNING BY EXAMPLE

This regular feature provides an opportunity to review a range of recent safety issues, where either the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has investigated an incident, or a claim for compensation as a result of an injury has been made against a school/academy/trust or local authority.

## SCHOOL **FINED** AFTER TEACHING ASSISTANT FALLS THROUGH CEILING

A school has been fined after a teaching assistant suffered a broken back as a result of falling through a fragile ceiling.

Bradford Magistrates' Court heard that on 18 September 2019, a teaching assistant had accessed the loft space in Todmorden Church of England Junior Infants and Nursery School to search for a spare desk, but fell through the ceiling to the floor of the school hall below—a distance of around four metres. The victim was in hospital for three weeks and required multiple operations.

An investigation by the HSE found that the area was only partially boarded, resulting in the ceiling giving way. The school pleaded guilty to breaching Section 6 (3) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005, was fined £4,000 and was ordered to pay a surcharge of £181 and £747.80 costs.

This accident—which could easily have been avoided—is a reminder to schools of the importance of carrying out safe working practices. Staff should undertake a detailed risk assessment prior to any work at height, with access equipment (such as ladders) thoroughly checked and restricted to those competent in its safe use, and the areas required for access should also be checked for their safety. In addition, access equipment should be removed/secured when not in use.

Source:

<https://press.hse.gov.uk/2022/03/01/school-fined-after-teaching-assisted-injured-in-fall-from-height/>





# SCHOOL AND CONTRACTOR **FINED** FOR ASBESTOS DISTURBANCE

During the installation of a school heating system in February 2019, ceiling tiles containing asbestos were disturbed, potentially exposing several people to asbestos fibres.

T.W. Steam & Heating Services Ltd had been contracted by Park View Academy, in Chester-le-Street, Durham, to install the new system, but an investigation by the HSE found that both parties had failed to refer to existing asbestos registers and management plans to identify the presence of asbestos within the building.

T.W. Steam & Heating Services Ltd of Rennys Lane Industrial Estate, Durham, pleaded guilty to breaching sections 2(1) and 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and was fined £2,000 with £4,710.37 costs.

Park View Academy pleaded guilty to breaching sections 2(1) and 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and was fined £3,000 with £4,785.37 costs.

The school's fine highlights the duty of those in charge of premises to inform contractors of the presence of asbestos-containing materials, and not leave the responsibility solely to those carrying out the work. See our article on page 6 for more information about how to manage asbestos risk in your school.

Source: <https://press.hse.gov.uk/2021/11/29/school-and-contractor-fined-for-unsafe-removal-of-asbestos/>

## MOUNTAIN RESCUE LEADS TO **£30,000 FINE** FOR SCHOOL

A school has been fined for its failure to protect pupils and staff on an organised trip to Helvellyn in the Lake District. After becoming stranded in winter conditions on their descent from the mountain, and with one pupil injured, the group, from the Gateshead Cheder School, had to be rescued by Keswick Mountain Rescue Team.

The trip took place on 5 March 2020 in cold and icy weather, and many of the 13-year 10 pupils did not have suitable hiking equipment, clothing or footwear. The teacher and teaching assistant leading the trip had no formal qualifications in mountain leadership or any experience of mountain environments in winter conditions. In addition, a weather report warning was ignored as were warnings by fellow hikers during the group's ascent of the mountain.

On descending the mountain, the group ventured off the path and encountered dangerous terrain, resulting in one pupil suffering a fall and sustaining minor cuts, and another running down the mountain in panic. As darkness began to fall, the party was rescued by the mountain rescue team, who cut steps into the snow to assist them back to the path. Fortunately, the other pupil who had descended the mountain alone was found by members of the public.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that neither of the adults with the party had the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience to lead the trip, and that the school

had not taken advice from a suitably competent person to plan or organise the excursion. There was no effective system to check the suitability of the clothing and equipment, and no effective contingency plan in place if conditions became too difficult to proceed.

The Gateshead Cheder Limited of Bede House, Tynegate Precinct, Sunderland Road in Gateshead pleaded guilty to breaching sections 2(1) and 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The school was fined £30,000 and ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £181 and costs of £4,574.90.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Stephen Garner said that schools "need to take sensible and proportionate measures to control the risks involved" and that this incident was "entirely avoidable."

The incident highlights the need for adequate planning of excursions, whether organised by the school, an external provider or a combination of both.

For guidance on organising offsite activities for pupils, please see document FR 9—Offsite Activities Framework, which can be downloaded from SHAREzone.

Source: <https://press.hse.gov.uk/2022/02/17/school-prosecuted-after-mountain-rescue-team-called-to-evacuate-children/>

# UPCOMING TRAINING EVENTS

Gallagher Risk Management Solutions delivers a variety of training courses. One of the courses we run regularly is the IOSH accredited Managing Safely course. The course is available either face-to-face or remotely and aims to provide the level of knowledge needed for people charged with overseeing health and safety in a low-to-medium risk environments, such as a school or academy.

We can run a course in-person for your school, academy or trust, and this is usually more cost-effective if there are six or more people who would like to attend. Otherwise, we have the following courses scheduled online during 2022/2023.

If you would like more information on these courses, or to book a place, please contact the SchoolSHARE helpline on 0800 612 9949.

IOSH Managing Safely remote courses:

19–22 September 2022

17–20 October 2022

21–24 November 2022







# WOULD YOU LIKE TO TALK?

If you have any questions or would like to explore how you can make risk management work harder for your school, we are here to help.

## SchoolSHARE Helpline

T: 0800 612 9949

E: [schoolshare@ajg.com](mailto:schoolshare@ajg.com)

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